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# Introduction

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The image of a small portion of Michelangelo's fresco, "Creation," found above serves as metaphor for this page's means and ends.

- ? How would you characterize God's arm in the fresco?
- ? How would you characterize Adam's arm?
- ? What is the message in Adam's limp wrist? In the fact that his arm rests on his knee?
- ? How does Adam, as painted in Michelangelo's fresco, represent all of us as we engage in scripture study and seek to understand scripture, scripture's divine author and our relationship to Him?
- ? How does Adam, as painted in Michelangelo's fresco, represent all of us as we seek God's enlivening, strengthening, and saving influence and presence in our daily lives?

Michelangelo reminds us of our desperate need for God's presence in our lives if we are to follow Him and be all that He hopes us to be. In relation to this page and its purposes, we are in need of God's help as we seek to understand and apply scripture.

The questions we posed and our brief commentary concerning the fresco represent an example of our approach to each scripture reading.

Scripture readings are accompanied by general and passage-specific questions to ponder along with brief comments. In addition to the passage-specific questions associated with each reading, the reader can apply the following **general questions** to most readings. These questions come from the purposes of scripture as identified in the introduction to our site, [ponderthescriptures.com](http://ponderthescriptures.com), found on the site's home page

- What does this reading reveal about the character of God?
- How and what does this reading testify of Christ?
- What wisdom and knowledge does this reading provide?
- How does this reading direct the way you think and act?
- Of what dangers does this reading warn? How does it help you avoid these dangers?
- How does this reading gladden your heart, encourage you, and give you hope?
- How does this reading expand your vision and increase your expectations of the possible?
- What does this reading discern or "read" about you?
- How will you apply this reading to your life, to how you relate with others, and to how you relate to Father, Son, and Holy Spirit?

It is not intended that the reader ponder every question. We introduce numerous and varied questions in hopes that readers will find a question or two that catches their imagination and interest, seems pertinent to their lives, and provides an opportunity for meaningful pondering and further spiritual insight. In addition, if the reader wishes, the many and varied ponder questions allow the reader to spend additional time to consider passages from various perspectives.

Finally, we suggest that during and after your reading and pondering experience you consider how you can incorporate your thoughts and feelings from the scripture reading into your personal prayer life. As you pray, share with Heavenly Father what you thought and felt as you studied and pondered. In your prayer, seek further insight from a God who is anxious to reveal himself, his will, and his interest in our lives. Incorporating your reading and pondering into your prayers can, we think, enliven a prayer life that can all too easily become mundane, mechanical, and rote.

## Matthew 2. <sup>1-3, 7-12</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judæa in the days of Herod the king, behold, there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem, <sup>2</sup>saying, “Where is he that is born King of the Jews? For we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him”

<sup>3</sup>When Herod the king had heard these things, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him...

<sup>7</sup>Then Herod, when he had privily called the wise men, enquired of them diligently what time the star appeared. <sup>8</sup>And he sent them to Bethlehem, and said, “Go and search diligently for the young child; and when ye have found him, bring me word again, that I may come and worship him also.”

<sup>9</sup>When they had heard the king, they departed; and, lo, the star, which they saw in the east, went before them, till it came and stood over where the young child was. <sup>10</sup>When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceeding great joy. <sup>11</sup>And when they were come into the house, they saw the young child with Mary his mother, and fell down, and worshipped him: and when they had opened their treasures, they presented unto him gifts; gold, and frankincense, and myrrh.

<sup>12</sup>And being warned of God in a dream that they should not return to Herod, they departed into their own country another way.

## Q

uestionary

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Today’s reading is the 13<sup>th</sup> in a series of Advent readings that will continue throughout the month of December.

1. Today’s reading is so familiar that we can take it for granted.  
? What new insights have you had as you read this text anew?
2. Matthew tells us that upon hearing about the birth of Jesus, king of Israel, Herod “was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him.”  
? Why was he and those in Jerusalem troubled?  
? How troubled should he have been?  
? How “dangerous” is Jesus today to national governments and their practiced way of ruling their nations?

We speak often of “likening” scripture to ourselves. Scripture passages often contain “signs” or “signals”—messages sent in the text that go beyond the story itself.

- ? What might the “signal” that Herod “was troubled” by news of Jesus’ birth mean beyond its historical notice?
- ? What might Herod’s rejection of Jesus signify concerning the response of earth’s rulers and kingdoms to Jesus?
- ? How does the following passage relate to Herod’s troubled response and the world’s leaders’ response to Jesus?

“Why do the nations raise such a ruckus,  
and entire populations make a fuss that will come to nothing?

The world’s kings offer resistance;  
world leaders form a united front  
against YHWH  
and against his Māšiah.

“We will break free of his restraints;  
throw off his control,” [they say]” (Psalm 2. <sup>1-3</sup>).

3. Matthew records that when the wise men “saw the star, they rejoiced with exceeding great joy.”  
? How can you make this entire Christmas Season a time of “exceeding great joy,” not only for yourself and your family but for those outside your family, especially individuals vulnerable to worry and sadness?  
? What can you do this Christmas Season to “seek” and “find” the Savior in a way that you

experience a sense of his presence in your life?

Matthew 4.<sup>23</sup>; 9.<sup>35</sup> & Luke 4.<sup>43</sup>— Jesus and the kingdom of God (questionary 4)

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<sup>23</sup>And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing all manner of sickness and all manner of disease among the people.

<sup>35</sup>And Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people.

<sup>43</sup>And he said unto them, I must preach the kingdom of God to other cities also: for therefore am I sent.

Jesus speaks of God's kingdom some forty times in the Gospel of Matthew. Jesus' announcement of God's kingdom were Jesus' first words as recorded in the Gospel of Mark. In the idea of God's kingdom, Jesus found a primary and motivational principle and value. It was a central feature of his ministry. In this series of questionnaires entitled, "Jesus and the Kingdom of God," we examine Jesus' sayings about the kingdom of God and what he hoped and intended to happen as a consequence of his focus on God's kingdom. This questionnaire is the fourth in this series.

In introducing Jesus' ministry, Mark characterizes Jesus as "preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God." We might translate, "preaching the positive proclamation about God's kingdom." Matthew not only introduces the beginning of Jesus' ministry as one focused on "the kingdom of heaven," but says that "*from that time* Jesus began to preach... the kingdom of heaven," suggesting that the kingdom of God/heaven remained a central feature of Jesus' teachings and intentions throughout his ministry.

In our first questionnaire, we attempted to suggest that the kingdom of God be thought of as that group or society that adopts God's rule over them, i.e. accepts and lives by the principles and values by which He, Himself lives and governs?

In our second questionnaire, we attempted to suggest that in proclaiming the kingdom of God Jesus hoped and intended to change this world and the principles and values by which it was governed and by which it lived. The kingdom of God on earth was in preparation for a kingdom of God in heaven, but he always intended that life on earth be improved and that the kingdom of God become an experience of human history on earth.

In our third questionnaire, we focused on the two things that Jesus encourages people to do in response to the good news of the imminent inauguration of the kingdom of God: repent, or change their perspectives/world view, and believe the good news.

1. We saw in our first reading that Jesus' ministry was characterized as being focused on the kingdom of God and its imminent inauguration. In Luke 4.<sup>43</sup>, Jesus expresses his belief that God sent him for the very purpose of proclaiming God's kingdom or rule.
  - ? What do you think and feel when you contemplate that the proclamation and inauguration of the kingdom of God was one of, if not the most central aspects and purposes of Jesus' ministry?
2. In both 4.<sup>23</sup> and 9.<sup>35</sup>, Matthew pairs Jesus' proclamation of God's kingdom or rule with his healing all manner of sickness and... disease.
  - ? What, do you think, is the significance of this pairing?
  - ? How does God's kingdom or rule relate to healing?
  - ? We can think of God's kingdom or rule in terms of His taking control over things formerly out of control or things controlled by other agents—individual or societal. How do healings demonstrate God's control?

(edition: November 24, 2024)



Luke 6.<sup>20</sup> & Matthew 5.<sup>3</sup>— (part 1) Jesus & the kingdom or rule of God (questionary 6)

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<sup>20</sup>Blessed be ye poor: for yours is the kingdom of God.

<sup>3</sup>Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Jesus speaks of kingdom of God<sup>1</sup> some forty times in the Gospel of Matthew. Jesus' announcement of the kingdom were Jesus' first words as recorded in the Gospel of Mark. In the idea of God's kingdom, Jesus found a primary and motivational principle and value. It was a central feature of his ministry. In this series of questionnaires entitled, "Jesus and the Kingdom of God," we examine Jesus' sayings about the kingdom of God and what he hoped and intended to happen as a consequence of his focus and teachings on God's kingdom. This questionnaire is the sixth in this series.

In introducing Jesus' ministry, Mark characterizes Jesus as "preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God." We might translate, "preaching the positive proclamation about God's kingdom." Matthew not only introduces the beginning of Jesus' ministry as one focused on "the kingdom of heaven," but says that "*from that time* Jesus began to preach... the kingdom of heaven," suggesting that the kingdom of heaven remained a central feature of Jesus' teachings and intentions throughout his ministry.

In our first 5 questionnaires, we have attempted to show that 1) the kingdom of God should be thought of as that group or society that adopts God's rule over it, i.e. accepts and lives by the principles and values by which He, Himself, lives and governs, and by which individuals and societies endure; 2) in proclaiming the kingdom of God, Jesus hoped and intended to change this world and the principles and values by which it governed and by which it lived. The kingdom of God on earth was in preparation for a kingdom of God in heaven, but he intended that life on earth be improved and that the kingdom of God become an experience of human history on earth; 3) Jesus expected a personal response to his message of the kingdom, that response being repentance/ a change in one's perspective and world view, and belief in Jesus' message of the imminent coming of the kingdom of God; and 4) that God sent Jesus for the express purpose of proclaiming the good news about the kingdom and that the healing of the sick was an integral part of the kingdom of God since it demonstrated God's taking control of things previously out of control.

The passages of this questionnaire are the first of several from the Sermon on the Mount in which Jesus speaks of the kingdom. In the case of Matthew, the passage begins both the sermon and Jesus' Beatitudes.

1. In these two passages, Jesus identifies the poor as those who possess and inhabit the kingdom of God. It might seem that Matthew and Luke have slightly different takes on this first Beatitude and what is meant by "poor." Some read Matthew's version in a spiritual sense and Luke's in a temporal sense.
  - ? Do you think Matthew and Luke understand Jesus' statement differently or can you harmonize the two? Why do you answer as you do?
  - ? If you harmonize them, do you harmonize to the spiritual or to the temporal? Why?
  - ? How would you feel if we harmonized the two so as to understand Luke's "poor" and Matthew's "poor in spirit" as both referring to those who experience temporal poverty? Why do you feel this way?
  - ? What attitudes or beliefs would one have toward poverty, real destitution, and those who experience it that they would reject the consolation ("invitation" or "comfort") that Jesus offers

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<sup>1</sup> Where the other Gospel writers speak of the "kingdom of God," Matthew speaks of the "kingdom of heaven." It is generally thought that Matthew speaks of the "kingdom of *heaven*" rather than the "kingdom of *God*" out of a disinclination to refer to God directly out of respect for God, much as Jews avoid speaking the name of Yahweh, replacing it with LORD. Therefore Matthew's "kingdom of heaven" should be understood as being precisely the same as the "the kingdom of God" spoken of elsewhere.

the poor when he says that they are the kind of people who inherit the kingdom of God/ heaven?

Consider the following.

The Greek word used for “poor” in Matthew’s “poor in spirit” and Luke’s “poor” is *ptōchos*. It means “destitute, impoverished, mendicant.” Related verbs are *ptossō*, “to crouch, be prostrate, bow down timidly,” and *ptōcheuō*, “to become a beggar, be indigent.” While another word, *penes*, for “poor” “denotes one who has to earn his living because he has no property, *ptōchos* denotes the complete destitution which forces the poor to seek the help of others by begging... It is the fate of a *ptōchos* to have nothing... but that of a *penes* to live frugally” (*TDOT*).

Now, consider the word, “spirit.” We sometimes speak of “school spirit.” We also speak of someone having their spirit broken. When we speak of someone having “school spirit” we mean that they have enthusiasm and are energetic and active for their school. When we speak of someone having their “spirit broke,” we mean their will to continue is weakened; they have become discouraged.

- ? How might you apply these observations to the idea of being “poor in spirit” or “poor in relation or relation to spirit”?
- ? Is it accurate to say that those who are temporally poor—truly poor, beggaredly so— often experience a serious lack of zest for life; that they can feel a lack of vitality and hope; that they can struggle to find a will to go?
- ? How do you respond to the assertion that all of this is what Jesus means when he speaks of the “poor in spirit”?

(*edition: December 4, 2024*)

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<sup>20</sup>Blessed be ye poor: for yours is the kingdom of God.

<sup>3</sup>Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Jesus speaks of kingdom of God<sup>2</sup> some forty times in the Gospel of Matthew. Jesus' announcement of the kingdom were Jesus' first words as recorded in the Gospel of Mark. In the idea of God's kingdom, Jesus found a primary and motivational principle and value. It was a central feature of his ministry. In this series of questionnaires entitled, "Jesus and the Kingdom of God," we examine Jesus' sayings about the kingdom of God and what he hoped and intended to happen as a consequence of his focus and teachings on God's kingdom. This questionnaire is the seventh in this series.

In introducing Jesus' ministry, Mark characterizes Jesus as "preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God." We might translate, "preaching the positive proclamation about God's kingdom." Matthew not only introduces the beginning of Jesus' ministry as one focused on "the kingdom of heaven," but says that "from that time Jesus began to preach... the kingdom of heaven," suggesting that the kingdom of God remained a central feature of Jesus' teachings and intentions throughout his ministry.

In our first 5 questionnaires, we have attempted to show that 1) the kingdom of God should be thought of as that group or society that adopts God's rule over it, i.e. accepts and lives by the principles and values by which He, Himself, lives and governs, and by which individuals and societies endure; 2) in proclaiming the kingdom of God, Jesus hoped and intended to change this world and the principles and values by which it governed and by which it lived. The kingdom of God on earth was in preparation for a kingdom of God in heaven, but he intended that life on earth be improved and that the kingdom of God become an experience of human history on earth; 3) Jesus expected a personal response to his message of the kingdom, that response being repentance/ a change in one's perspective and world view, and belief in Jesus' message of the imminent coming of the kingdom of God; and 4) that God sent Jesus for the express purpose of proclaiming the good news about the kingdom and that the healing of the sick was an integral part of the kingdom of God since it demonstrated God's taking control of things previously out of control.

The passages of this questionnaire are the first of several from the Sermon on the Mount in which Jesus speaks of the kingdom. In the case of Matthew, the passage begins both the sermon and Jesus' Beatitudes. In our first questionnaire in which we explore these two passages from the Sermon on the Mount, we asserted that Matthew's "poor in spirit" and Luke's simple "poor" both reflected the same class of people: those who were *temporally* poor, financially and economically destitute and beggarly.

1. Jesus' statement to the poor may be read as "consolation." Consolation can mean both "invitation" and "comfort"—it is easy to see how they are related since invitation often brings the one receiving the invitation a sense of comfort.
  - ? How do you feel about Jesus inviting the poor into "the kingdom of God/ heaven?"
  - ? How do you feel about Jesus offering the poor/ those discouraged and hopeless through temporal destitution comfort through this kingdom of God statement?
2. Jesus says to the poor, "yours *is* the kingdom of God." The verb *is* is in the present tense.
  - ? What do you make of this observation?
  - ? Do you think of Jesus' invitation to enter the kingdom of God/heaven as an invitation to enter

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<sup>2</sup> Where the other Gospel writers speak of the "kingdom of God," Matthew speaks of the "kingdom of heaven." It is generally thought that Matthew speaks of the "kingdom of *heaven*" rather than the "kingdom of *God*" out of a disinclination to refer to God directly out of respect for God, much as Jews avoid speaking the name of Yahweh, replacing it with LORD. Therefore Matthew's "kingdom of heaven" should be understood as being precisely the same as the "the kingdom of God" spoken of elsewhere.

into the kingdom at some far off, future, perhaps even other worldly time and place or as an invitation to enter immediately? Why do you answer as you do?

- ? Consider both these possibilities. What do you learn from each of them? How does each impact the way you think of the kingdom of God? Of the poor?
- ? What does it say about God and His kingdom that it is very specifically a place in which the poor are invited and where they can find comfort?

Jesus', "yours is the kingdom of God," could be read as descriptive rather than invitation. We might accurately translate Jesus' statement as, "the kingdom of God belongs to you." The poor are not simply invited out of compassion, but because they are the very kind of people who belong in the kingdom, the very kind of people for whom it was created.

- ? What do you think and feel when you contemplate this possibility?

*(edition: December 7, 2024)*

## Luke 6.<sup>20</sup> & Matthew 5.<sup>3</sup>— (part 3) Jesus & the kingdom or rule of God (questionary 8)

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<sup>20</sup>Blessed be ye poor: for yours is the kingdom of God.

<sup>3</sup>Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Jesus speaks of kingdom of God<sup>3</sup> some forty times in the Gospel of Matthew. Jesus' announcement of the kingdom were Jesus' first words as recorded in the Gospel of Mark. In the idea of God's kingdom, Jesus found a primary and motivational principle and value. It was a central feature of his ministry. In this series of questionnaires entitled, "Jesus and the Kingdom of God," we examine Jesus' sayings about the kingdom of God and what he hoped and intended to happen as a consequence of his focus and teachings on God's kingdom. This questionnaire is the eighth in this series.

In introducing Jesus' ministry, Mark characterizes Jesus as "preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God." We might translate, "preaching the positive proclamation about God's kingdom." Matthew not only introduces the beginning of Jesus' ministry as one focused on "the kingdom of heaven," but says that "*from that time* Jesus began to preach... the kingdom of heaven," suggesting that the kingdom of God remained a central feature of Jesus' teachings and intentions throughout his ministry.

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The passages of this questionnaire are the first of several from the Sermon on the Mount in which Jesus speaks of the kingdom. In the case of Matthew, the passage begins both the sermon and Jesus' Beatitudes. In our first two questionnaires in which we explore these two passages from the Sermon on the Mount, we asserted that 1) Matthew's "poor in spirit" and Luke's simple "poor" both reflected the same class of people: those who were temporally poor, indeed destitute and beggarly; 2) that Jesus statement could be seen as both invitation and comfort to the poor; 3) that Jesus invitation was for the poor to enter the comfort of his kingdom in the here and now as well as in some distant, future, post-mortal time and place; and 4) that even more than invitation and comfort, Jesus' statement reveals that the kingdom of God belongs naturally to the poor because of their own suffering and the nature of the Kingdom of God itself.

1. Consider the following passage.

"Behold, verily I say unto you, for this cause I have sent you... that a feast of fat things might be prepared for the poor; yea, a feast of fat things, of wine on the lees well refined, that the earth may know that the mouths of the prophets shall not fail; yea, a supper of the house of the Lord, well prepared, unto which all nations shall be invited. First, the rich and the learned, the

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<sup>3</sup> Where the other Gospel writers speak of the "kingdom of God," Matthew speaks of the "kingdom of heaven." It is generally thought that Matthew speaks of the "kingdom of *heaven*" rather than the "kingdom of *God*" out of a disinclination to refer to God directly out of respect for God, much as Jews avoid speaking the name of Yahweh, replacing it with LORD. Therefore Matthew's "kingdom of heaven" should be understood as being precisely the same as the "the kingdom of God" spoken of elsewhere.

wise and the noble; and after that cometh the day of my power; then shall the poor, the lame, and the blind, and the deaf, come in unto the marriage of the Lamb, and partake of the supper of the Lord, prepared for the great day to come” (DC 58.<sup>6, 8-11</sup>).

- ? How does this passage relate to the idea of the poor being especially invited to enter the kingdom of God and there find comfort from their destitution and the worries, discouragements, and hopelessness that deep poverty so often brings?

2. Take a few minutes to consider one of Jesus’ kingdom of God/ heaven parables—this one the parable of the wedding feast found in Matthew 22.<sup>2-14</sup>.

“The kingdom of heaven is like unto a certain king, which made a marriage for his son, And sent forth his servants to call them that were bidden to the wedding: and they would not come. Again, he sent forth other servants, saying, ‘Tell them which are bidden, Behold, I have prepared my dinner: my oxen and my fatlings are killed, and all things are ready: come unto the marriage.’

“But they made light of it, and went their ways, one to his farm, another to his merchandise: and the remnant took his servants, and entreated them spitefully, and slew them. But when the king heard thereof, he was wroth: and he sent forth his armies, and destroyed those murderers, and burned up their city. Then saith he to his servants, ‘The wedding is ready, but they which were bidden were not worthy. Go ye therefore into the highways, and as many as ye shall find, bid to the marriage.’

“So those servants went out into the highways, and gathered together all as many as they found, both bad and good: and the wedding was furnished with guests. And when the king came in to see the guests, he saw there a man which had not on a wedding garment: And he saith unto him, ‘Friend, how camest thou in hither not having a wedding garment?’

“And he was speechless. Then said the king to the servants, ‘Bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and cast him into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. For many are called, but few are chosen.’”

- ? How does the DC passage relate to this parable?
- ? How do they both relate to the two verses explored in this questionnaire?

In the DC passage, “First, the rich and the learned, the wise and the noble were invited to the “feast of fat things” and the “marriage of the Lamb.” In the parable found in Matthew, the same class, the wealthy—represented in the parable by landowners and merchants (vs. 5)—were first to be invited.

- ? What was the response of the landowners and merchants?
- ? Could we understand the DC’s “rich and the learned, the wise and the noble” to have similarly responded negatively to the invitation? Why do you answer as you do?
- ? What do you think and feel when we suggest that in both passages, those who are mentioned as having been invited “first” were not invited first because they were preferred or spiritually privileged—rather, the mention of their having been invited first is focused on the fact that they rejected the invitation?

3. In Luke’s Gospel, Jesus offered a contrast to his, “blessed be ye poor.” That contrast was, “But woe unto you that are rich! For ye have received your consolation [comfort or invitation or both]” (Lk. 6.<sup>24</sup>).

- ? How do you feel about Jesus’ statement toward the rich?
- ? How does Luke’s contrast clarify the nature of the poverty and the poor to which Jesus speaks?

One could understand that the rich have already been consoled in this life through their ease. One could understand that the rich have already been invited into the kingdom and refused the invitation. Or, finally, one could understand that the kingdom of God simply wasn’t created for the rich; that they were not the type of people who belonged in the kingdom; or the type of people to whom the kingdom of God and the ideals and principles by which it existed appealed or to which they would conform.

- ? Consider each of these. What does each teach you about the poor? About the rich? About the nature of the kingdom?
- ? As you think of the last possible meaning—that the kingdom of God simply wasn't created for the rich; that they were not the type of people who belonged in the kingdom; or the type of people to whom the kingdom of God and the ideals and principles by which it existed appealed or to which they would conform—what would it be about the kingdom and its ideals and principles that the rich might find unappealing? (This question is one to keep in mind as we continue to explore the meaning and nature of the kingdom of God.)

*(edition: December 11, 2024)*

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<sup>10</sup>Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Jesus speaks of kingdom of God<sup>4</sup> some forty times in the Gospel of Matthew. Jesus' announcement of the kingdom were Jesus' first words as recorded in the Gospel of Mark. In the idea of God's kingdom, Jesus found a primary and motivational principle and value. It was a central feature of his ministry. In this series of questionnaires entitled, "Jesus and the Kingdom of God," we examine Jesus' sayings about the kingdom of God and what he hoped and intended to happen as a consequence of his focus and teachings on God's kingdom. This questionnaire is the eighth in this series.

In introducing Jesus' ministry, Mark characterizes Jesus as "preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God." We might translate, "preaching the positive proclamation about God's kingdom." Matthew not only introduces the beginning of Jesus' ministry as one focused on "the kingdom of heaven," but says that "*from that time* Jesus began to preach... the kingdom of heaven," suggesting that the kingdom of remained a central feature of Jesus' teachings and intentions throughout his ministry.

In our first 5 questionnaires, we attempted to show that 1) the kingdom of God should be thought of as that group or society that adopts God's rule over it, i.e. accepts and lives by the principles and values by which He, Himself, lives and governs, and by which individuals and societies endure; 2) in proclaiming the kingdom of God, Jesus hoped and intended to change this world and the principles and values by which it governed and by which it lived. The kingdom of God on earth was in preparation for a kingdom of God in heaven, but he intended that life on earth be improved and that the kingdom of God become an experience of human history on earth; 3) Jesus expected a personal response to his message of the kingdom, that response being repentance/ a change in one's perspective and world view, and belief in Jesus' message of the imminent coming of the kingdom of God; and 4) that God sent Jesus for the express purpose of proclaiming the good news about the kingdom and that the healing of the sick was an integral part of the kingdom of God since it demonstrated God's taking control of things previously out of control.

In our sixth, seventh, and eighth questionnaires we examined the first Beatitude found in Jesus' Sermon on the Mount with its statement concerning the kingdom of God. Here, we found that 1) Matthew's "poor in spirit" and Luke's simple "poor" both reflected the same class of people: those who were temporally poor, indeed destitute and beggarly; 2) that Jesus statement could be seen as both invitation and comfort to the poor; 3) that Jesus invitation was for the poor to enter the comfort of his kingdom in the here and now as well as in some distant, future, post-mortal time and place; and 4) that even more than invitation and comfort, Jesus' statement reveals that the kingdom of God belongs naturally to the poor because of their own suffering and the nature of the Kingdom of God itself.

In today's questionnaire, we consider the eighth Beatitude as found in Jesus' Sermon on the Mount and its relation to Jesus' teachings about the kingdom of God.

1. First, we should understand what Jesus means by being "persecuted *for righteousness' sake*."
  - ? What does this "for righteousness' sake" mean to you?
  - ? How do you feel about reading "persecuted *on account of* righteousness/ goodness"?

The words, "righteousness/ righteous" have been loaded down with all sorts of meaning and assumptions.

- ? What, do you think, did these terms mean to Jesus' audience at the time he delivered it?
- ? What did they mean to Jesus, do you think?

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<sup>4</sup> Where the other Gospel writers speak of the "kingdom of God," Matthew speaks of the "kingdom of heaven." It is generally thought that Matthew speaks of the "kingdom of *heaven*" rather than the "kingdom of *God*" out of a disinclination to refer to God directly out of respect for God, much as Jews avoid speaking the name of Yahweh, replacing it with LORD. Therefore Matthew's "kingdom of heaven" should be understood as being precisely the same as the "the kingdom of God" spoken of elsewhere.



- ? What do you think and feel when you consider that individuals might be persecuted precisely because they seek to live by good and proper values?

Now, consider the word, “persecuted.”

- ? In your view, what does it mean to be persecuted?

We most often think of it in religious terms, but the word has a broader meaning. It can be to “harry, harass, pursue, exclude, accuse.” Many classes of people can be “persecuted.” The promise of the first beatitude was “the kingdom of heaven.” The promise of the 8<sup>th</sup> beatitude is the same.

- ? What does this suggest about the relationship between those “persecuted, harassed, excluded, etc. because they seek to live by good and proper values—the condition of the 8<sup>th</sup> beatitude—and being “poor”—the condition of the first beatitude (It might be helpful to review the questionnaire for the 1<sup>st</sup> beatitude)?

2. Jesus promises/ comforts those persecuted, harassed, excluded, etc. because they seek to live by good and proper values with the words, “theirs is the kingdom of heaven/ God” [see footnote 1].”
- ? What does it tell you about the kingdom of God that it is made up of people who are victims of harassment, exclusion, and prosecution because they seek to live by good and proper values?

*(edition: December 14, 2024)*

Matthew 5.<sup>19-20</sup>— Jesus & the kingdom or rule of God (questionary 11)

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<sup>19</sup>Whoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven. <sup>20</sup>For I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven.

In this series of questionnaires entitled, “Jesus and the kingdom of God,” we examine Jesus’ sayings about the kingdom of God. What did the kingdom of God mean to him? What was the nature of the kingdom of God? What did he hope and intend to happen as a consequence of his focus and teachings on the kingdom of God? What sorts of people inhabited the kingdom of God? We explore these and other questions in this series of questionnaires. This questionnaire is the tenth in the series.

