



## **DAILY BIBLE READING NOTES**

# **MATTHEW**

## **THE CLASH OF THE KINGDOMS**

### **Matthew 8 - 13**

Term 3, 2014

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31 August	Matthew 12:1-50 Lamentations 4:17-22	Accusations and Expectations
7 September (Fathers' Day)	Matthew 13:1-23 Lamentations 5:1-16	The Parable of the Sower
14 September	Matthew 13:24-53 Lamentations 5:17-22	Parables of the Kingdom

## Week 1 – 8:1-22 – Willing and Able!

### Day One

#### **Read Matthew 8:1-22**

**Think** – How does what we see Jesus doing in this section fulfil the prophecy of Isaiah 53:4? What does it mean to you that Jesus “took up our infirmities and carried our diseases”?

**Pray** – that we might live for him who lived and died for us.

### Day Two

#### **Read 8:1-4**

**Think** – Notice carefully the question that is put to Jesus and his response. What is on view here?

What is the significance of Jesus’ touching the man?

How might / should this impact the way in which we relate to Jesus?

**Pray** – rejoicing in Jesus’ willingness to touch and to heal.

### Day Three

#### **Read 8:5-13**

**Think** – Being astonished/amazed by Jesus is a repeated and understandable theme of the Gospels (see, 7:28, 8:27, 9:33, 15:31). But here we find it is Jesus who is “astonished” (v.10)! What astounds Jesus? And why?

**Pray** – for a faith without reservation, for such clarity of insight into our Lord.

### Day Four

#### **Read 8:14-17**

**Think** – These short verses combine the particular (personal and individual) and the general (universal and comprehensive). How do the two enhance our understanding and appreciation of Jesus?

**Pray** – with thankfulness for Christ’s care of us – both general and particular.

### **Day Five**

#### **Read – 8:18-22**

**Think** – How would you describe the responses Jesus makes here? And how do you account for this? What lesson(s) do we have to learn from this?

**Pray** – that we might follow Christ in a manner both informed and committed.

### **For group discussion**

1) There is a constant response of **amazement** to Christ – both what he said and what he did? What do you understand to be the cause of this amazement? Do you share it? Can you lose it? What is the value of it for a disciple?

2) In amongst all the amazement of the crowds, we meet here the **astonishment** of Jesus (8:10). What is the cause of this? Do you think Jesus can still be astonished today? How?

3) How does this section enlarge our understanding of Jesus? And how does it cue us to **respond to him**? What lesson(s) in particular are there for aspiring followers of Christ?

### **Starter**

The Gospels have famously been referred to as “passion narratives with extended introductions” (because of the focus on the climax of Jesus’ ministry on his death & resurrection), but what might stand to be lost without these ‘introductions’?

## Week 2 – 8:23-9:8 – Hazardous Authority

### Day One

**Read Matthew 8:23-9:8**

**Think** – This section contains both notable similarities and marked differences. What is the common thread, in your mind?

**Pray** – that we might see clearly Jesus' unique authority over all the world.

### Day Two

**Read 8:23-27**

**Think** – How would you describe the response of Jesus' disciples after his calming of the storm? What is the dominant note? Does this kind of response feature in your own personal response to Jesus?

**Pray** – that we might hold Christ in the awe which is his due.

### Day Three

**Read 8:28-34**

**Think** – How would you describe the response of the Gadarene town to Jesus? And how do you account for this? Have you seen something of this kind of response in your own experience? Are you tempted to it at some points yourself?

**Pray** – that we might be willing to embrace whatever disturbances following Christ might make to our otherwise settled lives.

### Day Four

**Read 9:1-8**

**Think** – In this incident we meet so many mixed motives and agendas – and yet all connected and related. What are we supposed to make of all of this?

**Pray** – that we might reckon with Jesus’ authority and look to him to make us and others whole.

### Day Five

**Read 8:23-9:8**

**Think** – How many different responses to Jesus can you find in this section? Which one do you find most surprising? And why?

**Pray** – that we might respond to Jesus as we should.

### **For group discussion**

1) When you think of Jesus’ **authority**, what comes to mind? How do you understand its jurisdiction? Where and how does Jesus exercise it? What implications does it have for you personally? How does it affect the way you live in the world?

2) For all of Jesus’ work to re-establish good order and to bring in the kingdom, it is clear that many found him a **threat** – intimidating and confronting. What do you make of this? Is it right? Under what circumstances? Can you think of modern equivalents?

3) In this small section we see something of Jesus encounter with the natural world, the super-natural world, the personal human being and religion? Which one makes most sense to you? Which one do you think gets most neglected in your appreciation of Jesus and his authority?

### Starter

A quick survey on the street would no doubt yield a great variety of responses to Jesus Christ. How do you explain this degree of variety?

