

Matthew: That's a Wrap

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On November 30, 2014, the first Sunday of Advent, we began a journey as a congregation. We went through the first 17 verses of the Gospel of Matthew. As part of our vision to grow as disciples of Jesus Christ, I believed we needed to spend substantial time looking at Jesus' life and learning from His teaching. Matthew provided both. So we started Matthew that day.

Since then, we have walked through the entire Gospel of Matthew – about 76 messages. Today I want to wrap up our Matthew study. I want to thank you for your patience and perseverance with me through Matthew. I pray that it has been a blessing to you. I hope that you have grown to know and understand Jesus more intimately and deeply through our time in this Gospel. I believe that God's Word does not come back void and the seeds of His Word will grow in our lives if we have listened.

Yet there is a danger that nothing sticks from our time in this Gospel. We can read a book and discover great nuggets of wisdom. We can go to a conference and hear a great speaker with an inspiring word. We can go see a good film and come home inspired for an hour as we ponder the message. But will our reading, hearing or seeing result in any tangible difference in our lives?

Last fall I shared with you about our need to grow in knowing the Lord in Prayer. I shared from Tim Keller's book on Prayer. I found it to be full of great insights and practices. Yet at the end of reading the book, my prayer life hadn't changed much. So I read the book again. I needed to think more deeply about what was written and reflect further on what was said. Then I needed to engage in regular practices that incorporated the reading into my life. From that, by God's grace, my prayer life has begun to change. Slowly but surely, my prayer life grows with the Spirits help. But if I had just read the book and put it aside, I'm not sure how much difference it would have made.

I fear the same result for us and the Gospel of Matthew. We've spent nearly three years going through it. But will it make any lasting difference in our lives? Will you do anything differently because of the Gospel of Matthew? How has your life changed because of our journey through it?

Today, I want to give you three possible paths forward where you can continue to grow and apply some of what we've discovered. These paths will involve a brief review of some theme or section of Matthew and then a way to apply it to your life. I pray that at least one of these will spur you on to further growth in Christ through this rich text.

The first theme comes from the first chapters of the book. Matthew sets out to prove something. He aims to prove that **Jesus, the son of Joseph and Mary is the promised Christ of the Old Testament and King over the Universe.** So on November 30, 2014, we went through Jesus' genealogy which points back to the royal line of David. In 1:1 - "The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the Son of David, the Son of Abraham." The Messiah had to come from the line of David. Matthew proves this.

The Messiah had to be recognized as a king. But Jewish leaders who rejected Jesus did not recognize him. So they picked up on a rumor that Jesus was an illegitimate child because Mary was pregnant before Joseph and her married. In response, Matthew talks about Jesus' conception from the Holy Spirit and Mary. So at the end of Matthew one, we get the virgin birth. Then Matthew includes the account of the wise men who seek the one born king of the Jews. When they find him they bow down before the child Jesus recognizing his royalty. Throughout each of these little episodes, Matthew adds an Old Testament Scripture with the formula, "This was to fulfill what the Lord had spoken through the prophet."

Matthew continues to emphasize Jesus' royalty by talking about his forerunner. Kings had forerunners who announced their pending arrival. So John the Baptist arrives on the scene in chapter 3. He announces Jesus and then baptizes him at the end of chapter 3. Jesus then faces the temptation of the devil. Who offers all the kingdoms of the world if Jesus will only worship him. But Jesus will not take a shortcut to the throne. He refuses and the devil leaves. Then Jesus begins his public ministry in an unexpected place – Capernaum in the north away from Jerusalem the center of religious and royal power. Yet His ministry attracts large crowds.

Later in the Gospel the theme of kingship returned in chapter 16. Jesus asks the disciples "who do people say that I am?" After hearing various responses, He asks them "but who do you say I am?" In Matthew 16, Peter declares "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." Jesus does not deny it. He pronounces a blessing on Peter for declaring this. Yet there is a long way to go for these disciples to understand the kind of Christ or King that Jesus came to be. They anticipate a political and powerful deliverer who will overthrow the Romans and restore Israel to a place of prominence. Some of these expectations must have been heightened at the transfiguration in Matthew 17. Jesus is revealed in all his

heavenly glory to Peter, James and John so that his face shone like the sun. But this is only a glimpse of and temporary revelation of Jesus' true identity.