Jesus speaks of kingdom of God<sup>5</sup> some forty times in the Gospel of Matthew. Matthew not only introduces the beginning of Jesus’ ministry as one focused on “the kingdom of heaven,” but says that “*from that time* Jesus began to preach... the kingdom of heaven.” In introducing Jesus’ ministry, Mark characterizes Jesus as “preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God.” We might translate, “preaching the positive proclamation about God’s kingdom.” All this suggests that the kingdom of God remained a central feature of Jesus’ teachings and intentions throughout his ministry.

In previous questionnaires, we have attempted to show that 1) the kingdom of God should be thought of as that group or society that adopts God’s rule over it, i.e. accepts and lives by the principles and values by which He, Himself, lives and governs, and by which individuals and societies endure; 2) Jesus hoped and intended to change this world and the principles and values by which it governed and by which it lived. The kingdom of God on earth was in preparation for a kingdom of God in heaven, but he always intended that life on earth be improved and that the kingdom of God become a lived experience in human history; 3) Jesus expected a personal response to his message of the kingdom, that response being repentance/ a change in one’s perspective and world view, and belief in Jesus’ message of the imminent coming of the kingdom of God; 4) the kingdom of God was linked to Jesus’ ministry of physical healing as a demonstration of the kingdom of God and His ability to take control of things previously out of control and rule in a way that benefits all, thus demonstrating the reality and desirability of the kingdom of God; 5) the kingdom of God is based on very different principles than the kingdoms of this world, including the rejection of violence as a means of resistance and the maintenance of power; 6) the poor, those financially and economically destitute and beggarly, are the very kind of people that constitute the kingdom of God in the here and now and for whom it was created in the distant, future, post-mortal time and place; 7) those who desire the kingdom of God and to live by its principles become targets of persecution; and 8) the plea that the kingdom of God come and that people be ruled by his principles in the here and now should be a regular and integral part of the disciple’s prayers.

1. In the first and eighth beatitudes, Jesus indicated who and what types of people were part of the kingdom of God—the poor and the persecuted, two groups that have much in common. In today’s reading, Jesus indicates who and what kind of people are *not* and *cannot* be part of the kingdom of God.

? Who is excluded from the kingdom of God according to this reading?

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<sup>5</sup> Where the other Gospel writers speak of the “kingdom of God,” Matthew speaks of the “kingdom of heaven.” It is generally thought that Matthew speaks of the “kingdom of *heaven*” rather than the “kingdom of *God*” out of a disinclination to refer to God directly out of respect for God, much as Jews avoid speaking the name of Yahweh, replacing it with LORD. Therefore Matthew’s “kingdom of heaven” should be understood as being precisely the same as the “the kingdom of God” spoken of elsewhere.

- ? What was the nature of pharisaical “righteousness” that it had no place in the kingdom of God, either in the earthly present or in the eternal future?
- ? Why is this, do you think?

Consider, for example, the following passages and the nature of pharisaical righteousness in relation to Sabbath day observance.

“[Jesus] entered again into the synagogue; and there was a man there which had a withered hand. And they watched him, whether he would heal him on the sabbath day; that they might accuse him. And he saith unto the man which had the withered hand, ‘Stand forth.’

And he saith unto them, ‘Is it lawful to do good on the sabbath days, or to do evil? To save life, or to kill?’

But they held their peace. And when he had looked round about on them with anger, being grieved for the hardness of their hearts, he saith unto the man, ‘Stretch forth thine hand.’

And he stretched it out: and his hand was restored whole as the other” (Mk. 3.<sup>1-5</sup>).

“[Jesus] went into the house of one of the chief Pharisees to eat bread on the sabbath day, that they watched him. And, behold, there was a certain man before him which had the dropsy. And Jesus answering spake unto the lawyers and Pharisees, saying, ‘Is it lawful to heal on the sabbath day?’

And they held their peace. And he took him, and healed him, and let him go; and answered them, saying, ‘Which of you shall have an ass or an ox fallen into a pit, and will not straightway pull him out on the sabbath day?’

And they could not answer him again to these things” (Lk. 14.<sup>1-6</sup>).

The Old Testament had taught the Pharisees that the diseases and ritual defilements of others could spiritually defile another individual. Thus, in both instances above, the Pharisees themselves tried to distance themselves from the defiled individuals and expected Jesus, who claimed to be a man of God to maintain distance from defilement.

- ? What does this tell you about the nature of pharisaical righteousness and about the nature of the kingdom of God?
  - ? What is the nature of “righteousness” that is compatible with the kingdom of God?
2. Those who “break one of these least commandments” or “teach men” to break even the least of the commandments may be “least in the kingdom,” but they are still included in the kingdom. But the pharisees are outright excluded.
- ? What do you think and feel about this observation?

*(edition: December 21, 2024)*

## Matthew 6.<sup>10</sup> & Luke 11.<sup>2</sup>— Jesus & the kingdom or rule of God (questionary 10)

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<sup>10</sup>Thy kingdom come.

Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven.

<sup>2</sup>Thy kingdom come.

Thy will be done, as in heaven, so in earth.

Jesus speaks of kingdom of God<sup>6</sup> some forty times in the Gospel of Matthew. Jesus' announcement of the kingdom were Jesus' first words as recorded in the Gospel of Mark. In the idea of God's kingdom, Jesus found a primary and motivational principle and value. It was a central feature of his ministry. In this series of questionnaires entitled, "Jesus and the Kingdom of God," we examine Jesus' sayings about the kingdom of God and what he hoped and intended to happen as a consequence of his focus and teachings on God's kingdom. This questionnaire is the eighth in this series.

In introducing Jesus' ministry, Mark characterizes Jesus as "preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God." We might translate, "preaching the positive proclamation about God's kingdom." Matthew not only introduces the beginning of Jesus' ministry as one focused on "the kingdom of heaven," but says that "*from that time* Jesus began to preach... the kingdom of heaven," suggesting that the kingdom of God remained a central feature of Jesus' teachings and intentions throughout his ministry.

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In our sixth, seventh, and eighth questionnaires we examined the first Beatitude found in Jesus' Sermon on the Mount with its statement concerning the kingdom of God. Here, we found that 1) Matthew's "poor in spirit" and Luke's simple "poor" both reflected the same class of people: those who were temporally poor, indeed destitute and beggarly; 2) that Jesus statement could be seen as both invitation and comfort to the poor; 3) that Jesus invitation was for the poor to enter the comfort of his kingdom in the here and now as well as in some distant, future, post-mortal time and place; and 4) that even more than invitation and comfort, Jesus' statement reveals that the kingdom of God belongs naturally to the poor because of their own suffering and the nature of the Kingdom of God itself.

In our ninth questionnaire, focused on Jesus' eighth Beatitude, we found that those who are persecuted are part of the kingdom of God. Indeed, we suggested that it might very be, in fact, their desire for the kingdom of God that makes them targets of persecution.

In this questionnaire, we remain in Jesus' Sermon on the Mount and consider the kingdom of God in light

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of his instruction on prayer, often called The Lord's Prayer. Traditionally, the prayer is seen as having seven pleas. In this questionnaire, we consider the second and third.

1. After the first plea of the Lord's Prayer that God's "name" be "hallowed," or His "power" be held as "preeminent" (the most basic idea of holiness is the fact of uniqueness, of being set apart, of being unusual, and, in the case of God, of being unmatched, unparalleled, preeminent), Jesus suggests that his disciples pray for the coming of God's kingdom.
  - ? What is one asking for when they make this plea that God's kingdom might come?
  - ? Is a discussion of and desire for the coming of God's kingdom are significant part of your prayers? Why do you answer as you do?
  - ? How is the desire to see God's kingdom come and the plea that it be so manifest in your prayers?
2. The next plea is "Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven."
  - ? To what degree is the will of God done in heaven?
  - ? How does the idea of God's will being done on earth relate to the plea that "Thy kingdom come"?
3. We have suggested that Jesus' intention was not only to prepare his followers for entrance into the kingdom of God in the next life, but to provide principles and laws by which humans could establish a kingdom in the mortal life of humans. When we read the plea, "May thy kingdom come," we hear, "May thy kingdom come here and now."
  - ? Do you feel that the two pleas found in this reading confirm in any way our previous assertions? Why do you answer as you do?
  - ? How do these two requests from the Lord's Prayer suggest that Jesus did indeed hope to establish God's kingdom in the mortal life of humans?
  - ? How is the doing of the will of God on earth indicative of the kingdom of God?

*(edition: December 18, 2024)*

# Matthew 5-7— Sermon on the mount

## Questionary 1— sermon on the mount: Matthew 5.<sup>1-12</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>And seeing the multitudes, he went up into a mountain: and when he was set, his disciples came unto him: <sup>2</sup>And he opened his mouth, and taught them, saying,

<sup>3</sup>Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

<sup>4</sup>Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted.

<sup>5</sup>Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth.

<sup>6</sup>Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.

<sup>7</sup>Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy.

<sup>8</sup>Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God.

<sup>9</sup>Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God.

<sup>10</sup>Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

<sup>11</sup>Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake.

<sup>12</sup>Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.

This is the first of several questionaries in which we explore the 12 verses of the Sermon on the Mount that constitute Jesus' nine famous "beatitudes." In this first questionnaire, we will explore some general questions covering the entire 12 verse reading. Then, in future questionaries we will explore each beatitude in turn.

1. To begin our study of the beatitudes, we want to note that Luke also reported a series of Jesus' beatitudes. In Luke's reporting, each beatitude is also accompanied by an opposing "anti-beatitude." Here are Jesus' beatitudes with their contrary partners as found in Luke 6.

<sup>20</sup>Blessed be ye poor: for yours is the kingdom of God.

<sup>21</sup>Blessed are ye that hunger now: for ye shall be filled.

Blessed are ye that weep now: for ye shall laugh.

<sup>22</sup>Blessed are ye, when men shall hate you, and when they shall separate you from their company, and shall reproach you, and cast out your name as evil, for the Son of man's sake.

<sup>23</sup>Rejoice ye in that day, and leap for joy: for, behold, your reward is great in heaven: for in the like manner did their fathers unto the prophets.

<sup>24</sup>But woe unto you that are rich! for ye have received your consolation.

<sup>25</sup>Woe unto you that are full! for ye shall hunger.

Woe unto you that laugh now! for ye shall mourn and weep.

<sup>26</sup>Woe unto you, when all men shall speak well of you! for so did their fathers to the false prophets.

? After reading Matthew's and Luke's account of the beatitudes, what are your general impressions?

? What are the similarities and differences?

2. Each beatitude can be divided into two halves. In the first half, we find a trait or condition. In the second half, we find a promise. From now on, we will refer to these as condition/promise respectively. We might aspire to all of the promises found in the beatitudes but might not aspire to have or experience all of the conditions of the first half of each beatitude.

? The conditions of Jesus' beatitudes as recorded by Matthew might be divided between those for which one might aspire and those for which one might not aspire. Which of Matthew's conditions

seem like something for which you would aspire, and which conditions seem like something for which you would not aspire and would rather avoid if possible?

- ? Now, consider the previous question in relation to Jesus' beatitudes as found in Luke. For which conditions would you aspire? For which would you not aspire?
  - ? What is it about each of the conditions for which you aspire that makes them attractive to you?
  - ? What is it about each of the conditions for which you would not aspire that makes them unattractive to you?
  - ? Having selected conditions attractive and unattractive to you, how would you characterize the difference between Jesus' beatitudes as recorded by Matthew and Luke?
  - ? What do you make of the fact that the conditions in Jesus' beatitudes as found in Luke are universally unattractive... for who wishes to be poor, to be hungry, to mourn, and to be persecuted?
  - ? Does and/or should Luke's version of the four beatitudes common to Matthew shape the way you understand Matthew's version? Why do you answer as you do?
3. In the first half of each beatitude—what we are calling the condition—some find, almost a kind of command. For example, according to the most common reading of the first beatitude, "Blessed are the poor in spirit" almost takes the form of commandment: "You need to be humble if you wish the promise, of "the kingdom of heaven."
- ? How do you feel about this observation?
  - ? Do you read each condition as "command" to become or engage in something or as an "invitation" to those who have already become or are engaged in something?
  - ? What is the difference?

## Questionary 2— sermon on the mount: Matthew 5.<sup>1-12</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>And seeing the multitudes, he went up into a mountain: and when he was set, his disciples came unto him: <sup>2</sup>And he opened his mouth, and taught them, saying,

<sup>3</sup>**Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.**

<sup>4</sup>Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted.

<sup>5</sup>Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth.

<sup>6</sup>Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.

<sup>7</sup>Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy.

<sup>8</sup>Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God.

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<sup>10</sup>Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

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<sup>12</sup>Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.

This is the second of several questionaries in which we explore the 12 verses of the Sermon on the Mount that constitute Jesus' nine famous "beatitudes."

1. We have noted that Luke also reported a series of Jesus' beatitudes. In Luke's reporting, each beatitude is also accompanied by an opposing "anti-beatitude." Here is Luke's version of Jesus' first beatitude as recorded by Matthew.

"Blessed be ye poor: for yours is the kingdom of God" (Luke 6.<sup>20</sup>).

"But woe unto you that are rich! For ye have received your consolation" (Luke 6.<sup>24</sup>).

2. What are your general impressions as you compare Matthew's and Luke's versions of this beatitude?
  - ? What are the similarities and differences?

In this beatitude, Luke clearly hears Jesus addressing those who are involuntarily and temporally poor—the Greek word indicating impoverishment and the parallel "anti-beatitude" reflecting temporal wealth.

While Matthew spiritualizes Jesus' first beatitude (or did Luke temporalize it?), we can and should, perhaps, read Matthew's version as indicative of involuntary "spirit" impoverishment.

2. If we read it in this way, of what are the "poor in spirit" destitute?

We speak of "school spirit." By it, we mean that someone has enthusiasm and is energetic for their school. The Greek word for "spirit" can have this meaning of enthusiasm and energy.

2. What do you think and feel when we suggest that this is the meaning it could and probably does possess in Jesus' first beatitude—"Blessed are those who are impoverished/ destitute in relation to energy, enthusiasm, capacity"?

2. If we read, "poor in spirit," as many do, with the unlikely meaning of "blessed are the humble" the first beatitude essentially becomes a commandment: "If you want to be blessed, you need to be humble."
  - ? How do you respond to this observation?
  - ? But what if we think of the first beatitude as an utterance of comfort and invitation: "those who are spiritually impoverished can be blessed?"



- ? How would you respond if we noted that “to be humble” is more akin to “to be humiliated” than to “be teachable,” a common moniker of “humble.”

I always want to ask those who object to the idea that in his first beatitude Jesus is offering comfort to those who sense their spiritual poverty.... “So, do you never feel spiritually impoverished?”

- ? How would you respond to this question and the meaning of Jesus’ first beatitude for those who feel that they possess far, far too little spiritual energy and capacity?
  - ? How would you respond to the sense that those who object to this meaning of Jesus’ first beatitude might just be exhibiting a bit of self-righteousness and false security?
3. As we have noted, each beatitude can be divided into two halves. In the first half, we find a trait or condition. In the second half, we find a promise. We will refer to these as condition/promise respectively.
    - ? What is the promise of this first beatitude?
    - ? What does it mean to you to possess “the kingdom of heaven”?
    - ? Is this something referring only to a next life, or can it refer to something one can possess in the here and now? Why do you answer as you do?
    - ? As you consider the promise associated with other beatitudes, are they only associated with a future existence or do they refer to blessings that can be obtained in this life?
    - ? What does it mean to possess the “kingdom of heaven” in the here and now, in this life?
  4. In our previous reading on the beatitudes, we noted that while all of the promises can be aspired to, we might not aspire to all of the conditions.
    - ? Is the condition of this first beatitude—being impoverished in relation to spiritual energy, vitality, and vigor—one to which you aspire? Why do you answer as you do?
    - ? If those who lack spiritual vigor are promised “the kingdom of heaven,” why would anyone not wish to possess this condition?

## Questionary 3— sermon on the mount: Matthew 5.<sup>1-12</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>And seeing the multitudes, he went up into a mountain: and when he was set, his disciples came unto him: <sup>2</sup>And he opened his mouth, and taught them, saying,

<sup>3</sup>Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

**<sup>4</sup>Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted.**

<sup>5</sup>Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth.

<sup>6</sup>Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.

<sup>7</sup>Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy.

<sup>8</sup>Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God.

<sup>9</sup>Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God.

<sup>10</sup>Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

<sup>11</sup>Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake.

<sup>12</sup>Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.

This is the third of several questionaries in which we explore the 12 verses of the Sermon on the Mount that constitute Jesus' nine famous "beatitudes."

1. We have noted that Luke also reported a series of Jesus' beatitudes. In Luke's reporting, each beatitude is also accompanied by an opposing "anti-beatitude." Here is Luke's version of Jesus' first beatitude as recorded by Matthew.

"Blessed are ye that weep now: for ye shall laugh."

- ? What are your general impressions as you compare Matthew's and Luke's versions of this beatitude?
- ? What are the similarities and differences?

2. Luke also provides an anti-beatitude that is opposite of the beatitude.

"Woe unto you that laugh now! For ye shall mourn and weep."

- ? What does this contribute to your understanding of Matthew's second beatitude?
- ? What individuals and classes of people "mourn" or "weep" in this life?

3. As we have noted, each beatitude can be divided into two halves. In the first half, we find a trait or condition. In the second half, we find a promise. We will refer to these as condition/promise respectively.

- ? What is the promise of this second beatitude?
- ? How do you feel when you contemplate a future when those who mourn and weep will be "comforted" and "laugh" or find joy commensurate with their earthly sorrows?

4. In our previous reading on the beatitudes, we noted that while all of the promises can be aspired to, we might not aspire to all of the conditions.

- ? Is the condition of this second beatitude—mourning—one to which you or most people aspire to experience?

5. We have also questioned whether beatitudes should be thought of as "commandments"—conditions that must exist or be acquired if the promise is to be realized— or "invitations"—conditions that exist naturally, without effort yet still allow for the acquisition of the promise.

- ? Does it make sense to you that Jesus would be commanding individuals to live a life of mourning or weeping? Why do you answer as you do?
- ? How do you feel about this beatitude being an invitation or promise to those who mourn or weep

to expect recompense.

## Questionary 4— sermon on the mount: Matthew 5.<sup>1-12</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>And seeing the multitudes, he went up into a mountain: and when he was set, his disciples came unto him: <sup>2</sup>And he opened his mouth, and taught them, saying,

<sup>3</sup>Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

<sup>4</sup>Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted.

**<sup>5</sup>Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth.**

<sup>6</sup>Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.

<sup>7</sup>Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy.

<sup>8</sup>Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God.

<sup>9</sup>Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God.

<sup>10</sup>Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

<sup>11</sup>Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake.

<sup>12</sup>Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.

This is the fourth of several questionaries in which we explore the 12 verses of the Sermon on the Mount that constitute Jesus' nine famous "beatitudes."

1. As we have noted, each beatitude can be divided into two halves. In the first half, we find a trait or condition. In the second half, we find a promise. We will refer to these as condition/promise respectively.

? What is the promise of this third beatitude?

? What does it mean to you to "inherit the earth"?

2. In our previous reading on the beatitudes, we noted that while all of the promises can be aspired to, we might not aspire to all of the conditions.

? Is the condition of this third beatitude—meekness—one to which you or most people aspire to possess?

? What is it about "meekness" that makes you answer as you do?

The Greek word translation as "meek" is *praus*. It is etymologically related to "friend." It can mean to be "gentle," "soothing" "calming." It can indicate a "quiet and friendly composure which does not become embittered or angry at what is unpleasant... This is an active attitude and deliberate acceptance, not just a passive submission." "The Gk. term often has the sense of the calm acceptance of fate or human injustice" (See, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*). The Hebrew word, *'ānāw*, is usually translated as *praus*. "The words associated with the root *'ānā* II belong to a negatively charged domain of knowledge and experience... The nouns and adjectives refer to situations inimical to human life. The basic experience appears to be "affliction" in its various forms.

? Does any of this change the way you feel about aspiring to be "meek"?

? How do you feel about this beatitude if we understand meekness as "patience or calmness in the midst of humiliating affliction?"

? Would you aspire to this trait if it includes the experience of humiliation?

3. We have also questioned whether beatitudes should be thought of as "commandments"—conditions that must exist or be acquired if the promise is to be realized— or "invitations"—conditions that exist naturally, without effort yet still allow for the acquisition of the promise.

? Does it make sense to you that Jesus would be commanding individuals to be "meek" Why do you answer as you do?

## Questionary 5— sermon on the mount: Matthew 5.<sup>1-12</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>And seeing the multitudes, he went up into a mountain: and when he was set, his disciples came unto him: <sup>2</sup>And he opened his mouth, and taught them, saying,

<sup>3</sup>Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

<sup>4</sup>Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted.

<sup>5</sup>Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth.

**<sup>6</sup>Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.**

<sup>7</sup>Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy.

<sup>8</sup>Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God.

<sup>9</sup>Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God.

<sup>10</sup>Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

<sup>11</sup>Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake.

<sup>12</sup>Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.

This is the fifth of several questionaries in which we explore the 12 verses of the Sermon on the Mount that constitute Jesus' nine famous "beatitudes."

1. As we have noted, each beatitude can be divided into two halves. In the first half, we find a trait or condition. In the second half, we find a promise. We refer to these as condition/promise respectively.
  - ? What is the promise of this fourth beatitude?
  - ? With what will those blessed in this beatitude be filled?
2. In his version of the beatitudes, Luke quotes Jesus as follows
  - "Blessed are ye that hunger now: for ye shall be filled" (6.<sup>21</sup>).
  - ? What is the promise of this fourth beatitude?
  - ? With what will those blessed in this beatitude be filled?
  - ? What do you think and feel when you consider the difference between the two accounts?
3. In our previous reading on the beatitudes, we noted that while all of the promises can be aspired to, we might not aspire to all of the conditions.
  - ? Is the condition of this fifth beatitude—hunger—one to which you or most people aspire to possess?
  - ? Does your answer to the previous question depend on which version, Matthew's or Luke's you are reading? Why do you answer as you do?

Hunger is uncomfortable and undesirable. Longing for more food is indicative of the fact that one does not currently have all that they need/ want. It can cause suffering. If one is hungry and thirsty for "righteousness," then they do not currently have the "righteousness" that they need/ want.

- ? If real physical hunger is uncomfortable, an undesirable state, and a source of suffering, how is hungering for "righteousness" not an uncomfortable and undesirable state in which there is a sense of suffering?
  - ? If we consider Luke's version, do you have any interest in being hungry now so that you can be well fed at some point in the future? If not, how do you feel about Jesus' offer of happiness to the hungry?
  - ? What is the difference between Jesus blessing those who hunger for righteousness as apposed to his blessing those who have righteousness?
4. We have also questioned whether beatitudes should be thought of as "commandments"—conditions

that must exist or be acquired if the promise is to realized— or “invitations”—conditions that exist naturally, without effort yet still allow for the acquisition of the promise.

- ? Does this beatitude have the feel of commandment or promise?
- ? What is the commandment if it feels like commandment to you?
- ? What is the invitation if it feels like an invitation to you?
- ? How do you feel about Jesus pronouncing happy those who currently live in the uncomfortable and undesirable state of lacking “righteousness”—they are “hungry” after all?

5. Consider the following passage.

“Behold, verily I say unto you, for this cause I have sent you... you might be honored in laying the foundation, and in bearing record of the land upon which the Zion of God shall stand; and also that a feast of fat things might be prepared for the poor; yea, a feast of fat things, of wine on the lees well refined... yea, a supper of the house of the Lord, well prepared, unto which all nations shall be invited. First, the rich and the learned, the wise and the noble; and after that cometh the day of my power; then shall the poor, the lame, and the blind, and the deaf, come in unto the marriage of the Lamb, and partake of the supper of the Lord, prepared for the great day to come” (DC 58.<sup>6-11</sup>).

- ? How does this relate to Jesus’ fifth beatitude as found in Matthew? As found in Luke?
- ? What do you think and feel when you consider God’s desire, and the Church’s purpose in recompensing the “hungry” for all their suffering?

## Questionary 6— sermon on the mount: Matthew 5.<sup>1-12</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>And seeing the multitudes, he went up into a mountain: and when he was set, his disciples came unto him: <sup>2</sup>And he opened his mouth, and taught them, saying,

<sup>3</sup>Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

<sup>4</sup>Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted.

<sup>5</sup>Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth.

<sup>6</sup>Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.

**<sup>7</sup>Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy.**

<sup>8</sup>Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God.

<sup>9</sup>Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God.

<sup>10</sup>Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

<sup>11</sup>Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake.

<sup>12</sup>Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.

This is the sixth of several questionaries in which we explore the 12 verses of the Sermon on the Mount that constitute Jesus' nine famous "beatitudes."

1. As we have noted, each beatitude can be divided into two halves. In the first half, we find a trait or condition. In the second half, we find a promise. We refer to these as condition/promise respectively.
  - ? What is the promise of this fifth beatitude?
2. In our previous reading on the beatitudes, we noted that while all the promises can be aspired to, we might not aspire to all of the conditions.
  - ? Is the condition of this fifth beatitude—mercy—one to which you or most people aspire to possess?
  - ? What does it mean to you to be "merciful"?

The Greek word is often translated, "pity," or "sympathy."

  - ? Does this alter your understanding of mercy in any way?
3. We have also questioned whether beatitudes should be thought of as "commandments"—conditions that must exist or be acquired if the promise is to be realized— or "invitations"—conditions that exist naturally, without effort yet still allow for the acquisition of the promise.
  - ? Does this beatitude have the feel of commandment or promise?
  - ? What is the commandment if it feels like commandment to you?
  - ? What is the invitation if it feels like an invitation to you?
4. Luke does not include this among his four beatitudes. However, Luke does record Jesus as saying, "Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful" (6.<sup>36</sup>). In Luke, this saying stands in the place of Matthew's, "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your father which is in heaven is perfect" (5.<sup>48</sup>).
  - ? What is the relationship between being "merciful" and "complete"?
  - ? How is mercy "complete," "all encompassing," and "inclusive."
  - ? How is mercy exemplified in your life
  - ? Should we really understand the unmerciful to be outside the bounds of mercy as this beatitude seems to imply? Why do you answer as you do?
  - ? Is it possible that some who deny mercy to others do it out of more than heartlessness but out of "principle," believing, perhaps, that "mercy robs justice? Why do you answer as you do?
  - ? If the denial of mercy is based on principle, might it be that those same people would not accept mercy even when offered? Why do you answer as you do?

## Questionary 7— sermon on the mount: Matthew 5.<sup>1-12</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>And seeing the multitudes, he went up into a mountain: and when he was set, his disciples came unto him: <sup>2</sup>And he opened his mouth, and taught them, saying,

<sup>3</sup>Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

<sup>4</sup>Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted.

<sup>5</sup>Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth.

<sup>6</sup>Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.

<sup>7</sup>Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy.

<sup>8</sup>**Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God.**

<sup>9</sup>Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God.

<sup>10</sup>Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

<sup>11</sup>Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake.

<sup>12</sup>Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.

This is the seventh of several questionaries in which we explore the 12 verses of the Sermon on the Mount that constitute Jesus' nine famous "beatitudes."

1. As we have noted, each beatitude can be divided into two halves. In the first half, we find a trait or condition. In the second half, we find a promise. We refer to these as condition/promise respectively.

? What is the promise of this sixth beatitude?

? What do you anticipate when you consider seeing God?

? Is this something reserved for the next life or have application in mortality? Why do you answer as you do?

? How do the following passages relate to this promise?

"Now this Moses plainly taught to the children of Israel in the wilderness, and sought diligently to sanctify his people that they might behold the face of God; but they hardened their hearts and could not endure his presence..." (DC 84.<sup>23-24</sup>).

"Verily, thus saith the Lord: It shall come to pass that every soul who forsaketh his sins and cometh unto me, and calleth on my name, and obeyeth my voice, and keepeth my commandments, shall see my face and know that I am..." (DC 93.<sup>1</sup>).

"Therefore, sanctify yourselves that your minds become single to God, and the days will come that you shall see him; for he will unveil his face unto you, and it shall be in his own time, and in his own way, and according to his own will" (DC 88.<sup>68</sup>).

2. In our previous reading on the beatitudes, we noted that while all the promises can be aspired to, we might not aspire to all of the conditions.

? Is the condition of this sixth beatitude—purity of heart—one to which you or most people aspire to possess?

