

The Gospel of Matthew

8. The Journey to Jerusalem:

Confession at Caesarea Philippi (16:13-28)

Transfiguration (17:1-21)

Living Together as the Family of God (17:22—18:35)

Sunday, February 25, 2006

10 to 11 am in the Parlor.

Everyone is welcome!

St. John in the Wilderness

**Have pity Father, on us your
estranged and willful children;
grant that we may know the things
we ought to do
and have the grace to do them;
through Jesus Christ, your Son**

- New Zealand Prayer Book, p. 570

INTERPRETING
I · B · T
BIBLICAL TEXTS

THE
GOSPEL
OF
MATTHEW

Donald Senior

- **The Gospel of Matthew** (**Interpreting Biblical Texts Series**), Donald Senior, Abingdon Press, 1997, ISBN 0-687-00848-4
- **Dr. Senior** is Professor of New Testament Studies at Catholic Theological Union, Chicago.

- **Introducing Jesus the Messiah, the Son of God (Matthew 1:1—4:16)**
 - The Birth of the Messiah: The Fulfillment of God's Promises (1:1-25)
 - From Judea of David to the Galilee of the Gentiles (2:1-23)
 - Getting Ready: God's Son in the Wilderness (3:1—4:11)
 - Dispelling the Darkness in Galilee (4:12-16)
- **Jesus' Ministry to Israel - Part 1. Teaching, Healing, and Calling the Lost Sheep (Matthew 4:17—10:42)**
 - Jesus' Debut: Authority and Compassion. Dawn in Galilee (4:17-25)
 - The Sermon on the Mount: Magisterial Teaching, A Charter for Discipleship (5:1—8:1)
 - Restoring Life to Others: Jesus the Healer (8:2—9:35)
 - Great Harvest and Great Dangers: The Mission Discourse (9:36—10:42)
- **Jesus' Ministry to Israel - Part 2. Rejection and Confession (Matthew 11:2—16:20)**
 - Doubt, Indifference, and Dissent (11:2—12:45)
 - The Parable Discourse: the Mysteries of the Kingdom Revealed (12:46—13:54)
 - The Mission Resumes (13:54—16:12)
 - Rejection in Nazareth (13:54-58)
 - The Death of John (14:1-12)
 - Two Great Signs (14:13-36)
 - A Dispute with Israel; An Opening to the Gentiles (15:1-28)
 - Healing and Feeding the Multitudes; Demand for a Sign (15:29—16:12)
- **Jesus' Passion and Resurrection (Matthew 16:21-28:20)**
 - The Journey to Jerusalem (16:13—20:34)
 - Confession at Caesarea Philippi (16:13-28)
 - Transfiguration (17:1-21)
 - Living Together as the Family of God: Life Within the Community of the Kingdom (17:22—18:35)
 - Teachings on the Journey (19:1—20:16)
 - The Conclusion of the Journey (20:17-34)
 - In the Holy City: Conflict, Death, and Resurrection (21:1—28:15)
 - The Messiah in the Temple (21:1-17)
 - The Teacher and His Opponents (21:18—22:46)
 - False Teachers Lead Others to Ruin: Condemnation of the Scribes and Pharisees (23:1-39)
 - The Coming of the Son of Man and the Judgment of the World (24:1—25:46)
 - The Passion and Resurrection of Jesus. Finale (26:1—28:15)

The Journey to Jerusalem

Matthew 16:13—20:34

The Journey to Jerusalem

Introduction

- Jesus' ministry in Galilee is about to conclude and he and his disciples will begin the fateful journey to Jerusalem.
- On the journey, Jesus' messianic healing and teaching continue, but Matthew now emphasizes scenes of Jesus with his disciples. Often we see Jesus giving them private instruction.
 - The crowds and opponents are still around, but in the background.
- There is a much stronger focus on the Jesus coming passion and death, and what that means for those who would be his disciples.

Matthew 16:13—20:34

The Journey to Jerusalem

Two Major Narrative Themes

- The storyline is bound together by two major narrative themes:
 - (1). The Journey to Jerusalem
 - (2). Predictions of the Passion

Matthew 16:13—20:34

The Journey to Jerusalem

1. The Journey

- First they journey north to “the district of Caesarea Philippi.” (16:13)
- They gather back in Galilee (17:22) and then depart for “the region of Judea beyond the Jordan.” (19:1)
- They leave Jericho (20:29), come to Bethphage near Jerusalem (21:1) and then into Jerusalem.

Matthew 16:13—20:34

The Journey to Jerusalem

2. The Passion Predictions

- Jesus predicts his suffering and resurrection three times:
 - 1. At Caesarea Philippi after Peter's Confession (16:21)
 - 2. As they move from Caesarea back to the area of Capernaum (17:22)
 - 3. At the climax of the journey (the most detailed prediction) (20:17-19)

Matthew 16:13—20:34

Confession at Caesarea Philippi

Matthew 16:13-28

Confession at Caesarea Philippi

- After they have journeyed up to the district of Caesarea Philippi, Jesus asks his disciples, **“But who do you say that I am?”** (16:15 NRSV).
- Peter speaks up with the dramatic confession: **“You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God.”** (16:16 NRSV)

Confession at Caesarea Philippi

- Unlike in the Gospel of Mark, all of the disciples have already confessed Jesus as the “Son of God,” after seeing him walking on the Sea of Galilee (14:33)
- Asking the question here
 - In part is asking the reader “Who do you think Jesus is?”
 - In part is putting a particular focus on the apostle Peter.