Then comes the final week of Jesus' life which begins with him riding a donkey into Jerusalem. Crowds wave palms at him crying out "Hosanna" – "Save us" O son of David. It is the ride of a triumphant king as prophesied in the Old Testament. Jesus then goes in and drives out the money changers and traders in the temple claiming this is his Father's house. The religious leaders plot against him in Matthew 26.

He is betrayed and arrested. In the trial before the Jewish Council, the High Priest charges Jesus with the statement; "I adjure you by the living God, tell us if you are the Christ, the Son of God." Jesus answers – "You have said so. But I tell you from now on you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of power and coming on the clouds of heaven." The High Priest tears his robes and the council condemns him of blasphemy. They hand him over to Pilate who orders his crucifixion and ironically puts a sign above his head that reads "The King of the Jews." Yet his suffering, death and burial all fulfill prophecy pointing further to the claim that He is the Christ. Three days later He is resurrected. The disciples worship Him as God and bow before Him as king. So from a genealogy and a little baby to a resurrected Lord, Matthew emphasizes Jesus as Messiah and King.

So how do we live in light of the fact that Jesus is the Christ and King over all? **If He is king and Christ over all, we must learn to live in recognition and confidence of His royalty.** We recognize Jesus' kingship by adjusting our lives to serve as His loyal subjects. We remove ourselves from the throne or control of our lives and we submit to Him as our king. But we also gain God-centered confidence. If Jesus is king over the universe, He is king over your life. He is king over all that happens in your life. He shows His kingly power by working all things together for good. He does His kingly work of reigning over the universe. He reigns over history. He reigns over the events and situations surrounding your life. So that when we face trouble, we don't have to wonder if Jesus has somehow become distracted from our situation. We have a king who never sleeps and never loses control over part of His realm. He will continue to reign invisibly in our hearts until He returns visibly to establish His kingdom on earth. So because Jesus is king, learn to live in recognition and confidence of His royalty.

The second theme relates somewhat to the first. But I saw it pop up at key moments. In a way, this theme reinforces Jesus' claim to royalty. Here it is. **Jesus Christ has the highest authority in heaven and earth.** Now there are

people today who have the title king or queen. Some have authority like the King of Saudi Arabia. But most royalty, especially in Europe, don't have much authority. They serve ceremonial roles. They carry on a tradition of the country. But they're not really the decision makers. Nor are they the ones who influence the masses with their ideas, projects and policies.

But look at what Matthew shows us throughout the Gospel. At the end of the Sermon on the Mount, Matthew writes in chapter 7, verses 28-29, "And when Jesus finished these sayings, the crowds were astonished at his teaching, for he was teaching them as one who had authority and not as their scribes." Jesus' teaching had authority in itself because of who delivered it and the truth it revealed. Then Matthew goes on in the next few chapters to display Jesus authority over many other areas. So in chapter 8, Jesus demonstrates authority over sickness by healing leprosy, paralysis and fever. He calms a storm in the middle of the sea. So His disciples ask, "What sort of man is this that even the winds and sea obey him?" He displays authority over demons by casting them out and sending them into a herd of pigs. He heals another paralytic so that in Matthew 9:8 we read "And when the crowds saw it, they were afraid and they glorified God, who had given such authority to men." He goes on to display His authority over death, blindness and muteness. He gives authority to the disciples in Matthew 10:1 to cast out unclean spirits. He claims authority over the Sabbath by declaring Himself Lord over the Sabbath. He walks on water demonstrating authority over the law of gravity. When asked by the religious leaders by what authority He cleansed the temple, he responds with authority by exposing the hypocrisy behind their question. Finally, after his resurrection He declares that verse you have on the front page of the bulletin Matthew 28:18 – "All authority in heaven and earth has been given to me."

So how do we live in light of Jesus' all-encompassing authority in heaven and earth? I think it's a very similar response to Jesus as King. **Live recognizing and trusting in the authority of Christ over your life.** We recognize Jesus' authority when we submit to it in our lives. Which is easy to write and speak. But it's very difficult to live out. There are times every day where we can struggle in giving authority of our lives over to Jesus. We can see a loss of independence or self determination as a kind of death. We have a sinful nature that wants to hold tightly to the throne of our lives. It invites us and moves us to feed it and serve our selfish desires. Jesus comes along and calls us to something different. He calls us to stop thinking so much about ourselves and start thinking more of others or Him. That's a battle we all need to fight every day.