? What does it mean to you to be "pure in heart"?

? What, if any, is the significance of Jesus speaking of being "pure in heart," as opposed to simple "pure"? Why do you answer as you do?

3. Purity often has the idea of cleanliness. It can also have the idea of being unalloyed, as in a metal—silver, say—without other elements mixed in.

? How do these two ideas influence your thoughts about purity?

Scripture often speaks of having an "eye single to the glory of God."



? How does this relate to purity?

4. Later in the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus says,

“Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: for where your treasure is, there will your heart be also. The light of the body is the eye: if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light” (Matthew 6.<sup>19-22</sup>).

? How does this relate to Jesus’ beatitude about purity?

? How does materialism make one impure, divided, and diluted?

5. We have also questioned whether beatitudes should be thought of as “commandments”—conditions that must exist or be acquired if the promise is to realized— or “invitations”—conditions that exist naturally, without effort yet still allow for the acquisition of the promise.

? Does this beatitude have the feel of commandment or promise?

? What is the commandment if it feels like commandment to you?

? What is the invitation if it feels like an invitation to you?

## Questionary 8— sermon on the mount: Matthew 5.<sup>1-12</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>And seeing the multitudes, he went up into a mountain: and when he was set, his disciples came unto him: <sup>2</sup>And he opened his mouth, and taught them, saying,

<sup>3</sup>Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

<sup>4</sup>Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted.

<sup>5</sup>Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth.

<sup>6</sup>Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.

<sup>7</sup>Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy.

<sup>8</sup>Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God.

**<sup>9</sup>Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God.**

<sup>10</sup>Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

<sup>11</sup>Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake.

<sup>12</sup>Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.

This is the eighth of several questionaries in which we explore the 12 verses of the Sermon on the Mount that constitute Jesus' nine famous "beatitudes."

1. As we have noted, each beatitude can be divided into two halves. In the first half, we find a trait or condition. In the second half, we find a promise. We refer to these as condition/promise respectively.

? What is the promise of this seventh beatitude?

? What does it mean to you when you read of being the "children of God"?

We often speak of everyone as being the "children of God." This verse, however, speaks of the "children of God" in a much more limited way. Paul too has a more limited view, teaching that individuals are "adopted" as God's children "by Jesus Christ" (See Ephesians 1.5).

? How do you explain the difference between the "universal" view that proclaims everyone to be a child of God regardless of their choices, and Jesus' more "limited" view that sees the child of God as an individual who makes conscious decisions?

? Is one view about who is a child of God more meaningful to you than the other? If so, which and why do you answer as you do?

? Is one or the other view about who is a child of God more reflective about the character we develop and preparedness for an enduring and happy existence? Why do you answer as you do?

? Conduct a study of scripture in which being children of God is mentioned. Which ones possess the "universal" view and which ones possess the "limited" view. What are your conclusions about this idea of being children of God after this study?

2. In our previous reading on the beatitudes, we noted that while all the promises can be aspired to, we might not aspire to all of the conditions.

? Is the condition of this seventh beatitude—being a peacemaker—one to which you or most people aspire to possess? Why do you answer as you do?

? What does it mean to you to be a peacekeeper?

? Did Jesus always keep the peace? Moses? Nephi? Alma? Moroni? Peter? Joshua? Jeremiah? Why do you answer as you do?

? If some don't feel peaceful after one's words or actions, does that condemn the speaker or actor as one who is not a peacekeeper? Why do you answer as you do?

? If some are offended or angered by another's speaking the truth, does that mean that the one speaking the truth is not a peacekeeper? Why do you answer as you do?

? Has considering these past two questions changed the way you think of being a peacekeeper? If

so how?

The Greek word seems to refer to individuals who act as mediator between individuals, groups, or nations that are at enmity with one another.

? How have you acted, do you act, and can you act as peacekeeper in this sense?

Scripture sometimes speaks of an enmity that exists between ourselves and God—the enmity being ours toward God, not God’s toward us. It also speaks of Jesus as bringing peace between us and God.

? How does Jesus bring us to peace with God, or, how does Jesus help us feel better about God than we might without him?

3. We have also questioned whether beatitudes should be thought of as “commandments”—conditions that must exist or be acquired if the promise is to realized— or “invitations”—conditions that exist naturally, without effort yet still allow for the acquisition of the promise.

? Does this beatitude have the feel of commandment or promise?

? What is the commandment if it feels like commandment to you?

? What is the invitation if it feels like an invitation to you?

? How did Jesus become a peacekeeper—by commandment, by invitation, or because of his innate character?

## Questionary 9— sermon on the mount: Matthew 5.<sup>1-12</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>And seeing the multitudes, he went up into a mountain: and when he was set, his disciples came unto him: <sup>2</sup>And he opened his mouth, and taught them, saying,

<sup>3</sup>Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

<sup>4</sup>Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted.

<sup>5</sup>Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth.

<sup>6</sup>Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.

<sup>7</sup>Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy.

<sup>8</sup>Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God.

<sup>9</sup>Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God.

<sup>10</sup>**Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.**

<sup>11</sup>**Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. <sup>12</sup>Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.**

This is the ninth and final of several questionaries in which we explore the 12 verses of the Sermon on the Mount that constitute Jesus' nine famous "beatitudes." We are going to study the 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> beatitudes together.

1. As we have noted, each beatitude can be divided into two halves. In the first half, we find a trait or condition. In the second half, we find a promise. We refer to these as condition/promise respectively.  
? What is the promise of the 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> beatitudes?

The promise of the first beatitude was "the kingdom of heaven." The promise of the 8<sup>th</sup> beatitude is the same.

? What does this suggest about the relationship between persecuted—the condition of the 8<sup>th</sup> beatitude—and being "poor in spirit"—the condition of the first beatitude (It might be helpful to review the questionnaire for the 1<sup>st</sup> beatitude)?

? What do you think and feel when you contemplate the admonition to "rejoice, and be exceeding glad when being reviled, persecuted, and falsely accused?"

2. In our previous readings on the beatitudes, we noted that while all the promises can be aspired to, we might not aspire to all of the conditions.  
? Is the condition of this 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> beatitude—being persecuted, reviled, lied about—one to which you or most people aspire to possess? Why do you answer as you do?

Consider the following passages.

"And they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name" (Acts 5.<sup>41</sup>).

"For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake..." (Phil. 1.<sup>29</sup>).

"And our hope of you is steadfast, knowing, that as ye are partakers of the sufferings, so shall ye be also of the consolation" (2 Cor. 1.<sup>7</sup>).

"For this is thankworthy, if a man for conscience toward God endure grief, suffering wrongfully... For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps..." (1 Pet. 2.<sup>19, 21</sup>).

"Forasmuch then as Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves likewise with the

same mind: for he that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin..." (1 Pet. 4.<sup>1</sup>).

"And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together. For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us" (Rom. 8.<sup>17-18</sup>).

- ? How do these passages relate to the 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> beatitudes?
  - ? Individuals being introduced to Jesus and his gospel are rarely informed of this aspect of discipleship. Should they be? Why do you answer as you do?
  - ? What do you think and feel when you consider how often this principle is ignored while suggestions are made over, and over, and over, and over again that discipleship brings contentment, success, and a good name.
  - ? How do you feel about being called to persecution and suffering?
3. We have also questioned whether beatitudes should be thought of as "commandments"—conditions that must exist or be acquired if the promise is to be realized— or "invitations"—conditions that exist naturally, without effort yet still allow for the acquisition of the promise.
- ? Do these two beatitudes have the feel of commandment or promise?
  - ? What is the commandment if it feels like commandment to you?
  - ? What is the invitation if it feels like an invitation to you?
4. In the 8<sup>th</sup> beatitude, Jesus speaks of being persecuted "for righteousness' sake." In the 9<sup>th</sup> beatitude, Jesus speaks of being persecuted "for my sake."
- ? What do these two phrases—"for righteousness' sake" and "for my sake" mean to you?
- Another way to translate these is "on account of (because of) goodness" and "on account of (because of) me."
- ? Does this change the way you think of these two beatitudes? If so, how?

## Questionary 10— sermon on the mount: Matthew 5.<sup>13-16</sup>

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<sup>13</sup>Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted? It is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men. <sup>14</sup>Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid. <sup>15</sup>Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house. <sup>16</sup>Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.

We opened our series of questionaries focused on Jesus' Sermon on the Mount with 9 questionaries on the Beatitudes. This questionary is our 10<sup>th</sup> focused on the Sermon on the mount.

1. In this reading, Jesus begins with a statement, "Ye are the salt of the earth."
  - ? What does this mean to you?
  - ? How does the impact that salt has on food apply to the impact that disciples have on those around them?
  - ? Keeping in mind the audience to whom Jesus was speaking, especially their spiritual immaturity at the time, what do you think Jesus' expectations are for them and the impact they can have on those around them?

2. Jesus follows up this first statement with a question, "But if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted?"
  - ? What does this mean to you?

Consider the fact that salt is extremely stable and does not naturally lose its flavor. The only reason salt might lose its taste is because other elements/tastes overwhelm and dilute the present salt.

- ? Does this change the way you understand Jesus' warning?
- ? What sorts of things come into our lives that cause us to lose our ability to impact the world around us?
- ? How does the following passage relate to this loss of savor?

"He also that received seed among the thorns is he that heareth the word; and the care of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the word, and he becometh unfruitful" (Mt. 13.<sup>22</sup>).

- ? How does materialism dilute our power and ability to be an influence for good?

3. Jesus suggests that we be like "a city that is set on an hill."
  - ? What does this suggest to you?
  - ? What does it suggest that we are to be like a city on a hill rather than, say, a city on a plain or in a valley?
4. Jesus says, "Ye are the light of the world.... Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven."
  - ? How do you feel about being called to be so prominently visible?
  - ? What do you do to fulfill this call?

While with the Nephites after his resurrection, Jesus said,

"Therefore, hold up your light that it may shine unto the world. Behold I am the light which ye shall hold up—that which ye have seen me do" (3 Ne. 18.<sup>24</sup>).

- ? Does this change the way you feel about being so prominent in the eyes of the world? Why do you answer as you do?

## Questionary 11— sermon on the mount: Matthew 5.<sup>17-20</sup>

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<sup>17</sup>Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil.  
<sup>18</sup>For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled. <sup>19</sup>Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven. <sup>20</sup>For I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven.

We opened our series of questionaries focused on Jesus' Sermon on the Mount with 9 questionaries on the Beatitudes. This questionary is our 11<sup>th</sup> focused on the Sermon on the mount.

1. Jesus says that he intends to fulfill the law.
  - ? What do you think he meant by this?
  - ? How might his follow up help clarify his meaning?

“Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.”
  - ? How did Jesus “fulfill” or do and teach others to do the law and prophetic counsel?
2. Jesus also warns, “Except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven.”
  - ? What was the nature and extent of scribal or pharisaical observance of the law and prophetic counsel?
  - ? How did Jesus' righteousness exceed scribal or pharisaical observance of the law, which was exceedingly rigid, and prophetic counsel?
  - ? What do the prophets say about the “fulfillment” or the consequences of doing or not doing, of teaching or not teaching the law and the prophetic counsel?

## Questionary 12— sermon on the mount: Matthew 5.<sup>21-26</sup>

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<sup>21</sup>Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, ‘Thou shalt not kill; and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment.’ <sup>22</sup>But I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment: and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council: but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire.

<sup>23</sup>Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee; <sup>24</sup>Leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift. <sup>25</sup>Agree with thine adversary quickly, whiles thou art in the way with him; lest at any time the adversary deliver thee to the judge, and the judge deliver thee to the officer, and thou be cast into prison. <sup>26</sup>Verily I say unto thee, Thou shalt by no means come out thence, till thou hast paid the uttermost farthing.

We opened our series of questionaries focused on Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount with 9 questionaries on the Beatitudes. This questionary is our 12<sup>th</sup> focused on the Sermon on the mount.

1. In verses 17-20, Jesus suggested that he had come to “fulfill” the law and that fulfilling the law entailed something more than what the Pharisees taught and did. With today’s reading, Jesus begins to address various aspects of “the law” and how they are truly “fulfilled (5.<sup>21-26</sup>, 5.<sup>27-30</sup>, 5.<sup>31-32</sup>, 5.<sup>33-37</sup>, 5.<sup>38-42</sup>, 5.<sup>43-48</sup>, 6.<sup>1-4</sup>, 6.<sup>5-15</sup>, 6.<sup>16-18</sup>). Jesus introduces the first six examples of fulfilling the law with “Ye have heard that it hath been said...” or some variation on it.
  - ? How does Jesus’ view of fulfilling the command to not kill differ from and go beyond that normally thought of?
  - ? What does Jesus see as a precursor to murder?
  - ? What do you think and feel about Jesus’ seeing the law as directing not only outward actions but inner feelings as well?
2. Jesus speaks of bringing “thy gift to the altar.”
  - ? What does this mean?
  - ? What was the intent in bringing a “gift to the altar”?
  - ? How did bringing a gift to the altar bring reconciliation with God?
  - ? What role does Jesus suggest that our reconciliation with our “brother” plays in our being reconciled with God?
  - ? What is the modern-day equivalent of bringing “thy gift to the altar”? How can this gift be tainted by tainted relationships?
3. Jesus speaks of “thy brother” who “hath ought [something] against you.”
  - ? Of whom is he speaking when he refers to “thy brother”?
4. Jesus does not say to remember that you have something against another, but to remember that another has something against you.
  - ? What is the significance of this observation?
  - ? How do you feel about Jesus assigning you responsibility, not only in how you feel about others but about how others feel about you?
5. Jesus tells his followers that they are to abandon their gift at the altar to first “be reconciled to thy brother.”
  - ? What does this tell you about God’s priority between public acts of worship and every day personal relationships with others?
  - ? Why does he seem to give priority to our personal relationships with others?
  - ? How do our personal relationships with others impact our relationship with God?
  - ? What happens emotionally and psychologically to you and the other when you make it clear that you bear no animosity toward another who bears animosity against you?



- ? What happens emotionally and psychologically to you and the other if they continue to bear you animosity even though you have reached out for reconciliation?
6. Jesus warns that if we do not take him up on his invitation to seek reconciliation with others, we will suffer the full consequences of our stubbornness.
- ? What does this say about Jesus' understanding of human beings who feel aggrieved by and hostile toward others?
  - ? How do you feel about Jesus' contention that aggrieved and hostile individuals are likely to carry out their feelings to the absolute maximum?

## Questionary 13— sermon on the mount: Matthew 5.<sup>27-30</sup>

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<sup>27</sup>Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, ‘Thou shalt not commit adultery:’ <sup>28</sup>But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart. <sup>29</sup>And if thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell. <sup>30</sup>And if thy right hand offend thee, cut it off, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell.

We opened our series of questionaries focused on Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount with 9 questionaries on the Beatitudes. This questionary is our 13<sup>th</sup> focused on the Sermon on the mount.

1. In verses 17-20, Jesus suggested that he had come to “fulfill” the law and that fulfilling the law entailed something more than what the Pharisees taught and did. Jesus then addresses various aspects of “the law” and how they are truly “fulfilled (5.<sup>21-26</sup>, 5.<sup>27-30</sup>, 5.<sup>31-32</sup>, 5.<sup>33-37</sup>, 5.<sup>38-42</sup>, 5.<sup>43-48</sup>, 6.<sup>1-4</sup>, 6.<sup>5-15</sup>, 6.<sup>16-18</sup>). Jesus introduces the first six examples of fulfilling the law with “Ye have heard that it hath been said...” or some variation on it.
  - ? How does Jesus’ admonition concerning lust and adultery go beyond the Law and Pharisaical expectations?
  - ? What is the meaning and nature of lust?
2. Just as he did in verses 21-26 with his discussion of murder and anger, Jesus asks his disciples to be introspective and consider not only their actions but the thoughts and feelings that lead to their actions.
  - ? How inclined are you do conduct this type of introspection?
  - ? What have you discovered about yourself as you have engaged in introspection?
  - ? What are the benefits of introspection? What are the dangers of introspection?
3. Jesus speaks of poking out an eye and cutting off a hand rather than allowing them to lead to sin.
  - ? What do you understand Jesus to be saying by this extreme language?
  - ? What do you think and feel at the suggestion that this extreme response is indicative of the sort of undeviating commitment against sin that Jesus expects his disciples to possess?
  - ? We deem our eyes and hands to be highly valuable and essential. In what way does lust of all kinds, including of men’s lust for women and women’s lust for men, become a driving force in our actions?
  - ? How does lust of all kinds become essential to our character?

## Questionary 14— sermon on the mount: Matthew 5.<sup>31-32</sup>

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<sup>31</sup>It hath been said, ‘Whosoever shall put away his wife, let him give her a writing of divorcement:’

<sup>32</sup>But I say unto you, That whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, causeth her to commit adultery: and whosoever shall marry her that is divorced committeth adultery.

We opened our series of questionaries focused on Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount with 9 questionaries on the Beatitudes. This questionary is our 14<sup>th</sup> focused on the Sermon on the mount.

1. In verses 17-20, Jesus suggested that he had come to “fulfill” the law and that fulfilling the law entailed something more than what the Pharisees taught and did. Jesus then addresses various aspects of “the law” and how they are truly “fulfilled (5.<sup>21-26</sup>, 5.<sup>27-30</sup>, 5.<sup>31-32</sup>, 5.<sup>33-37</sup>, 5.<sup>38-42</sup>, 5.<sup>43-48</sup>, 6.<sup>1-4</sup>, 6.<sup>5-15</sup>, 6.<sup>16-18</sup>). Jesus introduces the first six examples of fulfilling the law with “Ye have heard that it hath been said...” or some variation on it.
  - ? How does Jesus’ admonition concerning divorce and adultery go beyond the Law and Pharisaical expectations?
  - ? How does Jesus’ admonition concerning divorce and adultery go beyond current Church practices and policies?
  - ? How do you feel about Jesus rather strict perspective concerning divorce and the justification for divorce?
  - ? Though Jesus can, at times, seem somewhat progressive in his treatment of women, he seems not to be able to perceive that a woman might file for divorce due to a husband’s infidelity, let along other issues, such as abuse. What is your response to this observation?

## Questionary 15— sermon on the mount: Matthew 5.<sup>33-37</sup>

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<sup>33</sup>Again, ye have heard that it hath been said by them of old time, ‘Thou shalt not forswear thyself, but shalt perform unto the Lord thine oaths:’ <sup>34</sup>But I say unto you, Swear not at all; neither by heaven; for it is God's throne: <sup>35</sup>Nor by the earth; for it is his footstool: neither by Jerusalem; for it is the city of the great King. <sup>36</sup>Neither shalt thou swear by thy head, because thou canst not make one hair white or black. <sup>37</sup>But let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay: for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil.

We opened our series of questionaries focused on Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount with 9 questionaries on the Beatitudes. This questionary is our 15<sup>th</sup> focused on the Sermon on the mount.

In verses 17-20, Jesus suggested that he had come to “fulfill” the law and that fulfilling the law entailed something more than what the Pharisees taught and did. Jesus then addresses various aspects of “the law” and how they are truly “fulfilled (5.<sup>21-26</sup>, 5.<sup>27-30</sup>, 5.<sup>31-32</sup>, 5.<sup>33-37</sup>, 5.<sup>38-42</sup>, 5.<sup>43-48</sup>, 6.<sup>1-4</sup>, 6.<sup>5-15</sup>, 6.<sup>16-18</sup>). Jesus introduces the first six examples of fulfilling the law with “Ye have heard that it hath been said...” or some variation on it.

1. Jesus quotes the law as stipulating, “Thou shalt not forswear thyself, but shalt perform unto the Lord thine oaths.”
    - ? What does it mean to “forswear” oneself?
    - ? How do you feel about people who swear or promise to do something and then do not do it?
    - ? What does such behavior do to interpersonal relationships?
  2. Jesus admonishes that we go beyond the type of honesty in which we keep our promises. He stipulates, “Swear not at all.”
    - ? How does this admonition go beyond the Law and Pharisaical expectations?
  3. Jesus goes on to admonish that we do not swear “either by heaven; for it is God's throne: <sup>n</sup>or by the earth; for it is his footstool: neither by Jerusalem; for it is the city of the great King. Neither shalt thou swear by thy head,”
    - ? What is the nature of promises made in the name of “heaven,” “earth,” “Jerusalem,” or one’s “head,” or “life”?
    - ? How do such oaths or promises mean to show an extra sense of seriousness on the part of the one swearing or promising?
    - ? Why would promises made so seriously also be discouraged?
    - ? What does it say about an individual that they feel they must or others expect that they will swear, utter oaths, promises, etc., in order to be believed and trusted?
    - ? What does it say about an individual that they do not need to and are not expected by others to make oaths, promises, etc. before they will be trusted?
  4. Rather than swearing oaths and offering great verbal proofs of one’s seriousness to do what they promise, Jesus admonishes us to offer a simple, “yes,” or “no.”
    - ? What does this signify to you?
    - ? What does it mean for a man to be “a man of his word,” or a woman to be “a woman of her word”?
  5. Jesus says that the necessity for oaths and promises to earn trust (rather than simple statements of intents—“yes,” or “no”) “cometh of evil.”
    - ? What does he mean by this?
    - ? What do you think and feel if we translate something like, whatsoever is more than these “is indicative of poor moral character”?
- ? What type of person are you?

- ? Are you the type of person that can't stay motivated to keep a promise unless you seriously commit yourself through oaths and promises?
- ? Are you the type of person upon whom others feel they can depend only if you have seriously committed yourself through oaths and promises?
- ? Are you the type of person others feel they can depend upon to do as you say simply because you say you will do it?
- ? Why do you answer these questions as you do?
- ? Why, do you think, is being a person of your word such an important part of being a disciple of Christ?

## Questionary 16— sermon on the mount: Matthew 5.<sup>38-42</sup>

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<sup>38</sup>Ye have heard that it hath been said, ‘An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth.’ <sup>39</sup>But I say unto you, That ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also. <sup>40</sup>And if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloke also. <sup>41</sup>And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain. <sup>42</sup>Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away.

We opened our series of questionaries focused on Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount with 9 questionaries on the Beatitudes. This questionary is our 16<sup>th</sup> focused on the Sermon on the mount.

1. In verses 17-20, Jesus suggested that he had come to “fulfill” the law and that fulfilling the law entailed something more than what the Pharisees taught and did. Jesus then addresses various aspects of “the law” and how they are truly “fulfilled (5.<sup>21-26</sup>, 5.<sup>27-30</sup>, 5.<sup>31-32</sup>, 5.<sup>33-37</sup>, 5.<sup>38-42</sup>, 5.<sup>43-48</sup>, 6.<sup>1-4</sup>, 6.<sup>5-15</sup>, 6.<sup>16-18</sup>). Jesus introduces the first six examples of fulfilling the law with “Ye have heard that it hath been said...” or some variation on it.
  - ? How does Jesus’ admonition concerning the restoration for loss and the righting of wrongs go beyond the Law and Pharisaical expectations?
2. Jesus requires that his disciples “resist not evil.”
  - ? What does this mean to you?
  - ? What if we read, “resist not wrongs committed against you”? Does this change the meaning of the requirement and your response to it? Why do you answer as you do?
3. Jesus refers to the legal principle, “An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth” found in the Law of Moses.
  - ? What does this law mean in practice?

This law simply requires that commensurate restitution—both private and societal— be made for any personal loss or wrongs. If one suffers loss of, say \$100, the remedy is the restoration of the \$100. This is, in theory, the same as our legal system today.

- ? How does this impact how you feel about what at first glance appears to be a rather austere Old Testament law?
  - ? How do you feel about our present laws of legal restitution for loss and wrongs being essentially the same as those found under the Law of Moses?
  - ? How do you feel when you see laws of restitution—either private or societal—exaggerated so that a loss or wrong requires restitution many times beyond the loss or wrong?
  - ? How do you apply this teaching to your own life?
4. Jesus expects those who claim to be his disciples to have a very different response to personal loss or wrong committed against them.
    - ? What is the nature of each of the losses/wrongs that Jesus uses as examples?
    - ? If someone strikes you “on thy *right* cheek, what is their intention—physical harm or emotional humiliation? Why do you answer as you do?

Keep in mind that most people are right-handed. The right hand in the form of a fist used to do physical harm, lands on the left, not right cheek of the victim. Thus, a blow with the right hand to the right side of another’s face requires a back-handed slap rather than fist punch. A back-handed slap is meant to emotionally humiliate or put someone in their place rather than do physical harm.

- ? How do these observations impact your response to Jesus’ requirement of disciples?
- ? What is the nature of the wrong committed by someone who “compelled” another “to go a mile” with him?

- ? Roman soldiers could force Jews to travel with them and carry their luggage free of charge for limited distances. What is the nature of this wrong against the victim?
- ? What does this suggest about the response Jesus wishes to see in a disciple who is the target of the abuse of power or is taken advantage of financially?
- ? How do each of the responses to a loss or wrong serve to reveal the wrong to the one causing the harm?
- ? What can you do to seek to reform those who wrong others rather than simply perpetuate a system of blind back and forth, tit for tat of wrongs and complaints that often only serves to harden everyone's positions and does not serve to reveal the evil found inside individuals or reform their character?

## Questionary 17— sermon on the mount: Matthew 5.<sup>43-48</sup>

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<sup>43</sup>Ye have heard that it hath been said, ‘Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy.’ <sup>44</sup>But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; <sup>45</sup>That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust. <sup>46</sup>For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same? <sup>47</sup>And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others? do not even the publicans so? <sup>48</sup>Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.

We opened our series of questionaries focused on Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount with 9 questionaries on the Beatitudes. This questionnaire is our 16<sup>th</sup> focused on the Sermon on the mount.

1. In verses 17-20, Jesus suggested that he had come to “fulfill” the law and that fulfilling the law entailed something more than what the Pharisees taught and did. Jesus then addresses various aspects of “the law” and how they are truly “fulfilled (5.<sup>21-26</sup>, 5.<sup>27-30</sup>, 5.<sup>31-32</sup>, 5.<sup>33-37</sup>, 5.<sup>38-42</sup>, 5.<sup>43-48</sup>, 6.<sup>1-4</sup>, 6.<sup>5-15</sup>, 6.<sup>16-18</sup>). Jesus introduces the first six examples of fulfilling the law with “Ye have heard that it hath been said...” or some variation on it. This reading represents Jesus’ last contrast between his expectations for his disciples and those of “the Law” or traditional religion.
  - ? How does Jesus’ admonition concerning one’s response to one’s enemies and love for all go beyond the Law and Pharisaical expectations?
  - ? How does this reading relate to the previous reading (verses 38-42)?
2. In encouraging his disciples to love, bless, do good, and pray for one’s enemies, cursers, haters, and persecutors, Jesus indicates that such an attitude allows one to be thought of as “children of your Father which is in heaven.”
  - ? What does this tell you about the character of God and His attitude and response to those who are in some way at odds with God and His desires?
  - ? What do you think and feel when you contemplate God “praying for,” “blessing,” doing good to,” and “loving” those who oppose him and act contrary to God’s wishes and interests?
3. AS evidence of God’s gracious attitude toward those who act contrary to His wishes and interests, Jesus mentions that God “maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust.”
  - ? How do you feel about this statement of God’s generosity to those who we might not consider “worthy” of it?
  - ? What are the implications of Jesus’ observation for God’s relation with “the evil” as well as our relation with “the evil”?
4. In verses 46 and 47, Jesus asks a series of questions:
  - “For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye?”
  - “Do not even the publicans the same?”
  - “And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others?”
  - “Do not even the publicans so?”
  - ? How would you answer these questions?
  - ? Jesus was unimpressed by and dismissive of those who thought well of and treated well others toward whom basic human decency would dictate loving and respectful behavior. How do you feel about this—Does Hitler get credit for being kind and loving toward those who were kind, loving, and obedient to him?
  - ? How is Jesus likely to feel about our being loving and kind toward those that common thought and practice simply expect that we would be kind—family, friends, “fans,” etc.?