Matthew 16:13-28

Confession at Caesarea Philippi

- Peter has been entrusted with an authentic revelation from the Father.
 - Recalls Jesus' great prayer in 11:25-27: **“I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and the intelligent and have revealed them to infants; yes, Father, for such was your gracious will. All things have been handed over to me by my Father; and no one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.”** (NRSV)

Matthew 16:13-28

Confession at Caesarea Philippi

- Because he has been entrusted with this revelation, Peter. Jesus tells him:
 - “... you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not prevail against it.” (16:18 NRSV)
 - Rock = *petron*
 - “I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.” (16:19 NRSV)
 - Reminiscent of Isaiah 22:22 when Shebna is appointed prime minister of the royal household: “I will place on his shoulder the key of the house of David; he shall open, and no one shall shut; he shall shut, and no one shall open.” (NRSV)

Matthew 16:13-28

Confession at Caesarea Philippi

- Right after this, we are told Jesus tells his disciples his passion and death.
- Peter, the rock, took Jesus ‘... **aside and began to rebuke him, saying, “God forbid it, Lord! This must never happen to you.”**’ (16:22 NRSV)
- Jesus replies: **“Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to me; for you are setting your mind not on divine things but on human things.”** (16:23 NRSV)
 - Matthew may be playing here on rock (*petron*) and stumbling block (*skandalon*)

Matthew 16:13-28

Confession at Caesarea Philippi

- The portrayal of Peter here has stirred controversy in the church:
 - Is he simply a “representative disciple”?
 - Is he a disciple who has been given a singular role in salvation history?
 - Is he a symbol of a continuing position of leadership within the church? (the basis of the Roman Catholic papacy)
- In any case, the mixed picture of Peter: *blessed* and then *rebuked*, may be considered both an affirmation and a warning to leaders of the Christian community.

Matthew 16:13-28

Confession at Caesarea Philippi

- Jesus then warns his disciples (and us): “If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will find it.” (16:24-25 NRSV)

Matthew 16:13-28

Transfiguration

Matthew 17:1-21

Transfiguration

Promise of Glory

- Soon after Peter's Confession, the identity of Jesus as the Son of God and the coming exaltation of Jesus to glory is dramatically revealed in the **Transfiguration**.
- Matthew 17:1-3: **“Six days later, Jesus took with him Peter and James and his brother John and led them up a high mountain, by themselves. And he was transfigured before them, and his face shone like the sun, and his clothes became dazzling white. Suddenly there appeared to them Moses and Elijah, talking with him.”** (NRSV)

Matthew 17:1-9

Transfiguration

Promise of Glory

- Peter takes the leadership role and asks “**Lord, it is good for us to be here; if you wish, I will make three dwellings here, one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah.**” (17:4 NRSV)
- A voice from heaven cuts Peter off and strikes fear in the awed disciples: “**This is my Son, the Beloved; with him I am well pleased; listen to him!**” (17:5 NRSV)
- Jesus reassures and comforts his disciples, touching them and saying, “**Get up and do not be afraid.**” (17:7 NRSV)

Matthew 17:1-9

Transfiguration

Question About Elijah

- Coming down from the mountain, disciples ask about Elijah, who was supposed to come before the Messiah.
- Jesus reminds them the Elijah has already come – he was John of the Baptist (17:12)
 - Recall Jesus in Matthew 11:13-14 **“For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John came; and if you are willing to accept it, he is Elijah who is to come.”** (NRSV)

Matthew 17:10-13

Transfiguration

The Son with Epilepsy

- At the end of the descent from the mountain they encounter a crowd, and a father kneels before Jesus and pleads: **“Lord, have mercy on my son, for he is an epileptic and he suffers terribly; he often falls into the fire and often into the water. And I brought him to your disciples, but they could not cure him.”** (17:15-16 NRSV)

Matthew 17:14-21

Transfiguration

The Son with Epilepsy

- Matthew's focus is not on the miracle (Jesus does cure the son), but on the *lack of faith* that prevented his disciples from curing the boy.
- Jesus condemns this “**faithless and perverse generation**” (17:17 NRSV)
 - Recalls Moses' lament about Israel in Deuteronomy 32:4-5: “**A faithful God, without deceit, just and upright is he; yet his degenerate children have dealt falsely with him, a perverse and crooked generation.**” (NRSV)

Matthew 17:14-21

Life Within the Family of God

Matthew 17:22—18:35

Life in the Family of God

The Second Passion Prediction

- Jesus and his disciples now gather in Galilee, and Jesus alludes a second time to passion and resurrection (17:22-23)

Matthew 17:22-23

Life in the Family of God

The Temple Tax Issue

- The curious story about the temple tax is found only in Matthew.
- All Jews – even those outside Palestine – considered it a sacred duty to pay a half-shekel tax for the Temple in Jerusalem, which was collected by the Romans.
- After the Romans destroyed the temple in 70 A.D., they continued to collect the tax from the Jews, but used it to support the Temple of Jupiter in Rome.