But we also can live trusting the authority of Christ. So if someone mistreats us and never repents for it, we know that one day they will face the authority of Christ on Judgment Day. If some authority mistreats its citizens, the ultimate authority will call them to account one day. If some situation arises where an authority forbids or blocks or opposes something you sense God wants you to do, Jesus has the authority to overcome that earthly authority.

That's where our great resource of prayer comes in. We give the situation over to Christ and ask Him to deal with the authorities. If you're facing a situation where you're dealing with some injustice or difficulty, I encourage you to read through Matthew again asking the Lord to show you Jesus' authority throughout. Or listen to the messages on Matthew 8.

The third major theme I want to highlight in our wrap of Matthew must concern Jesus' teaching. **Jesus teaches about 5 different parts of discipleship.** This is a major feature of Matthew's Gospel. If you want to get a comprehensive picture of Jesus' teaching, go to Matthew. It's really amazing how Matthew has arranged Jesus' teaching to form a natural progression in discipleship.

So he starts with **Everyday Discipleship** in the Sermon on the Mount – Matthew 5-7. How is a disciple supposed to live every day? What are our lives supposed to look like? How do you pray? What do we do with our anger and lust? How do you relate to enemies? These are all found in the Sermon on the Mount which concludes with the parable of building your house on the rock or sand.

Then Matthew gives us Jesus teaching for **Missionary Disciples 9:35-10:42**. What kind of attitude must disciples have on mission? Jesus sets up the disciples so they will be forced to depend on people in the various places they travel to. It will force dependence on God to provide. He also warns them about persecution and their need to depend on the spirit for words to speak when on trial. Then the disciples go out and minister in light of Jesus' teaching.

But they and we live in a time where followers of Jesus will be in the minority. We will not be part of the dominant culture. So we need to learn to live as **Underground Disciples – Matthew 13**. This is what the parables were all about. They taught that there would be gatherings of people who claimed to be Christ followers. But only at the end would true followers be revealed. So disciples need to persevere in the faith and continue to follow Christ wholeheartedly even when other so called Christians go a different way.

Then Matthew collects Jesus' teaching on being a **Church Community Disciple in Matthew 18**. Here Jesus teaches that people in God's community need to stop being concerned about status. Humility must mark the people of God. God's people must also carefully guard and watch over little ones who are new in faith or new in life. An attitude of forgiveness needs to permeate us along with a welcoming heart to those who return from being lost. Jesus lays out clearly how we're supposed to respond to one another if a brother or sister sins against us. He concludes with the devastating parable of the unforgiving servant at the end of Matthew 18. This servant owed a huge debt to the king and pled for mercy. The king forgave his debt. But when the servant went out and saw someone who owed him a much smaller debt, he began choking the person demanding payment. The poor fellow asked the servant for mercy. But the servant refused and had the person put in prison. The king hears about this. He recalls the servant to whom he had showed mercy. The king declares "You wicked servant! I forgave you all that debt because you pleaded with me. And should not you have had mercy on your fellow servant, as I had mercy on you?" So the king had the servant delivered to the jailers until he should pay all his debt. Jesus concludes by saying "So also my heavenly Father will do to every one of you, if you do not forgive your brother from your heart.

We've just come through the final section of Jesus' teaching in Matthew 24 and 25. There Jesus teaches about **End Times Discipleship**. He taught about signs that would signal the destruction of the temple and His return. He taught about the certainty of His return. We saw Jesus teach about the disciple's need to use their lives for that which counts for eternity. Then they will be ready for Jesus' return at any moment. We saw last week Jesus' teaching on the final judgment which would signal the end of history.

So we gain a great wealth of Jesus' teaching throughout Matthew. **Learn and live out by His Strength the discipleship He calls us to.** If you want to grow as every day disciple go to Matthew 5-7. If you're going out on mission, Matthew 10. If you're the only Christian at work or school or in your family, look at the parables in Matthew 13. On relationships in the church, look at Matthew 18. On investing your life today in that which matters tomorrow, Matthew 24 and 25.

Jesus is the Christ and King. All authority in heaven and earth has been given to Him. Jesus is the great teacher who shows us the way of discipleship.

With all of this in Matthew, what does Jesus say to us in conclusion? Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to obey all that I have

commanded. And surely, I am with you always to the end of the age. Therefore, let's go Sturgeon Valley. A new ministry year awaits us in just a few weeks. As you yourself grow as a disciple, go and make disciples of Christ in your home; at work; in your family among your friends. Go back to Matthew often to internalize this God inspired message. Thank you for joining me for this journey. I will announce our next steps during the first two Sundays of September.