5. Jesus demonstrates God's generosity toward those with whom one might not expect him to be generous. Jesus expects his disciples to act similarly and treat others as God does. He summarizes this expectation with "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect."
  - ? What do you understand Jesus to be asking of us?
  - ? Luke reports Jesus' expectation differently: "Be ye therefore merciful, even as your Father also is merciful" (Lk. 6.<sup>36</sup>).
  - ? In your mind, how does this alter what Jesus is asking of us?
  - ? How has Jesus shown God to be "merciful" in this reading?
  - ? "Perfect" can mean "complete" or "finished." How would you feel about the "perfection" Jesus has in mind being one in which we are as complete or encompassing or embracing in loving and blessing others as Jesus says God is?

Some handle Jesus's admonition to be "perfect" to apply not only to all that he has taught so far in the Sermon on the Mount, but to everything God ever has, does, or might ask of us. This is highly unlikely—and Luke's reading suggests it is wrongheaded. This admonition should be applied to this final admonition of verses 43-47 about treating others with love, respect, and acceptance.

  - ? How do you respond to this more restricted understanding of what Jesus means when he asks us to be "perfect"—or merciful, in Luke?
  
6. With these verses, Jesus ends his challenging contrast between what he expects ethically of his disciples and what religious and legal traditions have traditionally expected ethically of their members.
  - ? How well are those who claim to be Jesus' disciples doing at living up to Jesus' expectations?
  - ? It is OK if you are uncomfortable "judging" others. You can still consider how well those who claim discipleship to Jesus are doing by evaluating not individuals, but groups. How well are the nations that claim to be Christian doing at living up to Jesus' ethical expectations?
  - ? Why do you answer as you do?

## Questionary 18— sermon on the mount: Matthew 6.<sup>1-4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Take heed that ye do not your alms before men, to be seen of them: otherwise ye have no reward of your Father which is in heaven. <sup>2</sup>Therefore when thou doest thine alms, do not sound a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward. <sup>3</sup>But when thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth: <sup>4</sup>that thine alms may be in secret: and thy Father which seeth in secret himself shall reward thee openly.

We opened our series of questionaries focused on Jesus' Sermon on the Mount with 9 questionaries on the Beatitudes. This questionary is our 18<sup>th</sup> focused on the Sermon on the mount.

In verses 17-20, Jesus suggested that he had come to “fulfill” the law and that fulfilling the law entailed something more than what the Pharisees taught and did. Jesus then addresses various aspects of “the law” and how they are truly “fulfilled (5.<sup>21-26</sup>, 5.<sup>27-30</sup>, 5.<sup>31-32</sup>, 5.<sup>33-37</sup>, 5.<sup>38-42</sup>, 5.<sup>43-48</sup>, 6.<sup>1-4</sup>, 6.<sup>5-15</sup>, 6.<sup>16-18</sup>). Jesus introduces the first six examples of fulfilling the law with “Ye have heard that it hath been said...” or some variation on it. That formula is not found in this reading, but the reading continues to explore how Jesus' view of fulfilling the law differs from and goes beyond that often practiced.

1. In this reading, Jesus speaks of doing “alms.”  
? What is an “alm”?

The Greek word translated as “alm” is *dikaiosynē*. This word indicates action that is “right,” “virtuous,” “correct,” “just,” and “equitable.” It is often translated as “righteousness.”

- ? Does this change your understanding of an “alm”? If so, how?
    - ? How does Jesus' view of doing what is right differ from and go beyond that often practiced?
  2. Jesus speaks of those who do what is right in a very public way so as to get attention and be honored by others.
    - ? How do you feel about those who act in such ways?
    - ? Do you find yourself acting in this way? If yes, what examples of your acting in this way come to your mind? If no, how do you avoid this common reason for doing what is right and good?
    - ? How is going what is right to be seen and honored a betrayal of the law as God intended it to be practiced?
  3. Jesus speaks of doing what is right for “reward”—a either from others or from God.
    - ? In what ways do people get “rewarded” by others when they do right?
    - ? We can easily discern that Jesus does not approve of those who do right for the reward it brings them from others. How does he feel about doing right for the reward it brings from God?
    - ? How do you feel about individuals who only do right because they see something in it for them?
    - ? Is there a higher reason for doing what is right than for reward, even divine reward? Why do you answer as you do?
    - ? Consider all that Jesus did right. Why did he do it? How would you feel about him suffering and dying for you—a good and right thing for him to do—so that he would be rewarded?
    - ? What do you think about those who do the right thing precisely because it is the right thing, and doing the right thing is simply in their character regardless of reward?
    - ? How often do you do right out of character rather than in consideration of reward? Why do you answer as you do?
- ? How does proper personal motivation fulfill the law and improper motivation can not?

## Questionary 19— sermon on the mount: Matthew 6.<sup>5-8</sup>

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<sup>5</sup>And when thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are: for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward. <sup>6</sup>But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly. <sup>7</sup>But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking. <sup>8</sup>Be not ye therefore like unto them: for your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask him.

We opened our series of questionaries focused on Jesus' Sermon on the Mount with 9 questionaries on the Beatitudes. This questionnaire is our 19<sup>th</sup> focused on the Sermon on the mount.

1. In verses 17-20, Jesus suggested that he had come to “fulfill” the law and that fulfilling the law entailed something more than what the Pharisees taught and did. Jesus then addresses various aspects of “the law” and how they are truly “fulfilled (5.<sup>21-26</sup>, 5.<sup>27-30</sup>, 5.<sup>31-32</sup>, 5.<sup>33-37</sup>, 5.<sup>38-42</sup>, 5.<sup>43-48</sup>, 6.<sup>1-4</sup>, 6.<sup>5-15</sup>, 6.<sup>16-18</sup>). Jesus introduces the first six examples of fulfilling the law with “Ye have heard that it hath been said...” or some variation on it. That formula is not found in this reading, but the reading continues to explore how Jesus' view of fulfilling the law differs from and goes beyond that often practiced.
  - ? How does Jesus' view of prayer differ from and go beyond that often practiced?
2. Jesus admonishes, “when ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking.”
  - ? What does it mean to use “vain repetitions”?

The Greek word that the KJV translates as “vain repetitions” is *battalogéō*, which means something like “to babble,” “to go on and on.” We do know from Greek and Jewish religious practice at the time, that it was common to grow loquacious in prayer. Long prayers were deemed more likely to achieve their goal.

    - ? Why would a long prayer be deemed more efficacious?

God was often deemed to be somewhat prickly and hard to please. More words might seem to increase the odds of saying just the right thing in just the right way.
    - ? How do you feel about this observation?
    - ? How inclined are you to view God as somewhat prickly and needing to be approached just right in prayer lest your prayer not achieve its end?
3. When we pray, we do most if not all of the talking. We can, indeed, come to think of prayer as a time when we talk to God.
  - ? What error is found in such thinking and behavior?
  - ? What do you think and feel when you consider that as important a part of prayer, maybe the more important part of prayer is the part when we are not talking, but just listening?
  - ? What, would you say, is the balance in prayer between us do the talking and us being silent and letting God do the talking?
  - ? How balanced are you in your prayer life?
4. In association with his admonition about long, convoluted prayers, Jesus admonishes, “Be not ye therefore like unto them: for your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask him.”
  - ? What do long, convoluted prayers have to do with the fact that God already knows “what things ye have need of, before ye ask him”?
  - ? How does the fact that “God already Knows what things ye have need of, before ye ask him”

impact your prayers?

## Questionary 20— sermon on the mount: Matthew 6.<sup>9-13</sup> (part 1)

**<sup>9</sup>After this manner therefore pray ye:**

**Our Father which art in heaven,**

**Hallowed be thy name.**

<sup>10</sup>Thy kingdom come.

Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven.

<sup>11</sup>Give us this day our daily bread.

<sup>12</sup>And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.

<sup>13</sup>And lead us not into temptation,  
but deliver us from evil:

For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen.

We opened our series of questionaries focused on Jesus' Sermon on the Mount with 9 questionaries on the Beatitudes. This questionary is our 20<sup>th</sup> focused on the Sermon on the mount and the 1<sup>st</sup> of several that explore what has come to be called, "The Lord's Prayer."

1. In verses 17-20, Jesus suggested that he had come to "fulfill" the law and that fulfilling the law entailed something more than what the Pharisees taught and did. Jesus then addresses various aspects of "the law" and how they are truly "fulfilled (5.<sup>21-26</sup>, 5.<sup>27-30</sup>, 5.<sup>31-32</sup>, 5.<sup>33-37</sup>, 5.<sup>38-42</sup>, 5.<sup>43-48</sup>, 6.<sup>1-4</sup>, 6.<sup>5-15</sup>, 6.<sup>16-18</sup>). Jesus introduces the first six examples of fulfilling the law with "Ye have heard that it hath been said..." or some variation on it. That formula is not found in this reading, but the reading continues to explore how Jesus' view of fulfilling the law differs from and goes beyond that often practiced.
  - ? How does Jesus' view of prayer differ from and go beyond that often practiced?
2. Jesus begins his instructional prayer with "Our Father which art in heaven."
  - ? How does this likely differ from the more common prayers of his day?
  - ? How is one's attitude in and about prayer effected by beginning "Our Father," rather than, say, a long list of divine titles and descriptions of his attributes?
  - ? What is it that Jesus was trying to teach his disciples with this opening?
  - ? How is this opening to a prayer more than a formula?
  - ? How does this opening remind us of God's intimate feelings for us and of the intimate relationship and communication we can enjoy with him?
  - ? How can and should this opening impact the way we approach God in prayer—our attitude and language?
3. Traditionally, Jesus is understood as offering his disciples seven suggestions concerning the sorts of requests that we that they might make in pray.
  - ? What are those seven suggested requests?
  - ? How are these seven requests reflected in your own personal prayers?
  - ? There are any number of very specific requests we can make for ourselves and others. But, after identifying a few of the specific requests you have recently made, consider if and how they fit into one of Jesus' seven?
4. After affirming God's intimate feelings for us and our desire to enjoy intimate communication with him, Jesus offers the first of what is counted as seven requests: "Hallowed be thy name."
  - ? What does it mean for God's "name" to be "hallowed"?
  - ? How does thinking of this line, not as a statement of worship or a description of the divine character, but as a request—"May your character be venerated"—change your understanding of this line?
  - ? How do express your desire in pray that God be venerated?

- ? What role do you play in helping others understand how great God is and how worthy He is of their attention, love, and service?
- ? How much of your prayer time is devoted to talking about him, sharing your feelings about him?
- ? Why might God wish us to spend time in prayer considering him and the greatness of his character and sharing with him what we think and feel about such things?

## Questionary 21— sermon on the mount: Matthew 6.<sup>9-13</sup> (part 2)

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<sup>9</sup>After this manner therefore pray ye:

Our Father which art in heaven,

Hallowed be thy name.

<sup>10</sup>**Thy kingdom come.**

**Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven.**

<sup>11</sup>Give us this day our daily bread.

<sup>12</sup>And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.

<sup>13</sup>And lead us not into temptation,  
but deliver us from evil:

For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen.

We opened our series of questionaries focused on Jesus' Sermon on the Mount with 9 questionaries on the Beatitudes. This questionary is our 21<sup>st</sup> focused on the Sermon on the mount and the 2<sup>nd</sup> in which we explore what has come to be called, "The Lord's Prayer."

1. In verses 17-20, Jesus suggested that he had come to "fulfill" the law and that fulfilling the law entailed something more than what the Pharisees taught and did. Jesus then addresses various aspects of "the law" and how they are truly "fulfilled (5.<sup>21-26</sup>, 5.<sup>27-30</sup>, 5.<sup>31-32</sup>, 5.<sup>33-37</sup>, 5.<sup>38-42</sup>, 5.<sup>43-48</sup>, 6.<sup>1-4</sup>, 6.<sup>5-15</sup>, 6.<sup>16-18</sup>). Jesus introduces the first six examples of fulfilling the law with "Ye have heard that it hath been said..." or some variation on it. That formula is not found in this reading, but the reading continues to explore how Jesus' view of fulfilling the law differs from and goes beyond that often practiced.
  - ? How does Jesus' view of prayer differ from and go beyond that often practiced?
2. As traditionally enumerated, verse 10 contains the second and third requests of the Lord's prayer.
  - ? What are you asking to happen when you pray for God's kingdom to come?
  - ? How much a part of your thoughts—both in and out of prayer—is the coming of God's "kingdom"?
  - ? What role does any expectation you may have for his kingdom to come play in your daily life?
  - ? What does it mean for God's will to be "done in earth, as it is in heaven"?
  - ? To what degree is God's will done in heaven?
  - ? To what degree is God's will done on earth? Why do you answer as you do?
  - ? How nearly do you do God's will as it is done in heaven?
  - ? What is one thing that you do or don't do in your life that you could change so as to be more consistent with the doing of God's will as it is done in heaven?
  - ? What would be the consequences in your daily life to you having these two requests as a regular part of your daily prayers?

## Questionary 22— sermon on the mount: Matthew 6.<sup>9-13</sup> (part 3)

<sup>9</sup>After this manner therefore pray ye:

Our Father which art in heaven,

Hallowed be thy name.

<sup>10</sup>Thy kingdom come.

Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven.

<sup>11</sup>**Give us this day our daily bread.**

<sup>12</sup>And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.

<sup>13</sup>And lead us not into temptation,  
but deliver us from evil:

For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen.

We opened our series of questionaries focused on Jesus' Sermon on the Mount with 9 questionaries on the Beatitudes. This questionary is our 21<sup>st</sup> focused on the Sermon on the mount and the 3<sup>rd</sup> in which we explore what has come to be called, "The Lord's Prayer."

1. In verses 17-20, Jesus suggested that he had come to "fulfill" the law and that fulfilling the law entailed something more than what the Pharisees taught and did. Jesus then addresses various aspects of "the law" and how they are truly "fulfilled (5.<sup>21-26</sup>, 5.<sup>27-30</sup>, 5.<sup>31-32</sup>, 5.<sup>33-37</sup>, 5.<sup>38-42</sup>, 5.<sup>43-48</sup>, 6.<sup>1-4</sup>, 6.<sup>5-15</sup>, 6.<sup>16-18</sup>). Jesus introduces the first six examples of fulfilling the law with "Ye have heard that it hath been said..." or some variation on it. That formula is not found in this reading, but the reading continues to explore how Jesus' view of fulfilling the law differs from and goes beyond that often practiced.
  - ? How does Jesus' view of prayer differ from and go beyond that often practiced?
2. The repeated, "Thy," found in the first three requests—it is not found in the last four—seems to reflect a focus on God, Himself.
  - ? What do you think and feel when you contemplate this observation?
  - ? What does a prayer that is highly focused on God, His works, His will, and His character look like?
  - ? How focused on God, , His works, His will, and His character, etc. are your prayers?
  - ? Could your prayers use adjustment in this regard? Why do you answer as you do?
3. In the fourth, fifth, sixth, and seventh requests, Jesus repeatedly uses the pronouns "us" and "our" rather than "me," or "my."
  - ? What is the significance of this observation?
  - ? How do the pronouns Jesus uses serve to make prayer less self-centered?
  - ? How self-centered do your prayers tend to be?
  - ? How can you use prayer so that it benefits others as much as yourself?
4. In this fourth request, we ask God to give us this day our daily bread."
  - ? What is meant by "daily bread"?
  - ? The LDS temple speaks of our having "sufficient for our needs." How does this relate to Jesus' "daily bread"?
  - ? How often do your prayers go beyond the necessary temporal needs to less necessary and more luxurious temporal wants?
  - ? How might praying for temporal needs as Jesus suggest help check our appetites and insatiable desire for more and more and more?

As traditionally reckoned, Jesus offers seven requests in his prayer. Only one, this fourth, involves temporal/ financial matters.



- ? In your mind, what is the significance of this observation?
- ? How does this one-seventh part of prayer devoted to temporal concerns comport with your prayers?
- ? How does it comport with the focus of your daily life—your thoughts and efforts throughout the day?

## Questionary 23— sermon on the mount: Matthew 6.<sup>9-13</sup> (part 4)

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<sup>9</sup>After this manner therefore pray ye:

Our Father which art in heaven,

Hallowed be thy name.

<sup>10</sup>Thy kingdom come.

Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven.

<sup>11</sup>Give us this day our daily bread.

<sup>12</sup>**And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.**

<sup>13</sup>And lead us not into temptation,  
but deliver us from evil:

For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen.

We opened our series of questionaries focused on Jesus' Sermon on the Mount with 9 questionaries on the Beatitudes. This questionary is our 23<sup>st</sup> focused on the Sermon on the mount and the 4<sup>th</sup> in which we explore what has come to be called, "The Lord's Prayer."

1. In verses 17-20, Jesus suggested that he had come to "fulfill" the law and that fulfilling the law entailed something more than what the Pharisees taught and did. Jesus then addresses various aspects of "the law" and how they are truly "fulfilled (5.<sup>21-26</sup>, 5.<sup>27-30</sup>, 5.<sup>31-32</sup>, 5.<sup>33-37</sup>, 5.<sup>38-42</sup>, 5.<sup>43-48</sup>, 6.<sup>1-4</sup>, 6.<sup>5-15</sup>, 6.<sup>16-18</sup>). Jesus introduces the first six examples of fulfilling the law with "Ye have heard that it hath been said..." or some variation on it. That formula is not found in this reading, but the reading continues to explore how Jesus' view of fulfilling the law differs from and goes beyond that often practiced.
  - ? How does Jesus' view of prayer differ from and go beyond that often practiced?
2. Jesus speaks of God forgiving us in relationship to our forgiving others.
  - ? How do you think and feel when you consider that God's ability and willingness to forgive us is bound together with our willingness to forgive others? Why do you answer as you do?
  - ? Why do you think this connection and relationship exists?
  - ? How boldly and confidently would you ask for forgiveness if you always added this caveat, "as I forgive others"?
  - ? How does this verse comport with the following passage?

"My disciples, in days of old, sought occasion against one another and forgave not one another in their hearts; and for this evil they were afflicted and sorely chastened. Wherefore, I say unto you, that ye ought to forgive one another; for he that forgiveth not his brother his trespasses standeth condemned before the Lord; for there remaineth in him the greater sin. I, the Lord, will forgive whom I will forgive, but of you it is required to forgive all men" (DC 64.<sup>8-10</sup>).
  - ? How is it possible, or even "fair" that the greater sin rests in the one who refuses to forgive rather than the one who offended in the first place?

## Questionary 24— sermon on the mount: Matthew 6.<sup>9-13</sup> (part 5)

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<sup>9</sup>After this manner therefore pray ye:

Our Father which art in heaven,

Hallowed be thy name.

<sup>10</sup>Thy kingdom come.

Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven.

<sup>11</sup>Give us this day our daily bread.

<sup>12</sup>And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.

<sup>13</sup>**And lead us not into temptation,  
but deliver us from evil:**

For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen.

We opened our series of questionaries focused on Jesus' Sermon on the Mount with 9 questionaries on the Beatitudes. This questionary is our 24<sup>th</sup> focused on the Sermon on the mount and the 5<sup>th</sup> in which we explore what has come to be called, "The Lord's Prayer."

1. In verses 17-20, Jesus suggested that he had come to "fulfill" the law and that fulfilling the law entailed something more than what the Pharisees taught and did. Jesus then addresses various aspects of "the law" and how they are truly "fulfilled (5.<sup>21-26</sup>, 5.<sup>27-30</sup>, 5.<sup>31-32</sup>, 5.<sup>33-37</sup>, 5.<sup>38-42</sup>, 5.<sup>43-48</sup>, 6.<sup>1-4</sup>, 6.<sup>5-15</sup>, 6.<sup>16-18</sup>). Jesus introduces the first six examples of fulfilling the law with "Ye have heard that it hath been said..." or some variation on it. That formula is not found in this reading, but the reading continues to explore how Jesus' view of fulfilling the law differs from and goes beyond that often practiced.
  - ? How does Jesus' view of prayer differ from and go beyond that often practiced?
2. Verse 13 represents the last two of seven requests made in Jesus' exemplary prayer.
  - ? What are the requests?
  - ? How do you express these desires in your own prayers?
  - ? What do you understand "temptation" to be?
  - ? How can both satanic invitations and insinuations to sin and the natural trials of this life have in common?
  - ? How can both lead us away from God?
  - ? What do you understand "evil" from which we wish to be delivered to be?
  - ? Evil can be our own. It can also be others. It can be the evil that exist in this world and in our societies. What evils most trouble you?

## Questionary 25— sermon on the mount: Matthew 6.<sup>9-13</sup> (part 6)

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<sup>9</sup>After this manner therefore pray ye:

Our Father which art in heaven,

Hallowed be thy name.

<sup>10</sup>Thy kingdom come.

Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven.

<sup>11</sup>Give us this day our daily bread.

<sup>12</sup>And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.

<sup>13</sup>And lead us not into temptation,

but deliver us from evil:

**For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen.**

We opened our series of questionaries focused on Jesus' Sermon on the Mount with 9 questionaries on the Beatitudes. This questionary is our 25<sup>th</sup> focused on the Sermon on the mount and the 6<sup>th</sup> in which we explore what has come to be called, "The Lord's Prayer."

1. In verses 17-20, Jesus suggested that he had come to "fulfill" the law and that fulfilling the law entailed something more than what the Pharisees taught and did. Jesus then addresses various aspects of "the law" and how they are truly "fulfilled (5.<sup>21-26</sup>, 5.<sup>27-30</sup>, 5.<sup>31-32</sup>, 5.<sup>33-37</sup>, 5.<sup>38-42</sup>, 5.<sup>43-48</sup>, 6.<sup>1-4</sup>, 6.<sup>5-15</sup>, 6.<sup>16-18</sup>). Jesus introduces the first six examples of fulfilling the law with "Ye have heard that it hath been said..." or some variation on it. That formula is not found in this reading, but the reading continues to explore how Jesus' view of fulfilling the law differs from and goes beyond that often practiced.
  - ? How does Jesus' view of prayer differ from and go beyond that often practiced?
2. Jesus ends his exemplary prayer with "For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen."
  - ? What purpose does this end to prayer have?
  - ? What are we really saying when we end prayer with a focus on God, His rule, His power, and His glory?
  - ? How is this end to prayer reflected in your prayers?
  - ? How can you incorporate it into your prayers more meaningfully?

## Questionary 26— sermon on the mount: Matthew 6.<sup>9-13</sup> (part 7)

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<sup>9</sup>After this manner therefore pray ye:

**Our** Father which art in heaven,

Hallowed be thy name.

<sup>10</sup>Thy kingdom come.

Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven.

<sup>11</sup>Give **us** this day our daily bread.

<sup>12</sup>And forgive **us** our debts, as we forgive our debtors.

<sup>13</sup>And lead **us** not into temptation,  
but deliver **us** from evil:

For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen.

We opened our series of questionaries focused on Jesus' Sermon on the Mount with 9 questionaries on the Beatitudes. This questionary is our 26<sup>th</sup> focused on the Sermon on the mount and the 7<sup>th</sup> in which we explore what has come to be called, "The Lord's Prayer."

1. In verses 17-20, Jesus suggested that he had come to "fulfill" the law and that fulfilling the law entailed something more than what the Pharisees taught and did. Jesus then addresses various aspects of "the law" and how they are truly "fulfilled (5.<sup>21-26</sup>, 5.<sup>27-30</sup>, 5.<sup>31-32</sup>, 5.<sup>33-37</sup>, 5.<sup>38-42</sup>, 5.<sup>43-48</sup>, 6.<sup>1-4</sup>, 6.<sup>5-15</sup>, 6.<sup>16-18</sup>). Jesus introduces the first six examples of fulfilling the law with "Ye have heard that it hath been said..." or some variation on it. That formula is not found in this reading, but the reading continues to explore how Jesus' view of fulfilling the law differs from and goes beyond that often practiced.
  - ? How does Jesus' view of prayer differ from and go beyond that often practiced?
2. We have explored The Lord's Prayer in six previous questionaries. In this questionary, we reflect on one more aspect that we have previously ignored. In the passage that heads this reading, we have emphasized several words through bold print.
  - ? Why do you think we have highlighted these words?
  - ? What is the importance of Jesus consistently using plural pronouns (our, us) rather than singular (my, me)?
  - ? Is this merely a matter of Jesus including himself in a "group" prayer, or is there some other significance to the plural rather than singular pronouns?
  - ? What might God hear in a prayer that is all about I, me, my?
  - ? How much of your prayer life is focused on yourself and your needs/wants, and how much is focused on others' needs/wants?
  - ? What is the balance between these?
  - ? What do you think and feel when you consider that by his choice of plural pronouns Jesus was reminding his disciples that their prayers must seek the good of others as well as themselves?
  - ? What would it mean, for example, for you to spend time in prayer asking that others avoid temptation and falling into the evils of this world?
  - ? How can you make your prayers about others as well as about yourself?

## Questionary 27— sermon on the mount: Matthew 6.<sup>14-15</sup>

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<sup>14</sup>For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: <sup>15</sup>but if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.

We opened our series of questionaries focused on Jesus' Sermon on the Mount with 9 questionaries on the Beatitudes. This questionary is our 27<sup>th</sup> focused on the Sermon on the mount.

1. In verses 17-20, Jesus suggested that he had come to “fulfill” the law and that fulfilling the law entailed something more than what the Pharisees taught and did. Jesus then addresses various aspects of “the law” and how they are truly “fulfilled (5.<sup>21-26</sup>, 5.<sup>27-30</sup>, 5.<sup>31-32</sup>, 5.<sup>33-37</sup>, 5.<sup>38-42</sup>, 5.<sup>43-48</sup>, 6.<sup>1-4</sup>, 6.<sup>5-15</sup>, 6.<sup>16-18</sup>). Jesus introduces the first six examples of fulfilling the law with “Ye have heard that it hath been said...” or some variation on it. That formula is not found in this reading, but the reading continues to explore how Jesus' view of fulfilling the law differs from and goes beyond that often practiced.
  - ? How does Jesus' statement found in today's reading go beyond what is normally thought of as fulfilling the law?
2. After teaching his disciples how to pray with what has come to be known as “The Lord's Prayer,” Jesus offers this commentary on prayer. It begins with the connective word, “for.”
  - ? What does the “for” tell you?

Of all the elements of Jesus' prayer he comments on just one: “forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.”

- ? Why do you think he focused on forgiveness?
- ? How does our willingness to forgive impact the efficacy of our prayers?

## Questionary 28— sermon on the mount: Matthew 6.<sup>16-18</sup>

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<sup>16</sup>Moreover when ye fast, be not, as the hypocrites, of a sad countenance: for they disfigure their faces, that they may appear unto men to fast. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward. <sup>17</sup>But thou, when thou fastest, anoint thine head, and wash thy face; <sup>18</sup>that thou appear not unto men to fast, but unto thy Father which is in secret: and thy Father, which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly.

We opened our series of questionaries focused on Jesus' Sermon on the Mount with 9 questionaries on the Beatitudes. This questionary is our 28<sup>th</sup> focused on the Sermon on the mount.

1. In verses 17-20, Jesus suggested that he had come to “fulfill” the law and that fulfilling the law entailed something more than what the Pharisees taught and did. Jesus then addresses various aspects of “the law” and how they are truly “fulfilled (5.<sup>21-26</sup>, 5.<sup>27-30</sup>, 5.<sup>31-32</sup>, 5.<sup>33-37</sup>, 5.<sup>38-42</sup>, 5.<sup>43-48</sup>, 6.<sup>1-4</sup>, 6.<sup>5-15</sup>, 6.<sup>16-18</sup>). Jesus introduces the first six examples of fulfilling the law with “Ye have heard that it hath been said...” or some variation on it. That formula is not found in this reading, but the reading continues to explore how Jesus' view of fulfilling the law differs from and goes beyond that often practiced.
  - ? How does Jesus' admonition concerning fasting go beyond fasting as it is often practiced?
2. As with doing good (6.<sup>1-4</sup>), and praying (6.<sup>5-15</sup>), in addressing fasting, Jesus addresses the problem of religion being about self-righteous and self-promotion more than actual devotion to God and commitment to the betterment of others.
  - ? How do you feel about religion when it is used for purposes of self-promotion and self-righteousness?
  - ? How do and can you avoid this type of religion in your own life?
3. Obviously, doing good (alms) should primarily be focused on benefiting others than promoting oneself either with God or man. As we pointed out in our 7<sup>th</sup> reading on 6.<sup>9-13</sup>, Jesus' consistent use of the plural in his prayer (us, us, us...) suggest that prayer is intended to be used predominantly for others' benefit.
  - ? How do you use fasting to benefit others?
  - ? How does the following passage relate to fasting as a means to benefit others rather than ourselves? How might it have influenced Jesus' own view of fasting as expressed in here in Matthew?