Matthew 17:24-27

Life in the Family of God

The Temple Tax Issue

- Story has two ramifications:
 - 1. Affirmed Jesus' status as Son of God. Just as the kings of the earth and their children do not have to pay taxes to support their royal house, so also God and the children of God should not have to pay taxes to support God's house.
 - 2. May have afforded a practical rationale for members of Matthew's Christian Jewish community to pay the post 70 A.D. Temple Tax **“so that we do not give offense to them”** (17:27 NRSV)
 - For Matthew's community, “them” would be the Romans and perhaps fellow Jews.

Matthew 17:24-27

Life in the Family of God

Discourse on Community

- The theology of the temple tax issue – that the disciples are children of God – provides a lead-in for the discourse that follows on life within the community of the Kingdom of God (= the “family of God”).
- A collection of sayings and parables. Outline:
 - True Greatness (18:1-5)
 - Temptations to Sin (18:6-9)
 - The Parable of the Lost Sheep (18:10-14)
 - Reproving Another Who Sins (18:15-20)
 - Forgiveness (18:21-22)
 - The Parable of the Unforgiving Servant (18:23-35)

Matthew 18:1-35

Life in the Family of God

Discourse on Community

- Two key sayings about the “heavenly Father” emphasize the two major themes of the section:
 - 18:14 (concluding the Parable of the Lost Sheep): **“So it is not the will of your Father in heaven that one of these little ones should be lost.”** (NRSV)
 - 18:35 (concluding the Parable of the Unforgiving Servant): **“So my heavenly Father will also do to every one of you, if you do not forgive your brother or sister from your heart.”** (NRSV)
- An in-between segment on the procedure and authority for dealing with a recalcitrant member of the church (18:15-20) is tempered by Jesus’ calls for compassion and unlimited forgiveness that sandwich it.

Matthew 18:1-35

Life in the Family of God

Discourse on Community

- The first half of the discourse seems directed towards the inner core of the community, perhaps the leaders in particular. They are told:
 - Not to place “stumbling blocks” in the way of the “little ones” (18:6-9)
 - Not to despise the “little ones” (18:10)
 - To search for those “stray.” (18:12-15)

Life in the Family of God

Discourse on Community

- The second half of the discourse seems directed to those who have been sinned against:
 - 18:15: “If another member of the church sins against you, ...” (NRSV)
 - 18:21: “Then Peter came and said to him, “Lord, if another member of the church sins against me, how often should I forgive? As many as seven times?”” (NRSV)

Matthew 18:1-35

Life in the Family of God

Discourse on Community

- The discourse emphasizes several virtues which Matthew has consistently extolled:
- 1. A disciple should become humble like a child
 - Matthew 18:1-4: **“Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?” He called a child, whom he put among them, and said, “Truly I tell you, unless you change and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Whoever becomes humble like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.”** (NRSV)
 - Also note: 5:5, 11:25, 19:30, 20:16.

Matthew 18:1-35

Life in the Family of God

Discourse on Community

- The discourse emphasizes several virtues which Matthew has consistently extolled:
- 2. A disciple should care for the weak and the “little ones.”
 - Matthew 18:6 “If any of you put a stumbling block before one of these little ones who believe in me, it would be better for you if a great millstone were fastened around your neck and you were drowned in the depth of the sea.” (NRSV)
 - Matthew 18:10 “Take care that you do not despise one of these little ones; for, I tell you, in heaven their angels continually see the face of my Father in heaven.” (NRSV)
 - Matthew 18:14 “So it is not the will of your Father in heaven that one of these little ones should be lost.” (NRSV)
 - “little ones” = *mikron* refers to the status of a person in the community.

Matthew 18:1-35

Life in the Family of God

Discourse on Community

- The discourse emphasizes several virtues which Matthew has consistently extolled:
- 3. A disciple must forgive others, because we have received God's own gracious forgiveness
 - 18:23-35: The Parable of the Unforgiving Servant
 - Also see the Sermon on the Mount: 5:21-26, 38-42, 43-48; 6:12, 14-15

Matthew 18:1-35

Life in the Family of God

Discourse on Community

- The discourse emphasizes several virtues which Matthew has consistently extolled:
- 4. A disciple must treat an erring member with respect and discretion (18:15-17)
 - Every measure must be taken to find a solution before expelling a member from community.
 - When a member is expelled, they should be treated like “a Gentile and tax collectors.” (18:17)
 - Yet note Jesus befriended Gentiles and tax collectors, and the earnest search to bring them into the community became the mission of Christianity.

Matthew 18:1-35

Next Session:

The Journey to Jerusalem:

Teachings on the Journey

Marriage and Divorce (19:3-12)

The Children (19:13-14)

Leaving Behind One's Possessions (19:16-30)

The Parable of the Laborers (20:1-16)

The Conclusion of the Journey (20:17-34)