“Wherefore have we fasted, say they,  
and thou seest not?  
wherefore have we afflicted our soul,  
and thou takest no knowledge?  
Behold, in the day of your fast ye find pleasure,  
and exact all your labours.  
Behold, ye fast for strife and debate,  
and to smite with the fist of wickedness:  
ye shall not fast as ye do this day,  
to make your voice to be heard on high.  
Is it such a fast that I have chosen?  
a day for a man to afflict his soul?  
is it to bow down his head as a bulrush,  
and to spread sackcloth and ashes under him?  
wilt thou call this a fast,  
and an acceptable day to the LORD?”

Is not this the fast that I have chosen?  
to loose the bands of wickedness,  
to undo the heavy burdens,  
and to let the oppressed go free,  
and that ye break every yoke?  
Is it not to deal thy bread to the hungry,  
and that thou bring the poor that are cast out to thy house?  
when thou seest the naked, that thou cover him;  
and that thou hide not thyself from thine own flesh?" (Is. 58.<sup>3-7</sup>)

- ? How is everyday mistreatment of others a contradiction of the true meaning of fasting?
- ? How do you feel about fasting being less about how much or when one eats and more about the just, respectful, and loving treatment of others?



## Questionary 29— sermon on the mount: Matthew 6.<sup>19-21</sup>

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<sup>19</sup>Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: <sup>20</sup>but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal. <sup>21</sup>For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.

This reading and questionary is our 29<sup>th</sup> focused on the Sermon on the mount.

Jesus began his Sermon on the Mount with the Beatitudes (5.<sup>1-12</sup>, questionaries 1-9). In 5.<sup>13-16</sup>, Jesus briefly discussed the responsibility of discipleship (questionary 10). Then, in 5.<sup>17-6.18</sup> (questionaries 11-28), Jesus focused on the fulfillment of the law and what fulfilling the law entailed in his mind.

1. Now, with verse 6.<sup>19</sup>, Jesus shifts his attention to the relationship between the disciple and life's materialistic, economic, and temporal needs. This discussion will continue through verse 34 (questionaries 29-33).
  - ? How do you feel about Jesus devoting such a large block of his sermon to the issue of materialism and the disciple's response to it?
  - ? Why is this so important to Jesus?
2. Jesus speaks against "lay[ing] up for yourselves treasures upon earth."
  - ? What is the nature of "treasures upon earth"?
  - ? What is meant by "*laying up*" for oneself treasures upon earth?
  - ? What does "laying up treasures upon earth" look like? What actions would be indicative of one doing so?
  - ? Where do you stand in this "laying up treasures upon earth"?
3. On the other hand, Jesus advocates for "lay[in] up for yourselves treasures in heaven."
  - ? What is the nature of "treasures in heaven"?
  - ? What is meant by "laying up" for oneself treasures in heaven?
  - ? What does "laying up treasures in heaven" look like? What actions would be indicative of one doing so?
  - ? Where do you stand in this "laying up treasures in heaven"?
4. Jesus consistently maintains that what we do outwardly is a reliable sign about what we are on the inside. Here, Jesus suggests that what we "treasure" is indicative of who we are.
  - ? What do you treasure most—heaven's benefits or earth's?
  - ? Does the preponderance of your thoughts, your use of your time, etc. support your answer to the previous question?
  - ? How much energy and time do you employ in the pursuit of heaven's benefits as opposed to earth's materialistic offerings?
  - ? What do you see as the proper balance?
  - ? Have you reached a proper balance? Why do you answer as you do?

## Questionary 30— sermon on the mount: Matthew 6.<sup>22-24</sup>

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<sup>22</sup>The light of the body is the eye: if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light. <sup>23</sup>But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!

<sup>24</sup>No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.

This reading and questionary is our 30<sup>th</sup> focused on the Sermon on the mount.

Jesus began his Sermon on the Mount with the Beatitudes (5.<sup>1-12</sup>, questionaries 1-9). In 5.<sup>13-16</sup>, Jesus briefly discussed the responsibility of discipleship (questionary 10). Then, in 5.<sup>17-6.18</sup> (questionaries 11-28), Jesus focused on the fulfillment of the law and what fulfilling the law entailed in his mind. With verse 6.<sup>19</sup>, Jesus shifted his attention to the relationship between the disciple and life's materialistic, economic, and temporal needs.

1. This reading is the second that addresses the relationship between disciples and materialism.
  - ? What counsel do you find in these verses for your own life as you consider your priorities related to the "treasures of upon earth" and "treasures in heaven"?
2. Jesus says that "if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light."
  - ? How does this relate to one's priorities related to materialistic and spiritual concerns?
  - ? How do temporal concerns tend to dilute our spiritual energy and divide our focus?
3. After discussing eyes that are "single," Jesus immediately addresses eyes that are "evil."
  - ? What do you think when you consider that in Jesus' mind "single" and "evil" are opposites?
  - ? One antonym of "single" would be "divided. How is a mind that is divided between treasures on earth and treasures in heaven "evil" and "full of darkness"? Why do you answer as you do?
  - ? How single is your mind? What reasons do you have for answering as you do?
4. Jesus comes back to the matter of a divided mind, heart, and will in verse 24.

"No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon."

- ? What is mammon?
- ? What does it mean to "serve" either God or riches?
- ? Why can the two, God and riches, not be "served" at the same time?
- ? How do riches become an idolatrous God that is served as only the only true God is to be served?

## Questionary 31— sermon on the mount: Matthew 6.<sup>25-27</sup>

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<sup>25</sup>Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment?  
<sup>26</sup>Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they? <sup>27</sup>Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature?

This questionary is our 31<sup>st</sup> focused on the Sermon on the mount.

Jesus began his Sermon on the Mount with the Beatitudes (5.<sup>1-12</sup>, questionaries 1-9). In 5.<sup>13-16</sup>, Jesus briefly discussed the responsibility of discipleship (questionary 10). Then, in 5.<sup>17-6.18</sup> (questionaries 11-28), Jesus focused on the fulfillment of the law and what fulfilling the law entailed in his mind. With verse 6.<sup>19</sup>, Jesus shifted his attention to the relationship between the disciple and life's materialistic, economic, and temporal needs.

1. In verse 25, Jesus counsels to “take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Jesus will speak again of “taking thought” in verses 27, 28, 31, and 34.
  - ? What does Jesus mean by “taking thought”?

The Greek word can mean, “to be anxious,” “to brood over,” “to give ponderous thought to,” “to be intent on,” “to strive for.”

  - ? How does this meaning influence your answer to the previous question?
  - ? How anxious are you about temporal matters?
  - ? How much careful thought do you put into temporal matters?
  - ? How much careful thought do you put into your temporal matters compared to *careful* thought about God and the things of God?
  - ? How well, then, are you observing this counsel concerning your attention to temporal matters?
2. Jesus asks, “Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment?”
  - ? How do you answer this question? Why?
  - ? What more is there to life?
  - ? What matters get priority in your thoughts, actions, plans, etc.?
3. Jesus asks that his disciples consider “the fowls of the air,” that “sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them.”
  - ? How do you feel about being asked to consider birds and others of the animal kingdom and how they survive as you consider your own survival? Does it seem the same to you? Why do you answer as you do?
  - ? How seriously do you take Jesus’ counsel?
  - ? Do you think of God as feeding birds and other animals?
  - ? Can you consider God feeding you as He does them? Why or why not?
4. Jesus asks, “Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature?”
  - ? What does Jesus imply with this question?
  - ? How much in control are we, really, of our materialistic needs and of our temporal life?
  - ? In general, how reasonable and accurate do Jesus’ observations and counsel found in these verses seem to you? Why do you answer as you do?
  - ? How does your response to Jesus’ observations and counsel impact your attitudes and actions concerning temporal matters?

## Questionary 32— sermon on the mount: Matthew 6.<sup>28-34</sup>

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<sup>28</sup>And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: <sup>29</sup>and yet I say unto you, That even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. <sup>30</sup>Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to day is, and to morrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith? <sup>31</sup>Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? <sup>32</sup>(For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. <sup>33</sup>But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you. <sup>34</sup>Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.

This questionary is our 32<sup>nd</sup> focused on the Sermon on the mount.

We opened our series of questionaries focused on Jesus' Sermon on the Mount with 9 questionaries on the Beatitudes (5.<sup>1-12</sup>). We followed this up a questionary on Jesus' words about the responsibility of discipleship (5.<sup>13-16</sup>). We then had 18 questionaries focused on Jesus' discussion about the fulfilling of the law and what fulfilling the law entailed in his mind (5.<sup>17-6.18</sup>). These questionaries included 7 on what has come to be known as "The Lord's Prayer" (6.<sup>9-14</sup>). With verse 19, Jesus turned his attention to the relationship between the disciple and life's temporal needs (6.<sup>19-34</sup>). This is our 4<sup>th</sup> questionary focused on the relationship between the disciple and life's temporal needs.

1. In speaking of "the lilies of the field," Jesus says that "even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these."
  - ? What does this suggest to you about Jesus' feelings and appreciation for nature?
  - ? How do your feelings and appreciation for nature compare? Why do you answer as you do?
2. Jesus suggests that those who do not believe God will take care of them as bountifully and beautifully as he created and maintains nature are of "little faith?"
  - ? How do you feel about the beauty and complexity with which God created the natural world?
  - ? Do you believe that God can maintain you in your basic needs without your constant thought, preparations, worries, etc. about temporal needs—see our first question from questionary 31 (Mt. 6.<sup>25-27</sup>)?
3. Jesus questions the wisdom of being constantly anxious about the necessities of life—"What shall we eat?" "What shall we drink?" "Wherewithal shall we be clothed?"
  - ? When it comes to your temporal life, are the necessities of life enough for you?
  - ? What are the necessities, in your mind?
  - ? Why or why not are they enough?
  - ? How do you feel about saying that those who do not trust God to care for them as he cares for nature so as to provide life's necessities are of "little faith"?
4. In speaking of the necessities of life, Jesus says, "For after all these things do the Gentiles seek."
  - ? Who does he mean by "Gentiles"?
  - ? What does Jesus mean and imply by this?
  - ? How do you feel about the implication that we are not to be like "the Gentiles" or that we are to have higher aspirations than them?
  - ? How does the following passage relate to today's reading?

"Let them repent of all their sins, and of all their covetous desires, before me, saith the Lord; for what is property unto me? saith the Lord" (DC 117.<sup>4</sup>).
  - ? How do you feel about the Lord blowing off the importance of something as important to so many in this world as the possession of materialistic things and properties?
  - ? How practical and applicable do Jesus' teachings about the material and temporal needs of life

- seem to you? Why do you answer as you do?
- ? If they do not seem practical and applicable, how would you change them?
5. With his “Take therefore no thought for the morrow,” Jesus not only admonish against “taking thought,” or “being anxious, concerned about” temporal matters, but also about the future.
- ? What do you think and feel when you consider Jesus’ desire that we not become concerned and anxious about the future?
6. Of the future, Jesus says, “the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself.”
- ? What does this mean to you?
- ? We often plan as if we can control the future, but Jesus seems to suggest that, in fact, we have little control of the future. How do you feel about this observation?
7. Jesus observes, “Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.”
- ? What does he mean by this?
- ? How is this observation supposed to impact our daily life?
8. In perhaps his best known and most oft quoted statement about material life and concerns, Jesus admonishes, “Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.”
- ? How does a life with a priority of “the kingdom of God” and doing God’s will serve to keep our best and most frequent thoughts and actions being devoted to the mundane and often unworthy world lusts?
- ? What do you think and feel when you hear Jesus say, “all these things [life’s necessities] shall be added unto you”?
- ? How do you feel about life’s necessities being an “addition”?
- ? What then are life’s greatest and most important aims?
- ? After reading and studying Matthew 6.19-34, how closely do you comply with Jesus’ counsel concerning life’s temporal needs and concerns? Why do you answer as you do?
- ? Is there something you can do, change, or improve to be more compliant? If so, what is it?
- ? How will you go about making these changes and improvements?

## Questionary 33— sermon on the mount: Matthew 7.<sup>1-2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Judge not, that ye be not judged. <sup>2</sup>For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again.

This questionary is our 33<sup>rd</sup> focused on the Sermon on the mount.

We opened our series of questionaries focused on Jesus' Sermon on the Mount with 9 questionaries on the Beatitudes (5.<sup>1-12</sup>). We followed this up with a questionary on Jesus' words about the responsibility of discipleship (5.<sup>13-16</sup>). We then had 18 questionaries (11-28) focused on Jesus' discussion about fulfilling the law and what fulfilling the law entailed in his mind (5.<sup>17-6.18</sup>). These questionaries included 7 (20-26) on what has come to be known as "The Lord's Prayer" (6.<sup>9-14</sup>). In 6.<sup>19-34</sup>, Jesus turned his attention to the relationship between the disciple and life's temporal needs. We examined his perspectives on this relationship in questionaries 29-31. Matthew 7 is difficult to characterize in regard to topic or emphasis. However, a good deal of the chapter deals with judgement, human (7.<sup>1-12</sup>) and divine (7.<sup>13-28</sup>).

1. In this reading, Jesus addresses the issue of human judgement of others.

? What does it mean to you to judge another?

Every day we have to make decisions: decisions such as whose opinions, counsel, recommendations, and example we will follow. Such decisions necessarily involve judgment.

? How do such judgments relate to Jesus' warning?

2. Jesus says that the standards we use to judge must be standards against which we are willing to be judged.

? How does this modify Jesus' initial statement, "Judge not"?

? How would you feel about having others judge you on the same basis and standards that you use to judge them?

? How would you feel about having *God* judge you on the same basis and standards that you use to judge others?

? Based upon the standards you use to judge others, how are you likely to be judged by God—today and in the future?

## Questionary 34— sermon on the mount: Matthew 7.<sup>3-5</sup>

<sup>3</sup>And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye? <sup>4</sup>Or how wilt thou say to thy brother, 'Let me pull out the mote out of thine eye;' and, behold, a beam is in thine own eye? <sup>5</sup>Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye.

This questionary is our 34<sup>th</sup> focused on the Sermon on the mount.

We opened our series of questionaries focused on Jesus' Sermon on the Mount with 9 questionaries on the Beatitudes (5.<sup>1-12</sup>). We followed this up with a questionary on Jesus' words about the responsibility of discipleship (5.<sup>13-16</sup>). We then had 18 questionaries (11-28) focused on Jesus' discussion about fulfilling the law and what fulfilling the law entailed in his mind (5.<sup>17-6.18</sup>). These questionaries included 7 (20-26) on what has come to be known as "The Lord's Prayer" (6.<sup>9-14</sup>). In 6.<sup>19-34</sup>, Jesus turned his attention to the relationship between the disciple and life's temporal needs. We examined his perspectives on this relationship in questionaries 29-31. Matthew 7 is difficult to characterize in regard to topic or emphasis. However, a good deal of the chapter deals with judgment, human (7.<sup>1-12</sup>) and divine (7.<sup>13-28</sup>).

This reading continues to focus on human judgment.

1. In these verses, Jesus continues to instruct his disciples on human judgment. If you are unsure what Jesus means by a "mote" and a "beam," take a few minutes to explore the meaning of these two words.
  - ? What do the two words symbolize or represent in this metaphor?
2. We often minimize our own sins and maximize the sins of others. We tell ourselves that our sins are indicative of a momentary lapses of judgment while others' sins are indicative of deep character flaws.
  - ? How does Jesus' use of the "mote" (sliver, splinter) and "beam" ("house rafter, ship mast, etc) reverse this normal tendency?
3. Jesus calls those who minimize their own sins and maximize others' sins "hypocrites."
  - ? In your mind, what is hypocrisy?
  - ? How do you feel about Jesus calling this tendency of minimizing and maximizing hypocrisy?
4. Jesus ends this reading with, "first cast out the beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye."
  - ? How do you feel about Jesus' suggestion that we can assist others in removing sin from their lives?
  - ? Would not doing so involve some form of "judgment" on our part? How does this comport with Jesus' earlier admonition that we not judge?

## Questionary 35— sermon on the mount: Matthew 7.<sup>6-12</sup>

<sup>6</sup>Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you.

<sup>7</sup>Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you:

<sup>8</sup>For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be

opened. <sup>9</sup>Or what man is there of you, whom if his son ask bread, will he give him a stone? <sup>10</sup>Or if he ask a fish, will he give him a serpent? <sup>11</sup>If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him?

<sup>12</sup>Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets.

This questionary is our 35<sup>th</sup> focused on the Sermon on the mount.

We opened our series of questionaries focused on Jesus' Sermon on the Mount with 9 questionaries on the Beatitudes (5.<sup>1-12</sup>). We followed this up with a questionary on Jesus' words about the responsibility of discipleship (5.<sup>13-16</sup>). We then had 18 questionaries (11-28) focused on Jesus' discussion about fulfilling the law and what fulfilling the law entailed in his mind (5.<sup>17-6.18</sup>). These questionaries included 7 (20-26) on what has come to be known as "The Lord's Prayer" (6.<sup>9-14</sup>). In 6.<sup>19-34</sup>, Jesus turned his attention to the relationship between the disciple and life's temporal needs. We examined his perspectives on this relationship in questionaries 29-31. Matthew 7 is difficult to characterize in regard to topic or emphasis. However, a good deal of the chapter deals with judgement, human (7.<sup>1-12</sup>) and divine (7.<sup>13-28</sup>).

This reading continues to focus on human judgment.

1. Verse six is a difficult and harsh statement.

? Does it seem consistent with what proceeded and with what follows it? Why do you answer as you do?

? How does it jive with the admonitions about judging that proceed and Jesus' statements about divine and human generosity that follow?

Consider, for example, Jesus' example of divine generosity, "For *every one* that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened."

? How does this jive with the proverb?

Some have suggested that in verse 6 Jesus is quoting a well-known proverb that sets limits on one's generosity and that Jesus would have then said something like, "But I say," followed with the examples of generosity found in verses 7-12.

? How do you feel about such a proposal?

? Is there some other explanation you might offer to reconcile the proverb with what is before and after it?

2. As another example of God's generosity, Jesus says, "If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him?"

? How do human analogies of kindness, generosity, goodness, etc., fail to tell the story of God's kindness, generosity, goodness, etc.

? Actually experiencing God's kindness, generosity, goodness, etc. is the only way of understanding it. To what degree have you experienced God's kindness, generosity, goodness, etc.? What experiences make you answer as you do?

3. This reading ends with what has been called "The Golden Rule:" "Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them."



- ? How does this enhance Jesus' focus on generosity—this time not on God's generosity, but on the generosity he would have us show to others?
- ? Why does such an approach to others guarantee generosity between human beings?
- ? What can you do to live more consistently with this golden rule? How will you do so?

## Questionary 36— sermon on the mount: Matthew 7.<sup>13-14</sup>

<sup>13</sup>Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: <sup>14</sup>Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.

This questionary is our 36<sup>th</sup> focused on the Sermon on the mount.

We opened our series of questionaries focused on Jesus' Sermon on the Mount with 9 questionaries on the Beatitudes (5.<sup>1-12</sup>). We followed this up with a questionary on Jesus' words about the responsibility of discipleship (5.<sup>13-16</sup>). We then had 18 questionaries (11-28) focused on Jesus' discussion about fulfilling the law and what fulfilling the law entailed in his mind (5.<sup>17-6.18</sup>). These questionaries included 7 (20-26) on what has come to be known as "The Lord's Prayer" (6.<sup>9-14</sup>). In 6.<sup>19-34</sup>, Jesus turned his attention to the relationship between the disciple and life's temporal needs. We examined his perspectives on this relationship in questionaries 29-31. Matthew 7 is difficult to characterize in regard to topic or emphasis. However, a good deal of the chapter deals with judgement, human (7.<sup>1-12</sup>) and divine (7.<sup>13-28</sup>).

1. We might understand this reading as shifting from human to divine judgment, however, these two verses do not identify God as the agent of the judgment.
  - ? Should God be thought of as the agent of judgment in these two verses? Why do you answer as you do.
  - ? Can we think of human beings still being the agent of judgment in these two verses? If so, how? If not, why not?

These two verses might be read as a statement of cause and effect/consequences in which it is our choices that determine/ judge outcomes: either destruction/ ruin/ death or life/ continuation/ endurance.

? How do our choices determine outcomes?

We usually read the divergent outcomes as eschatological statements of final individual outcomes. However, these divergent outcomes can be applied to this life as well as to any future life in eternity.

- ? How do our choices determine outcomes in this life?
- ? How do our individual and societal choices determine societal outcomes—whether they come to ruin in this life or endure healthily in this life?

2. Jesus contends that the gate/ way, or choices that lead to destruction are many and varied and that "many" make choices that lead to destruction/ death. On the other hand, Jesus contends that the choices that lead to life/ endurance are much fewer and less varied and that "few" make them.
  - ? How do you feel about Jesus' contention concerning the "many" and "few"?
  - ? How do you feel about God having set up an existence in which many go the way of destruction and few go the way of life?
  - ? In which direction are our present societal choices leading: to ruin or to endurance? Why do you answer as you do?
  - ? How does the rise and fall of so many kingdoms/ nations in human history confirm Jesus' assessment concerning choices and consequences.

## Questionary 37— sermon on the mount: Matthew 7.<sup>15-20</sup>

<sup>15</sup>Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. <sup>16</sup>Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? <sup>17</sup>Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. <sup>18</sup>A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. <sup>19</sup>Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. <sup>20</sup>Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them.

This questionary is our 37<sup>th</sup> focused on the Sermon on the mount.

We opened our series of questionaries focused on Jesus' Sermon on the Mount with 9 questionaries on the Beatitudes (5.<sup>1-12</sup>). We followed this up with a questionary on Jesus' words about the responsibility of discipleship (5.<sup>13-16</sup>). We then had 18 questionaries (11-28) focused on Jesus' discussion about fulfilling the law and what fulfilling the law entailed in his mind (5.<sup>17-6.18</sup>). These questionaries included 7 (20-26) on what has come to be known as "The Lord's Prayer" (6.<sup>9-14</sup>). In 6.<sup>19-34</sup>, Jesus turned his attention to the relationship between the disciple and life's temporal needs. We examined his perspectives on this relationship in questionaries 29-31. Matthew 7 is difficult to characterize in regard to topic or emphasis. However, a good deal of the chapter deals with judgement, human (7.<sup>1-12</sup>) and divine (7.<sup>13-28</sup>).

1. Jesus says, "A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit."  
? Do you agree with this statement? Why or why not do you agree?

Some might disagree thinking of "fruit" as "works." It is certainly conceivable that bad people can do good things and good people can do bad things. But "works" are not "fruits." Fruits are the product of works, the consequences of works, final outcomes of works. Bad trees do not produce good, eatable, beneficial fruit, etc.

? What thoughts and feelings do you have as you consider these observations?

Another source of misunderstanding might have to do with the meaning of "good" and "evil."

? What other words might serve as replacements or synonyms for "good" and "evil" fruit?"

? What is the purpose of fruit?

? We might think of "good" as being that which is "beneficial" and of "evil" as being unbeneficial." What do you think and feel if we reread Jesus' statement some like, "A good tree cannot bring forth unbeneficial fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth beneficial fruit"

When considering our "goodness" or "badness," we most often think of intrinsic qualities we might have and how they are reflected in our private behavior. But we might better consider the benefit that we are to others and the world around us.

? Based on this standard of judgement, how would you ultimately characterize yourself?

2. The same observations made above apply to Jesus' warnings about "false prophets:" "Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?"  
? What is a "prophet"? What is a "false prophets"?  
? How many people actually think and speak of themselves as "prophets"?  
? We generally think of prophets in a very technical sense—those who lead the LDS Church. But must we think of prophets only in such technical, religious and organizational way?? Why do you answer as you do? How else might we think of them?

The Hebrew prophets did not restrict their observations to matters traditionally limited to "religious." They commented on such mundane social issues as the fraudulent use of weights and measures, wages, land use, wealth and poverty, flamboyant and luxurious lifestyles, etc.

? How would you feel about calling anyone a prophet who comments on such social issues today?

Why do you answer as you do?

- ? As we think of prophets in this broader way, we realize that there are many, many prophets—both true and false—running around in our society. What do you think and feel as you consider this suggestion?
- ? How do those who espouse social issues that are not beneficial to the whole of society create “fruit” or a society that is unsustainable and false and contrary to the will and kingdom of God?
- ? We judge prophets, then, as we judge ourselves, not on the words or actions they speak but upon the kind of society their words or actions produce. What do you think and feel as you consider this observation?

## Questionary 38— sermon on the mount: Matthew 7.<sup>21-23</sup>

<sup>21</sup>Not every one that saith unto me, “Lord, Lord,” shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. <sup>22</sup>Many will say to me in that day, “Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name, and in thy name have cast out devils, and in thy name done many wonderful works?”

<sup>23</sup>And then will I profess unto them, “I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.”

This questionary is our 38<sup>th</sup> focused on the Sermon on the mount.

We opened our series of questionaries focused on Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount with 9 questionaries on the Beatitudes (5.<sup>1-12</sup>). We followed this up with a questionary on Jesus’ words about the responsibility of discipleship (5.<sup>13-16</sup>). We then had 18 questionaries (11-28) focused on Jesus’ discussion about fulfilling the law and what fulfilling the law entailed in his mind (5.<sup>17-6.18</sup>). These questionaries included 7 (20-26) on what has come to be known as “The Lord’s Prayer” (6.<sup>9-14</sup>). In 6.<sup>19-34</sup>, Jesus turned his attention to the relationship between the disciple and life’s temporal needs. We examined his perspectives on this relationship in questionaries 29-31. Matthew 7 is difficult to characterize in regard to topic or emphasis. However, a good deal of the chapter deals with judgement, human (7.<sup>1-12</sup>) and divine (7.<sup>13-28</sup>).

1. Jesus says that to “enter into the kingdom of heaven,” one must do “the will of my Father which is in heaven.”
  - ? What is “the will” of Jesus’ Father? Or what is it that Jesus’ Fathers wills or wants us to do?
2. After this initial warning, Jesus issues a warning to three groups:
  - Those who *prophesy* in his name
  - Those who *cast out devils* in his name
  - Those who do *many wonderful works* in his name
  - ? How do you feel about such people being excluded from “the kingdom of heaven” and being told, “I never knew you”?
  - ? How could they being excluded from “the kingdom of heaven” and called “ye that work iniquity”—aren’t such things as the three mentioned consistent with the will of God and righteous works?
  - ? How could people who do not do the will of God and not be known of Jesus do such things as the three things Jesus mentions?
  - ? Are we to question that they actually did the three things mentioned? We are given no reasons to think so. Why do you answer as you do?
  - ? How do you explain the disconnect?
  - ? Is there something larger than the three things mentioned that constitute a deeper “will of God”? If so, what would that larger something be?

## Questionary 39— sermon on the mount: Matthew 7.<sup>24-27</sup>

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<sup>24</sup>Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock: <sup>25</sup>And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock. <sup>26</sup>And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand: <sup>27</sup>And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall of it.

This questionary is our 39<sup>th</sup> focused on the Sermon on the mount.

We opened our series of questionaries focused on Jesus' Sermon on the Mount with 9 questionaries on the Beatitudes (5.<sup>1-12</sup>). We followed this up with a questionary on Jesus' words about the responsibility of discipleship (5.<sup>13-16</sup>). We then had 18 questionaries (11-28) focused on Jesus' discussion about fulfilling the law and what fulfilling the law entailed in his mind (5.<sup>17-6.18</sup>). These questionaries included 7 (20-26) on what has come to be known as "The Lord's Prayer" (6.<sup>9-14</sup>). In 6.<sup>19-34</sup>, Jesus turned his attention to the relationship between the disciple and life's temporal needs. We examined his perspectives on this relationship in questionaries 29-31. Matthew 7 is difficult to characterize in regard to topic or emphasis. However, a good deal of the chapter deals with judgement, human (7.<sup>1-12</sup>) and divine (7.<sup>13-28</sup>).

1. In these verses, which we can hardly read without sinning the nursery song, Jesus speaks of building a house on bedrock.
  - ? In real life, outside the metaphor, what is required to build a house upon bedrock?
  - ? In real life, outside the metaphor, what is meant by building a house on the surface, rather than bedrock?
  - ? What is Jesus suggesting when he alludes to such hard work as digging down to find and build on bedrock?
  - ? In the metaphor, what is the rock upon which we must build?
  - ? What is the house?
  - ? How hard is it to do "these sayings of" of Jesus? How hard is it to do what Jesus has asked in the Sermon on the Mount alone, without any additional demands?
2. Jesus speaks of rain descending, and floods flowing, and winds blowing against the house.
  - ? We understand the nature of these destructive elements in nature, but what do they represent as metaphors in our spiritual life?
  - ? How do the things that Jesus has asked of us in the Sermon on the Mount serve as a strength against the storms of life?

## Questionary 40— sermon on the mount: conclusion

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We have studied Jesus' Sermon on the Mount under the following topics:

The Beatitudes (5.<sup>1-12</sup>).

The responsibility of Discipleship (5.<sup>13-16</sup>).

The Fulfillment of the Law (5.<sup>17</sup>-6.<sup>18</sup>).

The Disciple and Materialism (6.<sup>19-34</sup>)

Human Judgment (7.<sup>1-12</sup>)

Divine Judgment (7.<sup>13-28</sup>).

- ? Take a moment to consider what most stood out to you in each topic. Why, do you think, did this stand out to you?
- ? Take a moment to consider what, if any, of Jesus' ideas seemed most difficult to apply in your life. What makes these so difficult?
- ? Take a moment to consider what you feel is the most pertinent of Jesus' ideas for you to apply in your life right now? Why is this important to you?
- ? What will you do to periodically review Jesus' Sermon on the Mount and attempt to apply more of the principles found it?

Lent/ easter—**Matthew 5.**<sup>23-26</sup>

<sup>23</sup>Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee; <sup>24</sup>leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift.

<sup>25</sup>Agree with thine adversary quickly, whiles thou art in the way with him; lest at any time the adversary deliver thee to the judge, and the judge deliver thee to the officer, and thou be cast into prison. <sup>26</sup>Verily I say unto thee, Thou shalt by no means come out thence, till thou hast paid the uttermost farthing.

Today's is the 6th reading for Lent 2024.

As we consider more deeply our need to repent and focus more devotedly on being reconciled to God, it is also appropriate and necessary for us to consider our relationships with others; for our human relationships impact our relationship with Deity.

1. Jesus speaks of bringing “thy gift to the altar.”
  - ? What does this mean?
  - ? What was the intent in bringing a “gift to the altar”?
  - ? How did bringing a gift to the altar bring reconciliation with God?
  - ? What role does Jesus suggest that our reconciliation with our “brother” plays in our being reconciled with God?
  - ? What is the modern-day equivalent of bringing “thy gift to the altar”? How can this gift be tainted by tainted relationships?
2. Jesus speaks of “thy brother” who “hath ought [something] against you.”
  - ? Of whom is he speaking when he refers to “thy brother”?

Jesus does not say to remember that you have something against another, but to remember that another has something against you.

  - ? What is the significance of this observation?
  - ? How do you feel about Jesus assigning you such responsibility, not only in how you feel about others but about how others feel about you?
3. Jesus tells his followers that they are to abandon their gift at the altar to first “be reconciled to thy brother.”
  - ? What does this tell you about God’s priority between public acts of worship and every day personal relationships with others?
  - ? Why does he seem to give priority to our personal relationships with others?
  - ? How do our personal relationships with others impact our relationship with God?
  - ? What happens emotionally and psychologically to you and the other when you make it clear that you bear no animosity toward another who bears animosity against you?
  - ? What happens emotionally and psychologically to you and the other if they continue to bear you animosity even though you have reached out for reconciliation?
4. Jesus warns that if we do not take him up on his invitation to seek reconciliation, we will suffer the full consequences of our stubbornness.
  - ? What does this say about Jesus’ understanding of human beings who feel aggrieved by and hostile toward others?
  - ? How do you feel about Jesus’ contention that aggrieved and hostile individuals are likely to carry out their feelings to the absolute maximum?



<sup>23</sup>Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee; <sup>24</sup>leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift.

<sup>25</sup>Agree with thine adversary quickly, whiles thou art in the way with him; lest at any time the adversary deliver thee to the judge, and the judge deliver thee to the officer, and thou be cast into prison. <sup>26</sup>Verily I say unto thee, Thou shalt by no means come out thence, till thou hast paid the uttermost farthing.

## Matthew 6.<sup>9-13</sup>— lent

<sup>9</sup>After this manner therefore pray ye:

Our Father which art in heaven,

Hallowed be thy name.

<sup>10</sup>Thy kingdom come.

Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven.

<sup>11</sup>Give us this day our daily bread.

<sup>12</sup>And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.

<sup>13</sup>And lead us not into temptation,

but deliver us from evil:

For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen.

## Q

uestionary

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Today's reading is our 26<sup>th</sup> reading for Lent 2024.

Lent is a time for enhanced prayer and a more robust prayer life. For our 26<sup>th</sup> Lent reading, we turn our attention to the prayer that Jesus taught his disciples for instructional purposes. This reading is also part of a series of readings on the Sermon on the Mount.

1. Jesus begins his instructional prayer with “Our Father which art in heaven.”
  - ? What is it that Jesus was trying to teach his disciples with this opening?
  - ? How is this opening more than a formula?
  - ? How does this opening remind us of God’s intimate feelings for us and of the intimate relationship and communication we can enjoy with him?
  - ? How can and should this opening impact the way we approach God in prayer—our attitude and language?
2. In his prayer, Jesus is traditionally viewed as making seven requests to God.
  - ? What are those seven requests?
  - ? How are these seven requests reflected in your own personal prayers?
  - ? There are any number of very specific requests we can make for ourselves and others. But, after identifying a few of the specific requests you have recently made, consider if and how they fit into one of Jesus’ seven?
3. After affirming God’s intimate feelings for us and our desire to enjoy intimate communication with him, Jesus offers the first of what is counted as seven requests: “Hallowed be thy name.”
  - ? What does it mean for God’s “name” to be “hallowed”?
  - ? What, do you think, is the purpose of this request?
  - ? How much of your prayer time is devoted to talking to God about Him, sharing your feelings about Him?
  - ? Why might God wish us to spend time in prayer considering Him and the greatness of His character and sharing with Him what we think and feel about such things?

One way among many to understand this first request is to understand God’s “name” as “his character” and the “hallowedness” of his character as being reflective of his character’s uniqueness and superiority.

- ? How is the uniqueness and superiority of God’s character reflected in your life?
  - ? How is the way you live your daily life a reflection of how you feel about God and his character?
4. Consider the following questions as you reflect on the remaining requests.
    - ? How much a part of your thoughts—both in and out of prayer—is the coming of God’s “kingdom”?

- ? What role does it play in your daily life?
- ? What does it mean for God's will to be "done in earth, as it is in heaven"?
- ? What would be the consequences in your daily life of this request being a regular part of your prayer?
- ? What is the significance of Jesus' repeated "us" and "our" rather than "me" and "my" in the fifth, sixth, and seventh requests?
- ? What is the role and purpose of the final, "For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever"?
- ? How is this sentiment reflected in your prayers?

## Matthew 11.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>And it came to pass, when Jesus had made an end of commanding his twelve disciples, he departed thence to teach and to preach in their cities.

### Q

uestionary

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Today's reading from Matthew 11, is the first of seven readings from that chapter. In this chapter, Jesus is engaged in an extraordinary amount of self-revelation.

1. Today's single verse speaks of Jesus "teaching" and "preaching."
  - ? In your mind, is there a difference between "teaching" and "preaching"? If so, what is that difference?
2. Concerning the meaning of the Greek word translated by the KJV as "teaching," we read the following: "This word denotes teaching and learning in the wide sense of imparting theoretical and practical knowledge with the highest possible development of the pupil as the goal" (*Abridged Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*).
  - ? What do think when you consider that teaching has "the highest possible development of the pupil as the goal"?
  - ? What experiences have you had in "gospel teaching" settings that have informed you, inspired you, and made you want to be a better person?
3. Speaking of the nature of "teaching, we read that "in later Judaism teaching signifies instruction in the law for the right ordering of the relation to God and neighbor" (*Abridged Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*).
  - ? Identify an instance when, as a consequence of a "gospel teacher," you strove more thoroughly to improve your relationship with God or with others?
4. "Preaching" seems to be something a little more "public," perhaps on a bigger stage than "teaching." Concerning the nature of "preaching," we read that it often urges "acceptance of the message, with warnings of consequences for not doing so."
  - ? Identify an instance when a "gospel preacher" has informed you, inspired you, and made you want to be a better person.
  - ? Identify an instance when a "gospel preacher" has "urged" you to act, and has "warned of consequences for not doing so"?
  - ? Have you acted in the role of "gospel teacher" or "gospel preacher"?
  - ? If so, what did you do to
    - Relay information?
    - Attempt the "development of the pupil"?
    - Suggest that your students or audience order their lives so as to improve their relationship to God?
    - Suggest that your students or audience order their lives so as to improve their relationship to others?

## Matthew 11.<sup>2-6</sup>

<sup>2</sup>Now when John had heard in the prison the works of Christ, he sent two of his disciples, <sup>3</sup>And said unto him, “Art thou he that should come, or do we look for another?”

<sup>4</sup>Jesus answered and said unto them, “Go and shew John again those things which ye do hear and see: <sup>5</sup>The blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached to them. <sup>6</sup>And blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in me.”

### Questionary

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We are examining Matthew 11 in seven readings. In this chapter, Jesus is engaged in an extraordinary amount of self-revelation. In the first reading (verse 1), Jesus reveals himself through the spoken word in “teaching” and “preaching.”

Today’s reading is the second from Matthew 11.

1. John’s disciples asked Jesus, “Art thou he that should come, or do we look for another?”
  - ? In asking this question, who is it, do you think, that the disciples wondered if Jesus might be?
  - ? When you think of the Messiah—he that should come—what stands out foremost in your mind about his actions and character?
2. Rather than answering the disciples’ question directly, Jesus answers by suggesting that they evaluate his character based on what they hear him say and see him do. Specifically, he offers the following act as evidence of his Messiahship;

“The blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached to them.”

- ? What does such a ministry say to you about the character of Jesus?
- ? How does it serve as evidence that Jesus is Messiah?
- ? How does the following passage relate to Jesus’ evidence of his character?

The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me;  
because the LORD hath anointed me  
to preach good tidings unto the meek;  
he hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted,  
to proclaim liberty to the captives,  
and the opening of the prison to them that are bound;  
to proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD,  
and the day of vengeance of our God;  
to comfort all that mourn;  
to appoint unto them that mourn in Zion,  
to give unto them beauty for ashes,  
the oil of joy for mourning,  
the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness;  
that they might be called trees of righteousness,  
the planting of the LORD,  
that he might be glorified” (Isaiah 61.<sup>1-3</sup>).

3. After offering up his ministry to the vulnerable as evidence of his character, Jesus warns John’s disciples against an apparently real possibility of being offended thereby.
  - ? What could possibly be offensive about Jesus’ ministry to such vulnerable individuals?
4. How does the following passage reflect the fact that this type of ministry is not unique to Jesus’ *earthly* ministry, but reflects his *eternal ministry and character*?

“And also that you might be honored in laying the foundation, and in bearing record of the land upon which the Zion of God shall stand; and also that a feast of fat things might be prepared for the poor; yea, a feast of fat things, of wine on the lees well refined, that the earth may know that the mouths of the prophets shall not fail; yea, a supper of the house of the Lord, well prepared, unto which all nations shall be invited. First, the rich and the learned, the wise and the noble; and after that cometh the day of my power; then shall the poor, the lame, and the blind, and the deaf, come in unto the marriage of the Lamb, and partake of the supper of the Lord, prepared for the great day to come” (DC 58.<sup>7-11</sup>).

- ? Have you had an occasion when you were vulnerable and found Jesus ministering in your life?
- ? What classes of people in our society today are vulnerable and represent those to whom Jesus would minister if he were here today?
- ? What can you do specifically to imitate him in ministering to those who are vulnerable around you?

## Matthew 11.<sup>7-15</sup>

<sup>7</sup>And as they departed, Jesus began to say unto the multitudes concerning John,

“What went ye out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken with the wind?”

<sup>8</sup>But what went ye out for to see? A man clothed in soft raiment? Behold, they that wear soft clothing are in kings’ houses.

<sup>9</sup>But what went ye out for to see? A prophet? Yea, I say unto you, and more than a prophet. <sup>10</sup>For this is he, of whom it is written, ‘Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee.’ <sup>11</sup>Verily I say unto you, Among them that are born of women there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist: notwithstanding he that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he. <sup>12</sup>And from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force. <sup>13</sup>For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John. <sup>14</sup>And if ye will receive it, this is Elias, which was for to come. <sup>15</sup>He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.

## Questionary

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Today’s reading is our third of seven from Matthew 11. In this chapter, Jesus is engaged in an extraordinary amount of self-revelation. In our first reading (11.<sup>1</sup>), we saw Jesus revealing himself through “teaching and preaching.” In the second (11.<sup>2-6</sup>), Jesus presented evidence of his Messiahship. The evidence he presented was his ministry to the vulnerable.

1. In today’s reading, Jesus seems to reference Malachi 4.<sup>5</sup>, and perhaps Isaiah 40.<sup>3</sup> in order to teach that John the Baptist was an emissary, sent to announce the coming of Messiah.
  - ? What kind of emissary was John? What was his nature and character, according to Jesus?
2. In speaking of John’s humble presentation of himself, Jesus may be doing more than revealing something about John’s character, but that of the Messiah as well.
  - ? What would it say about the Messiah that he did not want an impressive or royal-like emissary for his kingdom, but one of humble bearing?
  - ? How does this choice of emissary compliment what we already know of Messiah’s ministry—that he ministers to the poor and vulnerable?

Elsewhere, Jesus says that “many that are first shall be last; and the last shall be first” (Matthew 19.<sup>30</sup>), and that “whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased; and he that shall humble himself shall be exalted” (Matthew 23.<sup>12</sup>).

- ? How does this apply to John?
  - ? How does it apply to Messiah?
  - ? Does it apply, even, to Heavenly Father? If so, how? What does it imply about him?
  - ? How does it apply to you?
3. Jesus says that “the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force.”
    - ? What does this mean to you?
    - ? What more might it mean than that Jewish religious leaders have acted violently toward both John and Jesus?
    - ? How have the Jewish religious leaders, who opposed John and continue to oppose Jesus, “taken the kingdom of heaven by force”?
    - ? In the estimation of Jewish religious leaders of Jesus’ day, who gets into the kingdom of heaven?
    - ? In the estimation of the Jewish religious leaders who oppose Jesus, do the classes of people to whom Jesus ministered earlier in the chapter—the blind, the lame, the leprous, the deaf, the deceased, and the poor—enter the kingdom?
    - ? How is the closing of the kingdom to such vulnerable people as Jesus served a violent “theft” of the kingdom of heaven” for themselves?

- ? How does Jesus “wrest” back the kingdom from the religious leaders and offer it to the vulnerable?
- ? How would you feel as one of these vulnerable?
- ? How might a modern Christian “violently take the Kingdom of heaven by force”?



## Matthew 11.<sup>16-19</sup>

<sup>16</sup>“But whereunto shall I liken this generation? It is like unto children sitting in the markets, and calling unto their fellows, <sup>17</sup>And saying, ‘We have piped unto you, and ye have not danced; we have mourned unto you, and ye have not lamented.’ <sup>18</sup>For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, ‘He hath a devil.’ <sup>19</sup>The Son of man came eating and drinking, and they say, ‘Behold a man gluttonous, and a winebibber, a friend of publicans and sinners.’ But wisdom is justified of her children.”

### Q

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Today’s reading is our fourth of seven from Matthew 11. In this chapter, Jesus is engaged in an extraordinary amount of self-revelation. In our first reading (11.<sup>1</sup>), we saw Jesus “teaching and preaching.” In the second (11.<sup>2-6</sup>), Jesus presented evidence of his Messiahship by ministering to the vulnerable. In the third reading (11.<sup>7-15</sup>), Jesus revealed the unassuming character of Messiah by pointing out the selection of the humble John, the Baptist, as emissary and for-runner.

1. Jesus says that he and John, the Baptist, have both preached the same message, but they have done so in very different ways.

- ? What do their messages have in common?
- ? How do they present their similar message in different ways?

John taught repentance by threatening consequences for sin (compared to a funeral dirge, or death threat). Jesus taught repentance by showing the happiness that comes through following God (compared to dance music).

- ? Have you had gospel principles taught to you through these two means—negative and positive? Which one has been most influential in changing you? Why do you think that is?
- ? When and how does one decide which tact to take when preaching and teaching?
- ? What does it say about the Jewish audiences that they reject the message of repentance whether it is presented positively, focusing on the blessings of repentance, or negatively, focusing on the consequences of not repenting?

## Matthew 11.<sup>20-24</sup>

<sup>20</sup>Then began he to upbraid the cities wherein most of his mighty works were done, because they repented not: <sup>21</sup>“Woe unto thee, Chorazin! woe unto thee, Bethsaida! for if the mighty works, which were done in you, had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. <sup>22</sup>But I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the day of judgment, than for you. <sup>23</sup>And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted unto heaven, shalt be brought down to hell: for if the mighty works, which have been done in thee, had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day. <sup>24</sup>But I say unto you, that it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment, than for thee.”

## Q

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uestionary

Today’s reading is our fifth of seven from Matthew 11. In this chapter, Jesus is engaged in an extraordinary amount of self-revelation. In our first reading (11.<sup>1</sup>), we saw Jesus “teaching and preaching.” In the second (11.<sup>2-6</sup>), Jesus presented evidence of his Messiahship by ministering to the vulnerable. In the third reading (11.<sup>7-15</sup>), Jesus revealed the unassuming character of Messiah by pointing out the selection of the humble John, the Baptist, as emissary and for-runner. In the fourth reading (11.<sup>16-19</sup>), Jesus accused Jewish society of being hardened to the message of repentance, no matter how it was presented to them—threateningly or hopefully.

1. In today’s reading, Jesus compares Judah, unfavorably, to the gentile nations of Tyre and Sidon, and to the most wicked of nations, Sodom.
  - ? How do you feel about Jesus’ offensive comparison?
  - ? What would be a modern-day comparison?
2. Jesus compares Jewish refusal to repent in the face of Jesus’ ministry, with Tyre and Sidon’s repentance had he ministered to them. Speaking of this imaged repentance, Jesus says that they “would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes.”
  - ? How does Jesus’ contention that they would have repented “long ago” enhance Jesus’ negative comparison?
  - ? How does Jesus’ contention that they would have repented “in sackcloth and ashes” enhance Jesus’ comparison?
3. Of Judah, Jesus says that it will be “more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment, than for thee.” Concerning ancient Sodom’s “day of judgment,” Genesis records,

“Then the LORD rained upon Sodom and upon Gomorrah brimstone and fire from the LORD out of heaven; and he overthrew those cities, and all the plain, and all the inhabitants of the cities, and that which grew upon the ground” (Genesis 19.<sup>24-25</sup>).

  - ? How could Judah’s “day of judgment” be any worse than this?
  - ? When did Judah and Jerusalem experience their “day of judgment”?
  - ? When you consider any potential latter-day “day of judgment” what do you imagine?

## Matthew 11.<sup>25-27</sup>

<sup>25</sup>At that time Jesus answered and said, “I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. <sup>26</sup>Even so, Father: for so it seemed good in thy sight. <sup>27</sup>All things are delivered unto me of my Father: and no man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him.

### Questionary

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Today’s reading is our sixth of seven from Matthew 11. In this chapter, Jesus is engaged in an extraordinary amount of self-revelation. In our first reading (11.<sup>1</sup>), we saw Jesus “teaching and preaching.” In the second (11.<sup>2-6</sup>), Jesus presented evidence of his Messiahship by ministering to the vulnerable. In the third reading (11.<sup>7-15</sup>), Jesus revealed the unassuming character of Messiah by pointing out the selection of the humble John, the Baptist, as emissary and for-runner. In the fourth reading (11.<sup>16-19</sup>), Jesus accused Jewish society of being hardened to the message of repentance, no matter how it was presented to them—threateningly or hopefully. In the fifth reading, Jesus unfavorably compares Judah to the gentile nations of Tyre and Sidon, and to the archetypical wicked nation: Sodom.

1. In today’s reading, Jesus prays to his Father. In his prayer, Jesus returns to his principle interest in this narrative: his character. In his prayer, Jesus states that his character is hidden from “the wise and prudent,” while it is revealed “unto babes.”
  - ? What is meant by “babes”?
  - ? How does this reversal of what is expected, where the wise and prudent know things and babes do not, “subvert” traditional values held by the world?
  - ? What does this reversal suggest about the character of Father and Son?
2. In his prayer, Jesus contends that his ministry to vulnerable, broken individuals, and his choice of a lowly emissary—John—were consistent with his Father’s wishes.
  - ? Why would Father wish his Son’s ministry to be of such a lowly character?
  - ? How does Jesus’ lowly ministry reveal the Father’s character?
  - ? What does Jesus’ lowly ministry say about the Father’s character?

## Matthew 11.<sup>28-30</sup>

<sup>28</sup>Come unto me,  
all ye that labour and are heavy laden,  
and I will give you rest.

<sup>29</sup>Take my yoke upon you,  
and learn of me;  
for I am meek and lowly in heart:  
and ye shall find rest unto your souls.

<sup>30</sup>For my yoke is easy,  
and my burden is light.

## Questionary

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Today's reading is the 6<sup>th</sup> in a series of Advent readings that will continue throughout the month of December as well as one of our readings on atonement under the title of "Grace: The Savior's Generous and Earnest Invitation." \* It also represents our last of seven readings from Matthew 11.

In this chapter, Jesus is engaged in an extraordinary amount of self-revelation. In our first reading (11.<sup>1</sup>), we saw Jesus "teaching and preaching." In the second (11.<sup>2-6</sup>), Jesus presented evidence of his Messiahship by ministering to the vulnerable. In the third reading (11.<sup>7-15</sup>), Jesus revealed the unassuming character of Messiah by pointing out the selection of the humble John, the Baptist, as emissary and for-runner. In the fourth reading (11.<sup>16-19</sup>), Jesus accused Jewish society of being hardened to the message of repentance, no matter how it was presented to them—threateningly or hopefully. In the fifth reading (20-24), Jesus unfavorably compares Judah to the gentile nations of Tyre and Sidon, and to the archetypical wicked nation: Sodom. In the sixth reading (25-27), Jesus prays to his father, affirming his humble nature by the humble status of those who come to know and trust him.

1. Jesus invites those who "labour and are heavy laden" to yoke themselves to him.

? Why? What advantage does he suggest they will have by doing so?

Consider the imagery of two cattle yoked together, walking side by side, closely watching one another. Now, consider yourself joined to Christ, walking beside him, watching him closely. Jesus suggests that in doing so, we will "learn of him."

? What might we learn?

? What does Jesus say in this passage that we will learn about him and his character?

2. Jesus says that in being joined to him, we will learn that he is "meek and lowly in heart."

? What does it mean to you that Jesus is "meek and lowly in heart"?

? Think of someone whom you think of as "meek and lowly." What traits do they possess?

? How do they view and treat others?

? Since Jesus is like his father, our Heavenly Father is also "meek and lowly in heart." Have you thought of him in this way?

? Would your daily approaching of God in prayer change if you approached him with this image of him in mind? If so, how?

? How are Father and Son, then, being "meek and lowly in heart," likely to view and treat you?

3. Chapter 11 began with Jesus offering John's disciples evidence concerning his Messianic character.

"The blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached to them."

? How does Jesus' invitation to those who "labour and are heavy laden" relate to this

passage and Jesus' character?

4. If we join ourselves to Jesus, we learn from and of him. We learn that he is "meek and lowly in heart." Having learned this of him, we seek to imitate him and become, ourselves "meek and lowly in heart."
  - ? How does learning that Jesus is "meek and lowly in heart," and becoming so ourselves, bring us "rest"?
  - ? How does this lighten our burdens?
5. We suggested that in reading Matthew 11, we would find it extraordinarily revelatory in regard to the character of Jesus. We also suggested that it would be subversive.
  - ? In the final analysis, what stands out most to you in regard to Jesus' character as revealed in the chapter?
  - ? What ideas, cultural prejudices, principles, doctrines does Jesus subvert?
- \* The following ten titles are part of our atonement series:
  - "Fall: Our Need of Atonement"
  - "Grace: The Savior's Generous and Earnest Invitation"
  - "At-one-ment: The Savior's unity and connectedness with us"
  - "Sacrifice: What Jesus Suffered for Us"
  - "Glorification: The Savior's Resurrection, Ascension, and Enthronement"
  - "Justification: How We Repent and Change"
  - "Renewal: The Hope, Joy, Peace, and Power of Atonement"
  - "Sanctification: Imitating and living Jesus' life of Atonement"
  - "Thanksgiving: In Praise of Atonement"
  - "The Song of the Righteous: A Song unto Me"

**Matthew 13.<sup>22</sup>**— just scripture

He also that received seed among the thorns is he that heareth the word; and the care of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the word, and he becometh unfruitful.

**Q**uestionary

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- ? How does the inappropriate “care of this world” manifest itself in an individual’s life?
- ? In a society’s habits and culture?
- ? What are the evidences that riches have deceived an individual? A Society?

## Matthew 16.<sup>1-4</sup>

<sup>1</sup>The Pharisees also with the Sadducees came, and tempting desired him that he would shew them a sign from heaven. <sup>2</sup>He answered and said unto them, “When it is evening, ye say, ‘It will be fair weather: for the sky is red.’ <sup>3</sup>And in the morning, ‘It will be foul weather to day: for the sky is red and lowring,’ O ye hypocrites, ye can discern the face of the sky; but can ye not discern the signs of the times? <sup>4</sup>A wicked and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given unto it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas.”

And he left them, and departed.

## Questionary

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Today’s is the first of six readings from Matthew 16.

I have often quoted this passage in relation to the many Americans—most notably those who claim to be “Christians”—who have been unable or unwilling to discern the evils and dangers of tRUMP, America’s 45 president.

1. Jesus speaks of discerning commonly understood temporal things such as the weather and contrasts that discernment with the ability to discern spiritual things such as “the signs of the times.”

? Which do you think is most easily discerned—everyday temporal matters or spiritual matters?

? What do you think Jesus meant by “the signs of the times”?

We might most often think of this in terms of “the signs of the latter days.” But this is far too restrictive.

? Without considering the “second coming,” what sort of “times” do you “discern” we are now living in? How would you characterize our culture, our society?

2. Jesus speaks of “the sign of the prophet Jonas.”

? What is this “sign”?

At other moments of his ministry, Jesus used Jonas, or Jonah for different reasons as a sign “to this generation. Consider the following two passages.

“For as Jonas was a sign unto the Ninevites, so shall also the Son of man be to this generation” (Luke 11.<sup>30</sup>).

“For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth” (Matthew 12.<sup>40</sup>).

? What sort of “sign” was Jonah to the Ninevites?

? How did the Ninevites respond to Jonah’s “sign” that the time for them to repentant had arrived or else they would be overthrown”?

? How does Jesus act in this role as “sign” in his “generation”?

? How does someone like tRUMP serve as sign that the need to repent is urgent in order to avoid the overthrow of society?

We all know the story of Jonah and how he was swallowed by a “big fish.” The second chapter of his book contains the prayer he offered during his ordeal. In his prayer, he speaks of being in “the belly of hell.” He utilizes images that are used elsewhere of sheol, or hell—“the deep,” “billows” and “waves,” “weeds.” He speaks of being in “the bottoms of the mountains” and of the earth’s “bars” being “about me for ever.” He speaks of “corruption.” Jonah, then, is threatened by far more than the stomach juices of a big fish. He is threatened with death and hell itself.

? In addition to serving as sign that the time for repentance was ripe, how did Jesus fulfil Jonah’s role as a sign for the resurrection?

- ? In his sufferings, how did Jesus suffer “hell” as well as “death”?
- ? How does scripture point to the reality that Jesus suffered the “pains of hell” as part of his becoming one with us?



## Matthew 16.<sup>5-12</sup>

<sup>5</sup>And when his disciples were come to the other side, they had forgotten to take bread. <sup>6</sup>Then Jesus said unto them, “Take heed and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees.”

<sup>7</sup>And they reasoned among themselves, saying, “It is because we have taken no bread.”

<sup>8</sup>Which when Jesus perceived, he said unto them, “O ye of little faith, why reason ye among yourselves, because ye have brought no bread? <sup>9</sup>Do ye not yet understand, neither remember the five loaves of the five thousand, and how many baskets ye took up? <sup>10</sup>Neither the seven loaves of the four thousand, and how many baskets ye took up? <sup>11</sup>How is it that ye do not understand that I spake it not to you concerning bread, that ye should beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees?”

<sup>12</sup>Then understood they how that he bade them not beware of the leaven of bread, but of the doctrine of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees.

## Questionary

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Today's is the second of six readings from Matthew 16.

1. One can think of “the doctrine of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees” in terms of its dogmas, principles, speculations, etc. But whatever its specifics, Jesus has just suggested (verses 1-4) that their doctrine keeps them from “discerning” the “signs of the times” and the desperate need for repentance in the face of looming catastrophe.
  - ? What, do you suppose, did Jesus hope the disciples would have learned from his feeding of 5000?
  - ? In their having missed the importance and meaning behind his miracle of feeding the 5000, how do the disciples display a lack of discernment about the “signs of the times” similar to that of the Pharisees and Sadducees?
2. The Gospel writers repeatedly demonstrate that during Jesus' mortal ministry the disciples consistently lacked the discernment to understand Jesus, his teachings and his actions.
  - ? To what other examples of the disciples' lack of discernment can you point?
  - ? What, do you suppose, did the Gospel writers hope readers would learn from their repeated reportage of the disciples' lack of discernment?
  - ? How are we all like the disciples?
  - ? Why is Jesus so difficult to comprehend?
  - ? What does our lack of discernment about Jesus and his nature say about the standard “education” into which life introduces all of us?

## Matthew 16.<sup>13-21</sup>

<sup>13</sup>When Jesus came into the coasts of Cæsarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, saying, “Whom do men say that I the Son of man am?”

<sup>14</sup>And they said, “Some say that thou art John the Baptist: some, Elias; and others, Jeremias, or one of the prophets.”

<sup>15</sup>He saith unto them, “But whom say ye that I am?”

<sup>16</sup>And Simon Peter answered and said, “Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.”

<sup>17</sup>And Jesus answered and said unto him, “Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven. <sup>18</sup>And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.

<sup>19</sup>And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.”

<sup>20</sup>Then charged he his disciples that they should tell no man that he was Jesus the Christ.

<sup>21</sup>From that time forth began Jesus to shew unto his disciples, how that he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day.

## Q

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Today’s is the third of six readings taken from Matthew 16. We will treat Matthew 16.<sup>13-16.28</sup>, reported to have taken place in the region of Philippi, as one episode and examine it in four readings. Today’s is the first of these four readings. It is also the first in a series of readings focused on “True Greatness and the Godly Use of Power” (Matthew 16.<sup>13-21</sup>; Matthew 16.<sup>22-23</sup>; Matthew 16.<sup>24-26</sup>; Luke 9.<sup>28-36, 44-45</sup>; Mark 9.<sup>33-35</sup> & Matthew 18.<sup>2-4</sup>; Luke 9.<sup>51-56</sup>; Mark 10.<sup>35-45</sup>; Matthew 21.<sup>1-5</sup>; Revelation 5.<sup>1-7</sup>)

We note the following pattern in this episode:

- Peter’s apostolic confession of Jesus’ Messiahship
- Jesus’ corrective statement concerning his Messiahship
- Peter’s apostolic “rebuke” of Jesus’ corrective statement
- Jesus’ rebuke of Peter’s false confession of Jesus’ Messiahship
- Jesus’ corrective instruction to Peter’s apostolic confession and rebuke

1. We begin with Peter’s apostolic confession:

“Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.”

- ? What do you know about Jewish beliefs concerning the Messiah at the time of this episode? Take a moment to outline in our head or on paper those beliefs.
- ? How likely, do you feel, is it that Peter embraced such beliefs about the Messiah?
- ? What, do you think, did Jesus’ Messiahship suggest to Peter about Jesus’ greatness and the extent of his power?

2. Part of Jesus’ response to Peter’s confession was his clarification that he would “suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day.”

- ? Why, do you think, did Jesus feel it necessary to mention this at this particular moment—he had never hinted at any such fate previously?
- ? How much does it partake of the spirit and mood of Peter’s confession?
- ? How might it serve as a corrective to any false notions concerning the Messiah that Peter may have inherited through his culture?
- ? How are Peter’s confession and Jesus’ warning at odds with each other?
- ? What does Jesus’ corrective to Peter’s confession suggest about true greatness and the godly use of power?

3. Jesus says that “upon this rock I will build my church.”

? What is the rock on which the church would be built?

Several possibilities have been suggested:

- Revelation in general
- Revelation of Jesus' Messiahship
- Peter himself

? How do you feel about each of these? What are the strengths and weaknesses of each?

## Matthew 16.<sup>21-23</sup>

<sup>21</sup>From that time forth began Jesus to shew unto his disciples, how that he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day. <sup>22</sup>Then Peter took him, and began to rebuke him, saying, “Be it far from thee, Lord: this shall not be unto thee.”

<sup>23</sup>But he turned, and said unto Peter, “Get thee behind me, Satan: thou art an offence unto me: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men.”

### Questionary

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Today’s is the fourth of six readings taken from Matthew 16. We will treat Matthew 16.<sup>13-16</sup>.<sup>28</sup>, reported to have taken place in the region of Cæsarea Philippi, as one episode and examine it in four readings. Today’s is the second of these four readings. It is also the second in a series of readings focused on “True Greatness and the Godly Use of Power” (Matthew 16.<sup>13-21</sup>; Matthew 16.<sup>22-23</sup>; Matthew 16.<sup>24-26</sup>; Luke 9.<sup>28-36, 44-45</sup>; Mark 9.<sup>33-35</sup> & Matthew 18.<sup>2-4</sup>; Luke 9.<sup>51-56</sup>; Mark 10.<sup>35-45</sup>; Matthew 21.<sup>1-5</sup>; Revelation 5.<sup>1-7</sup>)

In verses 13-21, and in reply to Jesus’ inquiry concerning what his disciples thought of him, Peter uttered his famous confession, “Thou art the Christ. The Son of the living God.” Sensing, perhaps, that Peter misunderstood the meaning of his Messiahship, and the true nature of his greatness, Jesus issued his first warning that he would be rejected and killed.

We note the following pattern in this episode:

- Peter’s apostolic confession of Jesus’ Messiahship
- Jesus’ corrective statement concerning his Messiahship
- Peter’s apostolic “rebuke” of Jesus’ corrective statement
- Jesus’ rebuke of Peter’s false confession of Jesus’ Messiahship
- Jesus’ corrective instruction to Peter’s apostolic confession and rebuke

1. Today’s reading immediately follows the well-known account of Peter’s faithful witness of and to Jesus, “Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.”
  - ? What do you suppose was in Peter’s mind as he contemplated and bore witness of Jesus’ messiahship?
  - ? Given Peter’s almost certain glorious perspective concerning Jesus’ messiahship, how do you feel about the fact that the very first lesson Jesus taught about himself after Peter’s triumphant witness—and indeed “from that time forward”—was “I will suffer and die at others’ hands”?
  - ? Why would Jesus follow up such a glorious revelation about his Messiahship with a warning about his impending death?
2. Matthew reports that “Peter took him, and began to rebuke him.”
  - ? What do you feel when you read this?
  - ? What do you suppose did Peter find so offensive about Jesus’ testimony concerning himself, his suffering, and his death?
  - ? How does Peter’s rebuke of Jesus inform and clarify his earlier confession?
3. In response to Peter’s rebuke of him, Jesus rebukes Peter with, “Get thee behind me, Satan: thou art an offence unto me: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men.”
  - ? How do you feel about Jesus’ associating Peter and Satan?
  - ? How do you feel about a confession that Jesus is the Christ turning satanic?
  - ? How does it happen?
  - ? How do we “savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men” by our misunderstanding and even false attitudes about the nature of greatness and toward power and how it is exercised?

- ? In what ways do individuals and societies betray Jesus' understanding of what it means to display true greatness, power, and nobility?
  - ? What changes might be required of our society in order to be more consistent with Jesus' understanding concerning the behavior of those with true greatness, power, and nobility?
  - ? What can you do to encourage such societal changes?
4. Matthew 16 began with Jesus' criticism of the Pharisees and Sadducees for their lack of discernment about Jesus and the "sign" that he represented to Judah (verses 1-40). In verses 5-12, Jesus' disciples display a similar lack of "discernment" into Jesus, his teachings and actions.
- ? How does Peter display a lack of discernment concerning Jesus similar to that found among the Pharisees and Sadducees?
  - ? How do you feel about this lack of discernment?
  - ? How is a similar lack of discernment exhibited today among Christians?
  - ? We ask again, why, do you think, do the Gospel writers so consistently focus on the lack of discernment into Jesus and his character exhibited by both his enemies and his disciples?

## Matthew 16.<sup>21-26</sup>— atonement

<sup>21</sup>From that time forth began Jesus to shew unto his disciples, how that he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day. <sup>22</sup>Then Peter took him, and began to rebuke him, saying, “Be it far from thee, Lord: this shall not be unto thee.”

<sup>23</sup>But he turned, and said unto Peter, “Get thee behind me, Satan: thou art an offence unto me: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men.”

<sup>24</sup>Then said Jesus unto his disciples, “If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. <sup>25</sup>For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it. <sup>26</sup>For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?”

## Questionary

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Today’s passage is one in our series of readings on Atonement entitled, “Sanctification: Imitating and living Atonement.”\* It is also part of our series of readings focused on “True Greatness and the Godly Use of Power” (Matthew 16.<sup>13-21</sup>; Matthew 16.<sup>22-23</sup>; Matthew 16.<sup>24-26</sup>; Luke 9.<sup>28-36, 44-45</sup>; Mark 9.<sup>33-35</sup> & Matthew 18.<sup>2-4</sup>; Luke 9.<sup>51-56</sup>; Mark 10.<sup>35-45</sup>; Matthew 21.<sup>1-5</sup>; Revelation 5.<sup>1-7</sup>). The reader may want to consult the other *Read, Ponder, Pray* exercises for today’s reading.

1. In verses 13-21, and in reply to Jesus’ inquiry concerning what his disciples thought of him, Peter uttered his famous confession, “Thou art the Christ. The Son of the living God.” Sensing, perhaps, that Peter misunderstood the meaning of his Messiahship, the true nature of his greatness, and the meaning and extent of his at-one-ment, or unity with humankind, Jesus issued his first warning that he would be rejected and killed.
  - ? How does this warning correct any misunderstandings Peter may have had about Jesus, about the nature of his greatness and power, and about the nature and extent of his commitment to be at one with others?
2. Matthew reports that “Peter took him, and began to rebuke him.”
  - ? What do you suppose did Peter find so offensive about Jesus’ testimony concerning his own suffering, and his death?
  - ? How does Peter’s rebuke of Jesus inform and clarify Peter’s false view of Jesus, of the nature of his greatness and power, and of what his at-one-ment might mean?
3. In response to Peter’s rebuke of him, Jesus rebukes Peter with, “Get thee behind me, Satan: thou art an offence unto me: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men.”
  - ? How do you feel about Jesus’ associating Peter and Satan?
  - ? How do you feel about Jesus associating Peter’s confession that Jesus is the Christ with something that is Satanic?
  - ? What is it about the kind of self-sacrifice in which Jesus engaged that a Satanic mindset finds so undesirable and so worthy of rebuke?
4. Jesus teaches his disciples that true greatness is found, not in the degree to which one can gratify themselves, but in their willingness to “deny” themselves.
  - ? How do you feel about this?
  - ? What does it mean to you to “deny” oneself?

The Greek word, *aparnéomai*, means “to reject, disown, or renounce claim to.” It can mean “to be faithless [to oneself].”

  - ? How does this impact your thoughts about the meaning of self-denial and what it means to be a true follower of Christ?
5. Jesus instructs his disciples to “take up his cross, and follow me.”

? Given that Jesus had not yet experienced crucifixion, what, do you suppose, were the disciples likely to make of this requirement to “take up a cross”?

The disciples were certainly aware of crucifixion as a means of capital punishment, and the humiliation it was to the victim and their family and friends.

? How, do you suppose, did the disciple’s feel about this admonition at the time Jesus expressed it?

? How, do you suppose, did the disciples’ attitudes and feelings change after Jesus’ crucifixion?

? What does it mean to you to take up his cross?

? How does your life reflect your discipleship in taking up his cross and engaging in self-sacrifice in order to serve others and draw them to Christ?

6. The KJV’s “If any man will come after me,” could be read, If anyone wishes or wants to follow me.” The self-denial and taking up the cross, then is a result of our “wanting” or “wishes.” We have a choice of whether to follow him or not. But having chosen to follow him, we no longer have a choice as to whether we will deny ourselves or not.

? How do you feel about this observation?

? What does your current life show about what you really want or wish? Why do you answer as you do?

? What does today’s reading teach you about true discipleship and about the nature of sanctification or taking upon you the nature of Christ?

? How closely does your own life and discipleship conform to Jesus’ standard?

\* The following ten titles are part of our atonement series:

“Fall: Our Need of Atonement”

“Grace: The Savior’s Generous and Earnest Invitation”

“At-one-ment: The Savior’s unity and connectedness with us”

“Sacrifice: What Jesus Suffered for Us”

“Glorification: The Savior’s Resurrection, Ascension, and Enthronement”

“Justification: How We Repent and Change”

“Renewal: The Hope, Joy, Peace, and Power of Atonement”

“Sanctification: Imitating and living a life of Atonement”

“Thanksgiving: In Praise of Atonement”

“Song of the Righteous: A Song unto Me”

## Matthew 16.<sup>24-26</sup>

<sup>24</sup>Then said Jesus unto his disciples, “If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. <sup>25</sup>For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it. <sup>26</sup>For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?”

### Questionary

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Today’s is the fifth of six readings taken from Matthew 16. We will treat Matthew 16.<sup>13-16.28</sup>, reported to have taken place in the region of Cæsarea Philippi, as one episode and examine it in four readings. Today’s is the third of these four readings. It is also the third in a series of readings focused on “True Greatness and the Godly Use of Power” (Matthew 16.<sup>13-21</sup>; Matthew 16.<sup>22-23</sup>; Matthew 16.<sup>24-26</sup>; Luke 9.<sup>28-36, 44-45</sup>; Mark 9.<sup>33-35</sup> & Matthew 18.<sup>2-4</sup>; Luke 9.<sup>51-56</sup>; Mark 10.<sup>35-45</sup>; Matthew 21.<sup>1-5</sup>; Revelation 5.<sup>1-7</sup>)

In verses 13-21, and in reply to Jesus’ inquiry concerning what his disciples thought of him, Peter uttered his famous confession, “Thou art the Christ. The Son of the living God.” Sensing, perhaps, that Peter misunderstood the meaning of his Messiahship, and the true nature of his greatness, Jesus issued his first warning that he would be rejected and killed.

In verses 22-23, Peter rebukes Jesus for his warning. Jesus replies with his own rebuke of Peter, suggesting that Peter’s rebuke was satanic and driven by selfish desires rather than the will of God.

We note the following pattern in this episode:

- Peter’s apostolic confession of Jesus’ Messiahship
- Jesus’ corrective statement concerning his Messiahship
- Peter’s apostolic “rebuke” of Jesus’ corrective statement
- Jesus’ rebuke of Peter’s false confession of Jesus’ Messiahship
- Jesus’ corrective instruction to Peter’s apostolic confession and rebuke

After Peter’s confession concerning Jesus’ Messiahship, Jesus warned, as a sort of corrective to the disciples’ false ideas concerning the nature of that Messiahship, that he would be rejected and killed. Peter rebuked Jesus for this corrective warning, for which Jesus rebuked Peter. In today’s reading, Jesus offers instruction on the meaning of true greatness and the godly exercise of power.

1. Jesus teaches his disciples that true greatness is found, not in the degree to which one can gratify themselves, but in “denying” themselves.
  - ? How do you feel about this?
  - ? How well do those whom your society considers powerful and prestigious conform to Jesus’ idea of true greatness?
  - ? What does it mean to you to “deny” oneself?

The Greek word, *aparnéomai*, means “to reject, disown, or renounce claim to.” It can mean “to be faithless [to oneself].”

- ? How does this impact your thoughts about the meaning of self-denial?
- ? Consider instances in Jesus’ life when he “practiced what he is preaching here.”

2. Jesus instructs his disciples to “take up his cross, and follow me.”

- ? Given that Jesus had not yet experienced crucifixion, what, do you suppose, were the disciples likely to make of this requirement to “take up a cross”?

The disciples were certainly aware of crucifixion as a means of capital punishment, and the humiliation it was to the victim and their family and friends.

- ? How do you suppose the disciple’s felt about this admonition at the time Jesus expressed it?



- ? How, do you suppose, did the disciples' attitudes and feelings change after Jesus' crucifixion?
- 3. The KJV's "If any man will come after me," could be read, If anyone wishes or wants to follow me." The self-denial and taking up the cross, then is a result of our "wanting or wishes. We have a choice of whether to follow him or not. But having chosen to follow him, we do no longer have a choice as to whether we will deny ourselves or not.
  - ? How do you feel about this observation?
  - ? What does your current life show about what you really want or wish?
- ? How closely does your own life and discipleship conform to Jesus' standard?

## Matthew 16.<sup>27-28</sup>

<sup>27</sup>For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels; and then he shall reward every man according to his works. <sup>28</sup>Verily I say unto you, There be some standing here, which shall not taste of death, till they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom.

### Questionary

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Today's is the last of six readings from Matthew 16.

We will treat Matthew 16.<sup>13-16</sup>.<sup>28</sup>, reported to have taken place in the region of Cæsarea Philippi, as one episode and examine it in four readings. Today's is the last of these four readings.

We note the following pattern in this episode:

- Peter's apostolic confession of Jesus' Messiahship
- Jesus' corrective statement concerning his Messiahship
- Peter's apostolic "rebuke" of Jesus' corrective statement
- Jesus' rebuke of Peter's false confession of Jesus' Messiahship
- Jesus' corrective instruction to Peter's apostolic confession and rebuke

The chapter began with Jesus' criticism of Judah's religious leadership because of their lack of discernment into Jesus and his character—especially his role as a "sign" indicative of the nation's need to repent (verses 1-4). In verses 5-12, Jesus complains that his disciples exhibit the same lack of discernment. Then, with Peter's confession, the disciples again exhibit a lack of discernment into the character of Jesus.

After Peter's confession concerning Jesus' Messiahship, Jesus warned, as a sort of corrective to the disciples' false ideas concerning the nature of that Messiahship, that he would be rejected and killed. Peter rebuked Jesus for this corrective warning, for which Jesus rebuked Peter. Jesus then offered instruction on the meaning of true greatness and the godly exercise of power, indicating that disciples were expected to follow Jesus' example of self-denial and sacrifice.

1. Jesus speaks of "reward[ing] every man according to his works."
  - ? What does this mean to you?
  - ? For what "works" will "every man" be "rewarded"?

Jesus does not speak here of "punishing every man according to his works."

- ? What is the significance of this observation and of Jesus omitting of it?

Since nearly everyone, even the worst among us, at least occasionally does something worthy of "reward," it seems that "every man" will receive some type of reward—great or small, few or many.

- ? What are your thoughts as you contemplate this observation?

2. The chapter began with Jesus observation concerning the Pharisees and Sadducees lack of discernment into Jesus' character (1-4). The remainder of the chapter focused on the disciples, their similar lack of discernment into Jesus' character, the need to understand Jesus' character, and a disciple's need to adopt a character similar to that found in Jesus.

- ? How does Jesus' promise that "every man" will be "rewarded" "according to his works" apply to the central call of the chapter: that a disciple discern Jesus true nature and seek to imitate it?

## Matthew 17.<sup>1-8</sup>

<sup>1</sup>And after six days Jesus taketh Peter, James, and John his brother, and bringeth them up into an high mountain apart, <sup>2</sup>And was transfigured before them: and his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light. <sup>3</sup>And, behold, there appeared unto them Moses and Elias talking with him.

<sup>4</sup>Then answered Peter, and said unto Jesus, “Lord, it is good for us to be here: if thou wilt, let us make here three tabernacles; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias.”

<sup>5</sup>While he yet spake, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them: and behold a voice out of the cloud, which said, “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him.”

<sup>6</sup>And when the disciples heard it, they fell on their face, and were sore afraid. <sup>7</sup>And Jesus came and touched them, and said, “Arise, and be not afraid.”

<sup>8</sup>And when they had lifted up their eyes, they saw no man, save Jesus only.

## Questionary

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Today’s reading is the first of five readings taken from Matthew 17. This reading should be compared to the reading taken from Luke 9.<sup>28-36, 44-45</sup>, which was part of our series, “True Greatness and the Godly Use of Power.”

1. Matthew 16 can be read as commentary on Jesus’ disciples and their lack of discernment concerning Jesus’ nature and character.
  - ? How might what the disciple’s observed on the Mount of Transfiguration help them better discern the character of Jesus?
  - ? What might this even have taught his disciples about Jesus’ character?
2. The Gospel writers report that Jesus met with Moses and Elijah on the Mount of Transfiguration.
  - ? What is the significance of Jesus meeting with these two specific Hebrew prophets?
3. Peter was prepared to commemorate the even with some sort of shrine.
  - ? What are your thoughts about Peter’s intention? What did he intend and why?
4. All thought of a shrine built in honor of Jesus, Moses, and Elijah came to a halt and with the appearance of the voice of God.
  - ? What does this suggest to you?
  - ? How does God stand above and apart from even the most notable of prophets?
  - ? How do we sometimes allow ourselves to become enamored of prophets rather than God Himself?
5. When the disciples heard the voice of God, “they fell on their face, and were sore afraid.”
  - ? What does the different in the disciples’ response between the presence of God and the presence of Moses and Elijah suggest to you?

## Matthew 17.<sup>14-21</sup>

<sup>14</sup>And when they were come to the multitude, there came to him a certain man, kneeling down to him, and saying, <sup>15</sup>“Lord, have mercy on my son: for he is lunatick, and sore vexed: for oftentimes he falleth into the fire, and oft into the water. <sup>16</sup>And I brought him to thy disciples, and they could not cure him.”

<sup>17</sup>Then Jesus answered and said, “O faithless and perverse generation, how long shall I be with you? How long shall I suffer you? Bring him hither to me.”

<sup>18</sup>And Jesus rebuked the devil; and he departed out of him: and the child was cured from that very hour.

<sup>19</sup>Then came the disciples to Jesus apart, and said, “Why could not we cast him out?”

<sup>20</sup>And Jesus said unto them, “Because of your unbelief: for verily I say unto you, If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, ‘Remove hence to yonder place;’ and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you. <sup>21</sup>Howbeit this kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting.”

## Q

uestionary

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Today’s reading is the third of five readings taken from Matthew 17.

1. The Father of the afflicted son, informed Jesus that “oftentimes he falleth into the fire, and oft into the water.”
  - ? What is the significance of this observation?
  - ? What would you think of and how would we deal with someone intent on committing suicide as this son was?
  - ? Given this repeated pattern of attempted suicide, how old do you imagine this son to be?
  - ? What does it say about the desperate sadness and depression that tormented the son?
2. After lamenting the “faithless” nature of his generation, including his disciples, Jesus says, “How long shall I suffer you?”
  - ? What, do you think, did Jesus mean by “suffering” you?
3. Jesus informed his disciples that “If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, ‘Remove hence to yonder place;’ and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you.”
  - ? How much “faith” is that of “a grain of mustard seed”?
  - ? How do we sometimes mentally and rhetorically almost change Jesus’ saying to “It takes a mountain of faith to move a grain of mustard seed”?
4. Of his healing, Jesus says, “this kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting.”
  - ? How have you used prayer and fasting to do things that seemed beyond your capacity?
  - ? How does today’s reading add to your view of Jesus’ disciples and their lack of discernment regarding Jesus?
  - ? How is today’s reading consistent with what you have been learning of Jesus’ disciples from Matthew 16 and 17?

## Matthew 17.<sup>22-23</sup>

<sup>22</sup>And while they abode in Galilee, Jesus said unto them, “The Son of man shall be betrayed into the hands of men: <sup>23</sup>And they shall kill him, and the third day he shall be raised again.”

And they were exceeding sorry.

## Q

uestionary

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Today’s reading is the fourth of five readings taken from Matthew 17.

During roughly the first half of Jesus’ mortal ministry, Jesus said nary a word about his mortal destiny. He issued no warning of his rejection, suffering, or death. But with Peter’s confession, all of that changed.

- ? Take a moment to review Matthew 16 and 17. How many times does Jesus issue such a warning in just the next few days after Peter’s confession?
  - Immediately after Peter’s confession: “From that time forth began Jesus to shew unto his disciples, how that he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day” (Mt. 16.21).
  - Immediately after Jesus’ transfiguration: “Tell the vision to no man, until the Son of man be risen again from the dead” (Mt. 17.<sup>9</sup>).
  - “Likewise shall also the Son of man suffer of them” (Mt. 17.<sup>12</sup>).
  - Luke informs us that during Jesus’ visit with Elijah and Moses on the Mount of Transfiguration, the three of them “spake of his decease which he should accomplish at Jerusalem” (Lk 9.<sup>31</sup>).
- ? Why, do you think, did Jesus begin to speak more often and directly of his coming arrest, suffering, and death?
- ? How did the disciples respond to this unwelcome news?
- ? In addition to trying to prepare them for the future, what lessons, do you suppose, did Jesus hope they would learn from his arrest, suffering, and death?
- ? What do you learn from Jesus’ arrest, suffering, and death?
- ? How do you apply and practice those lessons in your daily life?

## Matthew 18.<sup>1-6</sup>

<sup>1</sup>At the same time came the disciples unto Jesus, saying, “Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?”

<sup>2</sup>And Jesus called a little child unto him, and set him in the midst of them, <sup>3</sup>And said, “Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. <sup>4</sup>Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven. <sup>5</sup>And whoso shall receive one such little child in my name receiveth me. <sup>6</sup>But whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea.

## Questionary

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Today’s reading is the 1<sup>st</sup> of 8 readings taken from Matthew 18. It is also one in our series of readings entitled, “True Greatness and the Godly Use of Power.” This series includes readings from Matthew 16.<sup>13-21</sup>, Matthew 16.<sup>22-23</sup>, Matthew 16.<sup>24-26</sup>, Luke 9.<sup>28-36, 44-45</sup>, Mark 9.<sup>33-35</sup> & Matthew 18.<sup>2-4</sup>, Luke 9.<sup>51-56</sup>, Mark 10.<sup>35-45</sup>, Matthew 21.<sup>1-5</sup>, and Revelation 5.<sup>1-7</sup>. Today’s reading is parallel to our reading from Mark 9.<sup>33-35</sup>.

1. Think about the disciples’ question: “Who is greatest in the kingdom of heaven?”
  - ? What, do you suppose, did the disciples have in mind when they thought of “greatness”?
  - ? How do you feel about their asking this question?
  - ? What, exactly, do you think they are asking?

Consider the following options.

- “What individual—for example, Moses or Elijah or even you, Jesus—holds the honor of being the ‘greatest’ ‘in the kingdom of heaven’?”
- “What sort of individual, i.e., what sort of character and what attributes, does the ‘greatest’ ‘in the kingdom of heaven’ possess?”
- “Is there any chance that we can be the ‘greatest’ ‘in the kingdom of heaven,’ and if so, how?”

Luke adds this notice to this episode: “Then there arose a reasoning among them, which of them should be greatest” (Luke 9.<sup>46</sup>). Mark adds this one: “And he came to Capernaum: and being in the house he asked them, ‘What was it that ye disputed among yourselves by the way?’ But they held their peace: for by the way they had disputed among themselves, who should be the greatest” (Mark 9.<sup>33-34</sup>).

- ? How do these notices influence the way you answer the proceeding question?
- ? How do you feel about this discussion on the part of the disciples?
- ? Which question does Jesus seem to answer?
- ? How does Jesus’ use of a child as an “object lesson” serve to answer the disciples’ question?

2. Jesus speaks of being “converted” and becoming “as little children.”
  - ? What does he mean by being “converted”?
  - ? If we understand “conversion” as a “turning away” from one thing and “turning toward” another, from what are we to turn if we are to turn to being “as little children”?
  - ? What is it about little children that makes them “the greatest” “in the kingdom of heaven”?

Jesus seems to restate his first assertion with a second: “Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven.”

- ? What, do you think, would the disciples see in the “little child” that they would have identified as “humble”?

3. Jesus ends with a warning: “whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it

were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea.”

- ? How does one “offend” a “little one”?
- ? How do you feel about Jesus’ warning that it is better to be dead than to offend a “little one”?
- ? Based on Jesus’ criteria for “greatness,” what level of “greatness” do you possess? Why do you answer as you do?
- ? What does it say about an individual who wonders about their own “greatness” in the kingdom?
- ? How well do you do in not “offending little ones”?
- ? How well does society do in not “offending little ones”?

## Matthew 18.<sup>7-10</sup>

<sup>7</sup>“Woe unto the world because of offences! For it must needs be that offences come; but woe to that man by whom the offence cometh! <sup>8</sup>Wherefore if thy hand or thy foot offend thee, cut them off, and cast them from thee: it is better for thee to enter into life halt or maimed, rather than having two hands or two feet to be cast into everlasting fire.

<sup>9</sup>And if thine eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee: it is better for thee to enter into life with one eye, rather than having two eyes to be cast into hell fire. <sup>10</sup>Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones; for I say unto you, that in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven.

## Questionary

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Today’s reading is the 2<sup>nd</sup> of 8 readings taken from Matthew 18.

In the first reading from Matthew 18 (verses 1-6), Jesus sought to help his disciples understand the true nature of greatness and power by holding up children as possessing attributes that are associated with true greatness and power. He then warned, “But whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea.”

1. In today’s reading, Jesus stays with his theme of “offense.”
  - ? What does Jesus mean by “offense”?
  - ? What thoughts and feelings do you have when we suggest that to “offend” means to “scandalize”?
  - ? What do you think of when you think of “scandal”?
  - ? Would it be fair to say that Jesus himself “offended” or “scandalized” many Jews, including, especially, the religious leadership? Why is he not guilty of the very “offense” against which he warns?
  - ? What is the difference between upsetting the unrepentant guilty by outlining their flaws, and causing “offense”?
  - ? What do think and feel if we suggest that an “offense” is something said and done against an “innocent” person or group, but cannot be applied to something done or said against the unrepentant “guilty”?
  - ? How does this relate to Nephi’s observation that “the guilty taketh the truth to be hard”? (1 Ne. 16.<sup>2</sup>)

Today’s reading closes out with Jesus returning to innocent children: “Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones; for I say unto you, that in heaven do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven.”

- ? How does this support the idea that the “offense” about which Jesus is speaking is something that is done to innocent people or groups?
2. Jesus’ recommendation that those who cause “offense” should be “cut off” seems harsh.
    - ? How do you feel about it?
    - ? Does it change your feelings to know that it is “innocent” people and groups that Jesus is seeking to protect?
    - ? What examples of “offense” would you point to in your experience and your society?
    - ? What can you do to avoid being one who gives offense?
    - ? How do you balance giving offense with speaking the truth about the realities of sin and guilt?



## Matthew 18.<sup>11-14</sup>

<sup>11</sup>“For the Son of man is come to save that which was lost. <sup>12</sup>How think ye? if a man have an hundred sheep, and one of them be gone astray, doth he not leave the ninety and nine, and goeth into the mountains, and seeketh that which is gone astray? <sup>13</sup>And if so be that he find it, verily I say unto you, he rejoiceth more of that sheep, than of the ninety and nine which went not astray. <sup>14</sup>Even so it is not the will of your Father which is in heaven, that one of these little ones should perish.

### Questionary

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Today's reading is the 3<sup>rd</sup> of 8 readings taken from Matthew 18.

In the first reading from Matthew 18 (verses 1-6), Jesus sought to help his disciples understand the true nature of greatness and power by holding up children as possessing attributes that are associated with true greatness and power. He then went on to warn about the evil and consequences of “offending” children, or the “innocent.”

1. Our previous reading ended with Jesus issuing this warning: “Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones; for I say unto you, that in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven” (verse 10). Today's reading begins with “For...” or “because...” in verse 11.
    - ? What does this “for” tell you about the relationship between verses 10 and 11?
    - ? What do “these little ones” have in common with those “which were lost”?
    - ? How are those who are “lost” offended by “the ninety and nine which went not astray”?
  2. Jesus speaks of “ninety and nine which went not astray”?
    - ? What does he mean by this? Of whom is he speaking?
    - ? Why, do you think, did Jesus mentioned such a group that, in fact, do not exist—“All have sinned and come short of the glory of God” (Rom. 3.<sup>23</sup>).
  3. Jesus tells how a shepherd “goeth into the mountains, and seeketh that which is gone astray.”
    - ? What is the significance of the shepherd, himself, “going into the mountains” to “seek” those who have “gone astray”?
    - ? How would it feel different if he had told how the shepherd stays at home and calls out to those who have “gone astray”?
    - ? How is Jesus' departure from his glory in heaven, his incarnation, and earthly ministry related to this parable?
    - ? How is this earth like the rugged and desert mountains in the parable?
    - ? How do you feel about Jesus' willingness to suffer the discomforts of “the mountains” in order to seek after we who had “gone astray”?
- ? Read Luke 15.1-7. What additional insights do you have from this version of Jesus' parable of the lost sheep?

## Matthew 18.<sup>15-18</sup>

<sup>15</sup>Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. <sup>16</sup>But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established.

<sup>17</sup>And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church: but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican. <sup>18</sup>Verily I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.

### Questionary

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1. Jesus offers a four-step approach in dealing with a “brother” who wrongs you.
  - ? What is meant by “brother”? Who might be included in this designation?
  - ? Since a “brother” is anyone with whom one has had a relationship—male or female—how, do you suppose, does this counsel apply to those with whom you might have no relationship and who wrong you somehow?
2. When someone wrongs you, Jesus suggests that you “go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone.”
  - ? What tone does Jesus anticipate that this will be done? What is the objective?
  - ? What is the difference, both for you and the offender, between the wrong being presented in the attitude of accusation or in the spirit of showing the impact that the wrong has had on you?
3. If the one-on-one does not change the offender’s attitudes and actions, Jesus counsels that one “take with thee one or two more.”
  - ? What is the tone and objective of this approach?
4. If the offender will not change his attitudes and actions after the the one-on-one and small-group approach, Jesus counsels the one “tell it unto the church.”
  - ? What is the tone and objective of this approach?
5. If the offender will still not change his attitudes and actions, Jesus counsels that he “be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican.”
  - ? What does this mean to you?
  - ? How did Jesus, himself, treat “heathens” and “publicans”?
  - ? Given Jesus’ willingness to serve, especially, “publicans” what does this suggest about the ongoing relationship between the wronged individual and the wrongdoer?
6. In this reading, Jesus’ offers counsel about dealing with individuals who do wrong to others with whom they have entered into a covenant of community, cooperation, love, and respect.
  - ? How does Jesus’ approach seek to reclaim the individual wrongdoer?
  - ? How does Jesus’ approach seek to maintain the sense of health and power in community?
  - ? How does the wrongdoer demonstrate his desire to either be part of a healthy community or his desire to be a disruptive influence within the community?
  - ? How do you feel about restricting an individual’s participation in a community when they openly refuse to stop being a harmful and disruptive influence within that community?
  - ? How does none restrict participation within the community and, at the same time, treat them as Jesus treated publicans?
  - ? What does all of this say about Jesus’ sense of community and the importance of maintaining communal health?

## Matthew 21.<sup>1-11</sup>— lent

<sup>1</sup>And when they drew nigh unto Jerusalem, and were come to Bethphage, unto the mount of Olives, then sent Jesus two disciples, <sup>2</sup>Saying unto them, “Go into the village over against you, and straightway ye shall find an ass tied, and a colt with her: loose them, and bring them unto me. <sup>3</sup>And if any man say ought unto you, ye shall say, ‘The Lord hath need of them;’ and straightway he will send them.”

<sup>4</sup>All this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying,

<sup>5</sup>“Tell ye the daughter of Sion,  
Behold, thy King cometh unto thee,  
meek, and sitting upon an ass,  
and a colt the foal of an ass.”

<sup>6</sup>And the disciples went, and did as Jesus commanded them, <sup>7</sup>And brought the ass, and the colt, and put on them their clothes, and they set him thereon. <sup>8</sup>And a very great multitude spread their garments in the way; others cut down branches from the trees, and strawed them in the way. <sup>9</sup>And the multitudes that went before, and that followed, cried, saying,

“Hosanna to the Son of David:  
Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord;  
Hosanna in the highest.”

<sup>10</sup>And when he was come into Jerusalem, all the city was moved, saying, “Who is this?”

<sup>11</sup>And the multitude said, “This is Jesus the prophet of Nazareth of Galilee.”

## Questionary

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Today’s reading for Palm Sunday, the first of our readings for Holy Week, is our 40<sup>th</sup> reading for the Lent/ Easter season.

1. Throughout our readings for Holy Week, our first priority will be to use our imagination; to close our eyes and form a picture of what we are reading, and to consider how we feel about what we are witnessing. With that in mind, close your eyes and picture the scene of Jesus’ entrance on a donkey.
  - ? What do you see?
  - ? What does the donkey look like?
  - ? How does Jesus look on the donkey?
  - ? How do you feel about what you are seeing?
2. Matthew quotes Zechariah to say of Jesus, “Behold, thy King cometh unto thee, meek, and sitting upon an ass.”
  - ? What is the opposite of “meekness”?
  - ? What does the fact that Jesus is a “meek ruler” suggest about the manner in which Jesus will rule, govern, or operate in your life?
  - ? How does this relate to the following invitation that Jesus extends to all?

“Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls” (Matthew 11.<sup>28-29</sup>).
  - ? Remembering that Jesus and Father are one, how does Jesus’ meekness as exemplified by his choice of donkey as mount impact the way you approach God in prayer?
  - ? When you pray, do you pray to a “meek” Being, or Someone closer to the opposite of “meek”?
3. Throughout his early ministry, Jesus has attempted to undo his disciples’ false, world-based view of the nature of greatness and power, and help them understand through his words and actions the nature of true greatness and power as it is exercised in heaven and as it ought to be exercised among those who are followers of God.

- ? How would most generals, kings, rulers, Caesars, etc. enter a city in “triumphal procession”?
  - ? How does Jesus’ choice of a donkey as a means of conveyance into Jerusalem contrast with such entries?
  - ? How does Jesus’ choice of a donkey as a means of conveyance into Jerusalem relate to and confirm his message of what it means to be truly great and powerful?
  - ? How can you conduct yourself so as to display greatness and power in a godly manner?
4. Jesus’ entrance into Jerusalem was accompanied by large crowds of very happy and excited people.
- ? What was the reason for their happiness and excitement?
  - ? Close your eyes once more. Imagine the scene. What do the crowds look like? What sounds do you hear?

One of the things we hear is the crowd’s shout, “Hosanna to the Son of David: Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord; Hosanna in the highest.”

- ? What, do you think, did this mean to them?
  - ? What did it mean to Jesus?
  - ? What does it mean to you?
- ? During this year’s Holy Week, what can you do to invite Jesus’ glad entrance into and deeper presence in your life?

## Matthew 21.<sup>12-16</sup>— lent

<sup>12</sup>And Jesus went into the temple of God, and cast out all them that sold and bought in the temple, and overthrew the tables of the moneychangers, and the seats of them that sold doves, <sup>13</sup>and said unto them, “It is written, ‘My house shall be called the house of prayer;’ but ye have made it a den of thieves.”

<sup>14</sup>And the blind and the lame came to him in the temple; and he healed them. <sup>15</sup>And when the chief priests and scribes saw the wonderful things that he did, and the children crying in the temple, and saying, “Hosanna to the Son of David;” they were sore displeased, <sup>16</sup>And said unto him, “Hearest thou what these say?”

And Jesus saith unto them, “Yea; have ye never read, ‘Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings thou hast perfected praise?’”

## Questionary

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This is our 41<sup>st</sup> reading for Lent/Easter. According to traditional Christian chronology, Jesus “cleansed” the temple on Monday of his final mortal week.

1. As we will do throughout Holy Week, we invite you to close your eyes and imagine the temple. Imagine the crowds. Imagine the “business” that is taking place in the temple. And, finally, imagine Jesus as he chases the businessmen from the temple.
  - ? What do you see?
  - ? What is Jesus’ mood?
  - ? What are those gathered doing? What do they look like in their activities?
  - ? How would you respond to someone “unauthorized” coming into the temple and attempting to change its organization?

2. In referring to the temple as a “den of thieves,” Jesus seems to be quoting the Hebrew prophet, Jeremiah.

“Is this house, which is called by my name, become a den of robbers in your eyes?” (Jer. 7.<sup>11</sup>)

- ? What do you picture when you imagine a “den of thieves”?

A “den of thieves” is a place where the guilty and lawless can go to escape the consequences of their crimes.

- ? How was the temple being used as a means to escape just consequences?
- ? What type of attitudes and behaviors would turn a modern temple into a “den of thieves”?

Jeremiah did a brief survey of the crimes and sins being committed by those who went to the temple.

“Trust ye not in lying words, saying, ‘The temple of the LORD, The temple of the LORD, The temple of the LORD, *are* these.’

“For if ye thoroughly amend your ways and your doings; if ye thoroughly execute judgment between a man and his neighbour; *if* ye oppress not the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow, and shed not innocent blood in this place, neither walk after other gods to your hurt: then will I cause you to dwell in this place, in the land that I gave to your fathers, for ever and ever.

“Behold, ye trust in lying words, that cannot profit. Will ye steal, murder, and commit adultery, and swear falsely, and burn incense unto Baal, and walk after other gods whom ye know not; and come and stand before me in this house, which is called by my name, and say, “We are delivered to do all these abominations?” (Jer. 7.<sup>5-10</sup>)

- ? How are the attitudes and behaviors that Jeremiah describes contrary to the ideals of the temple and of true worship of God?

3. Hearing Jewish leaders’ complaint about the crowd’s exuberance toward him, Jesus quotes the Psalmist (perhaps an alternative translation?) “Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings thou hast

perfected praise?" (Ps. 8.<sup>2</sup>).

? What does it mean to "perfect praise"?

? How does Jesus' attitude toward the "common people" contrast with that of the Jewish leaders?

## Matthew 22.<sup>34-40</sup>— Atonement

<sup>34</sup>But when the Pharisees had heard that he had put the Sadducees to silence, they were gathered together. <sup>35</sup>Then one of them, which was a lawyer, asked him a question, tempting him, and saying, <sup>36</sup>“Master, which is the great commandment in the law?”

<sup>37</sup>Jesus said unto him, “‘Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.’ <sup>38</sup>This is the first and great commandment.

<sup>39</sup>And the second is like unto it, ‘Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.’ <sup>40</sup>On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.”

### Q

uestionary

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This reading is one in a series of readings on Atonement that we entitle, “Sanctification: Imitating and living Jesus’ life of Atonement.”\* It also represents a reading from our Lent/Easter series of readings as, according to traditional chronologies, the conversation reported here took place on Tuesday of Holy Week.

1. As our title suggests, sanctification is about imitating Jesus in his feelings and actions of at-one-ment or connectedness with others
  - ? To what words and actions of Jesus would you point as evidence of his love for and attachment to God and others?
2. According to Matthew, this question was put to Jesus in a “tempting” way.
  - ? What does this mean to you?
  - ? What was the “lawyer” hoping to accomplish?
  - ? How, if at all, did the lawyer’s insincerity impact Jesus’ answer?
3. Consider the lawyer’s question, “Which is the great commandment in the law?”
  - ? In light of our familiarity with this question, it is difficult to do, but we want you to try. If you had been asked this question without knowledge of Jesus’ answer, how would you answer this question? Why do you answer as you do?
  - ? If someone followed you around to observe your daily activities, would they be able to surmise from your actions that these two things were the most important things in your life? What would they see to confirm or deny it?
  - ? What do you think and feel when you consider that Jesus did not answer with any specific, legalistic rule?
  - ? What is the relationship between love and legalistic behaviors?
4. Jesus says that “all the law and the prophets” “hang” on the love of God and the love of neighbour.
  - ? What does this mean to you?
  - ? How does the following passage relate to Jesus’ answer and his vision of the law?

“Now the end of the commandment is charity out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned” (1 Tim. 1.5).
  - ? What do you think and feel when we suggest that “charity” and thus loving relationship with others and God is really the only commandment?
  - ? Are there “commandments” that you keep that do not consciously invoke love of others? How would they fit into Jesus’ view of the commandments and of true obedience?
  - ? Can anyone claim obedience to God or others if love isn’t the motivating factor? Why do you answer as you do?

Write down six to ten specific commandments or rules of behavior.

? How do these relate to and serve as a reflection of the love of God?

? How do these relate to and serve as a reflection of the love of neighbor?

\* The following ten titles are part of our atonement series:

“Fall: Our Need of Atonement”

“Grace: The Savior’s Generous and Earnest Invitation”

“At-one-ment: The Savior’s unity and connectedness with us”

“Sacrifice: What Jesus Suffered for Us”

“Glorification: The Savior’s Resurrection, Ascension, and Enthronement”

“Justification: How We Repent and Change”

“Renewal: The Hope, Joy, Peace, and Power of Atonement”

“Sanctification: Imitating and living Jesus’ life of Atonement”

“Thanksgiving: In Praise of Atonement”

“The Song of the Righteous: A Song unto Me”



## Matthew 22.<sup>34-40</sup>— lent

<sup>34</sup>But when the Pharisees had heard that he had put the Sadducees to silence, they were gathered together. <sup>35</sup>Then one of them, which was a lawyer, asked him a question, tempting him, and saying, <sup>36</sup>“Master, which is the great commandment in the law?”

<sup>37</sup>Jesus said unto him, “‘Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.’ <sup>38</sup>This is the first and great commandment.

<sup>39</sup>And the second is like unto it, ‘Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.’ <sup>40</sup>On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.”

### Questionary

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This is our 42<sup>nd</sup> reading for Lent/Easter 2024. According to the traditional chronology of Jesus’ final week, this conversation took place on Tuesday.

1. According to Matthew, the question, “Which is the great commandment in the law?” was put to Jesus in a “tempting” way.
  - ? What does this mean to you?
  - ? What was the “lawyer” hoping to accomplish?
  - ? How, if at all, did the lawyer’s insincerity impact Jesus’ answer?
2. Consider the lawyer’s question, “Which is the great commandment in the law?”
  - ? How, do you imagine, might you have answered had you been asked the same question?
  - ? What do you think and feel when you consider that Jesus did not answer with any specific, legalistic rule?
  - ? What is the relationship between love and legalistic behaviors?
3. Jesus says that “all the law and the prophets” “hang” on the love of God and the love of neighbor.
  - ? What does this mean to you?
  - ? How does the following passage relate to Jesus’ answer and his vision of the law?

“Now the end of the commandment is charity out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned” (1 Tim. 1.<sup>5</sup>).
  - ? Can anyone claim obedience to God’s commandments if love isn’t the motivating factor behind the behavior? Why do you answer as you do?

Write down six to ten specific commandments or rules of behavior.

- ? How do these relate to and serve as a reflection of the love of God?
- ? How do these relate to and serve as a reflection of the love of neighbor?

**Matthew 24.**<sup>42, 44, 46</sup>

<sup>42</sup>Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come.

<sup>44</sup>Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh.

<sup>46</sup>Blessed is that servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing.

**Q**uestionary

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Today's reading is the 22<sup>nd</sup> in a series of Advent readings that will continue throughout the month of December. With it, we return to a consideration of Jesus' future appearance.

1. It is certainly true that we cannot know when the Savior may return for his anticipated "second coming." But, today we ask,
  - ? How much thought do you give to Jesus' second coming?
  - ? How much does it impact the way you conduct your life from day to day?
  - ? When you contemplate his second coming, what do you imagine?
  - ? If we suggested that you spend additional time and effort during this Christmas Season to invite Jesus to come now and minister now to you and those you love, what is it that you would do to extend this invitation?

**Matthew 25.**<sup>34-36</sup>— just scripture

<sup>34</sup>Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, ‘Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: <sup>35</sup>for I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: <sup>36</sup>naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me.

**Q**uestionary

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- ? How do you feel about the “requirements” for inheriting “the kingdom” that Jesus outlines in today’s reading?
- ? How closely does our nation, with its policies, procedures, and laws, resemble a kingdom that could be said to have God as its exemplar and/or rulers?

## Matthew 26.<sup>36-46</sup>— lent

<sup>36</sup>Then cometh Jesus with them unto a place called Gethsemane, and saith unto the disciples, “Sit ye here, while I go and pray yonder.”

<sup>37</sup>And he took with him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and began to be sorrowful and very heavy. <sup>38</sup>Then saith he unto them, “My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death: tarry ye here, and watch with me.”

<sup>39</sup>And he went a little further, and fell on his face, and prayed, saying, “O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt.”

<sup>40</sup>And he cometh unto the disciples, and findeth them asleep, and saith unto Peter, “What, could ye not watch with me one hour? <sup>41</sup>Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.”

<sup>42</sup>He went away again the second time, and prayed, saying, “O my Father, if this cup may not pass away from me, except I drink it, thy will be done.”

<sup>43</sup>And he came and found them asleep again: for their eyes were heavy. <sup>44</sup>And he left them, and went away again, and prayed the third time, saying the same words. <sup>45</sup>Then cometh he to his disciples, and saith unto them, “Sleep on now, and take your rest: behold, the hour is at hand, and the Son of man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. <sup>46</sup>Rise, let us be going: behold, he is at hand that doth betray me.”

## Q

uestionary

Today’s is our 44<sup>th</sup> reading for Lent/Easter. According to the traditional chronology of Jesus’ final week, the events recorded in today’s reading took place on Thursday evening.

1. Upon arriving at Gethsemane, Jesus informed his disciples, “My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death.”
  - ? Put Jesus’ words in your words?
  - ? What sort of pain feels like it can kill?
  - ? What, do you suppose, did the disciples think and feel when they heard Jesus confess that he was experiencing a pain that felt like it could kill him?
  - ? How does the following passage relate to Jesus’ confession?

“And lo, he shall suffer temptations, and pain of body, hunger, thirst, and fatigue, even more than man can suffer, except it be unto death; for behold, blood cometh from every pore, so great shall be his anguish for the wickedness and the abominations of his people” (Mos. 3.<sup>7</sup>).
  - ? How do you feel and what do you think knowing that had anyone else been asked to suffer as Jesus did they would not have survived the ordeal?
  - ? What does this tell you about Jesus?
  - ? What does it tell you about his suffering?
2. We have examined Jesus’ use of the “cup” as a metaphor for his suffering before. But, we will take the opportunity to examine it once more. In seeking relief from his terrible ordeal, Jesus asked, “remove this cup from me.”
  - ? Have you ever wondered why, in this terrible moment, Jesus resorted to a metaphor—the metaphor of a cup—rather than just saying outright what he meant: “stop the pain,” “make it end,” or some such sentiment?
  - ? Why, do you think, did he resort to this particular imagery of a cup?
  - ? What is the significance of the “cup”?

Consider the following passages.

Mosiah 3.<sup>25-27</sup>

Isaiah 51.<sup>17& 22</sup>

Ezekiel 23.<sup>32-34</sup>

Psalm 11.<sup>6</sup>

Jeremiah 25.<sup>15-17, 27</sup>

Revelation 14.<sup>10-11</sup>

Psalm 75.<sup>8</sup>

Jeremiah 51.<sup>7-9</sup>

Revelation 16.<sup>19</sup>

Revelation 17.<sup>4-6</sup>  
DC 43.<sup>26</sup>

Alma 40.<sup>26</sup>;  
DC 101.<sup>11</sup>

D&C 29.<sup>17</sup>

? After reading these passages, what do you think was “in” Jesus’ cup?

The following words and phrases are associated with this cup:

“Torment... as a lake of fire and brimstone”  
“Be moved and mad”  
“Awful view of... guilt and abominations”  
“Be drunken, and spue, and fall”  
“Shrink from the presence of the Lord”  
“Astonishment and desolation”  
“State of misery and endless torment”  
“Wrath of God”  
“Snares, fire and brimstone”  
“Indignation”  
“Horrible tempest”  
“Fierceness of his wrath”  
“Dregs”  
“Cast out”  
“Fury”  
“Unclean”  
“Cup of trembling”

? What does all of this language suggest to you about the nature of Jesus’ suffering?

3. Close your eyes and imagine that you are present in the garden of Gethsemane and witness Jesus’ “agony.”

? What does Jesus look like?

? What does the garden feel like?

? What, do you think, would you want to say to him if you had been there?

? Take so time in your upcoming prayers to say these things?

4. Jesus warned his disciples, “Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation.”

? This is good counsel at all times, but how might it have been particularly pertinent to the disciples on this night and in light of Jesus’ suffering?

? What do you think and feel when you contemplate the possibility that Lucifer and his hosts were likely present in the garden tempting Jesus and thus threatening anyone else in the vicinity?

5. We are repeatedly informed that the disciples were sleeping.

? How does this fit with the disciples’ continual lack of insight and preparedness?

## Matthew 27.<sup>33-50</sup>— atonement

<sup>33</sup>And when they were come unto a place called Golgotha, that is to say, a place of a skull, <sup>34</sup>they gave him vinegar to drink mingled with gall: and when he had tasted thereof, he would not drink. <sup>35</sup>And they crucified him, and parted his garments, casting lots. <sup>36</sup>And sitting down they watched him there; <sup>37</sup>And set up over his head his accusation written, THIS IS JESUS THE KING OF THE JEWS.

<sup>38</sup>Then were there two thieves crucified with him, one on the right hand, and another on the left.

<sup>39</sup>And they that passed by reviled him, wagging their heads, <sup>40</sup>and saying, “Thou that destroyest the temple, and buildest it in three days, save thyself. If thou be the Son of God, come down from the cross.”

<sup>41</sup>Likewise also the chief priests mocking him, with the scribes and elders, said, <sup>42</sup>“He saved others; himself he cannot save. If he be the King of Israel, let him now come down from the cross, and we will believe him. <sup>43</sup>He trusted in God; let him deliver him now, if he will have him: for he said, I am the Son of God.” <sup>44</sup>The thieves also, which were crucified with him, cast the same in his teeth.

<sup>45</sup>Now from the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land unto the ninth hour. <sup>46</sup>And about the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying,

“Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?” that is to say, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?”

<sup>47</sup>Some of them that stood there, when they heard that, said, “This man calleth for Elias.” <sup>48</sup>And straightway one of them ran, and took a sponge, and filled it with vinegar, and put it on a reed, and gave him to drink. <sup>49</sup>The rest said, “Let be, let us see whether Elias will come to save him.”

<sup>50</sup>Jesus, when he had cried again with a loud voice, yielded up the ghost.

## Q

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This reading is one in a series of readings on Atonement that we entitle, “Sacrifice: What Jesus Suffered for Us.” \*

1. We have mentioned before and will likely mention in future readings, Jacob’s hope and admonition that “all men would believe in Christ, *and view his death*” (Jacob 1.<sup>8</sup>). As you have done before, close your eyes and imagine. Imagine now that you are standing at the foot the cross. Look at the Savior hanging on the cross.
  - ? What do you see?
  - ? How do you feel about what you see?
  - ? Who and what do you see around you?
  - ? What are their moods and attitudes?
  - ? What role have you played in what is happening to him?
  - ? Look into the eyes of Jesus and let him look into your. What do you see in the way he looks at you?
  - ? What do you want to say to him?
2. Today’s reading is dominated by the thrice repeated challenge that Jesus, if he is who he says he is, deliver himself from the suffering of the cross.
  - ? What is the significance of this challenge being repeated three times?
  - ? What is the significance of Jesus’ refusal to his life, his ministry, and the meaning of his atonement?

\* The following ten titles are part of our atonement series:

“Fall: Our Need of Atonement”

“Grace: The Savior’s Generous and Earnest Invitation”

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