## Week 3 – 9:9-17 – Jesus and his Disciples

### Day One

#### **Read Matthew 9:9-17**

**Think** – What impressions do you get here of the social and religious impact following Christ had for his first disciples in these early days?

**Pray** – that we might count whatever cost comes with following Christ and not be squeezed to conform to the world around us.

### Day Two

#### **Read 9:9-13**

**Think** – How interesting to have the conversion of the author of this Gospel recorded here for us. What do we learn of his background? What was he leaving behind? What was he gaining?

**Pray** – for those who stand to lose a lot in this world, and for those who might never think themselves eligible to gain Christ.

### Day Three

#### **Read 9:9-13**

**Think** – What perspective did others have of Matthew and his ‘tax collecting’ colleagues? How do Jesus’ statements here speak to our sense of perspective?

**Pray** – for a healthy perspective of self and of others.

### Day Four

#### **Read 9:14-17**

**Think** – Why did Jesus’ disciples stand out here? And what are we supposed to learn from Jesus’ response?

What do you understand the implications of this little exchange to be for Jesus' disciples today? How does this guide the way in which you might expect Jesus' disciples to stand out today? What do you make of the practice of 'fasting'?

**Pray** – that we might in every way respond to Christ as a bride to her groom.

### **Day Five**

#### **Read 9:14-17**

**Think** – What does the wine & wineskin analogy refer to? How do you understand Jesus' point here? And what are the implications of this? How did the history of the early church bear this tension out? What temptations exist today to retain the old to the constraint of the new?

**Pray** – that we might preserve carefully the newness of the new creation/covenant that Christ introduced.

### **For group discussion**

- 1) What would you say is the standard / default **perspective** for human beings of themselves? How does religion affect this, do you think? What do you think it takes for someone to see themselves as "sick"?
- 2) How do you understand the **timing** that Jesus outlines in verse 15? And how therefore do you understand his comment to apply to us? Is Jesus with us OR absent from us? Is this time to mourn OR time to rejoice? And what do you make of 'fasting' in particular?
- 3) How do you understand the tension Jesus is describing between **the old and the new**? Is it just a faulty understanding of the old that Jesus is challenging? Was there something about Judaism (or is there something about religion per se / in general) that makes it mutually exclusive with Christianity?

## **Starter**

Disciples of Jesus did not seem to fit in easily with the varied religious landscape of their day. Even John the Baptist & his disciples had questions about the kind of religion Jesus and his disciples practised. Why is this? How do you account for this? What could have made them so different?

## **Week 4 – 9:18-38 – Jesus and the Need for More Workers**

### **Day One**

#### **Read Matthew 9:18-38**

**Think** – This section follows some of the most poignant personal vignettes with a general summary of Jesus’ ministry and how he saw the people (“crowds”). What do you think is meant by the description “harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd” (v.36)? How might you put this in your own words? What might have been the signs that signalled to Jesus this was the case?

**Pray** – that we might experience all of the blessings of the Good Shepherd, and that others too would come to share in his cure and care.

### **Day Two**

#### **Read 9:18-26**

**Think** – What is the impact of the way in which Matthew has sandwiched together the story of the dying girl and the bleeding woman?

**Pray** – that as we walk through the valley of the shadow of death, we might not be afraid but know the comfort of a Saviour.

### **Day Three**

#### **Read 9:27-31**

**Think** – Why does Jesus make such a thing of ‘faith’ in his healings (see, vv.28-30, & compare v.22 from yesterday)? What does this have to teach us?

**Pray** – that our faith might continually cast us on the love and power and mercy of Christ.

### **Day Four**

#### **Read 9:32-34**

**Think** – How do you explain the conclusion that the Pharisees reach in verse 34? How closely do you think it is related to the amazed comment of the crowds in verse 33?

**Pray** – for those who call good bad evil and evil good.

### Day Five

#### **Read 9:35-38**

**Think** – How do you think Jesus’ disciples would have heard his comments about the plentiful harvest and paucity of workers? How do you view the situation we find ourselves in today? And how should we be responding? (Note the way in which the next chapter provides something of the answer to Jesus’ prayer!)

**Pray** – for the harvest and for (more) the workers.

### **For group discussion**

1) The news about Jesus keeps spreading (vv.26&31), even though he keeps warning people not to speak (v.30, compare 8:4 & 12:16)? What do you make of this? Why would Jesus be seeking to keep the news contained? Why would those who have benefited from him flagrantly disobey him? Isn’t it just a little ironic that we who have every encouragement to spread the good news seem to find it so difficult?

2) What condition (in particular) do you think of Jesus as coming to redress? How do you see it personally – in terms of your own **point of need**? How do you see this in relation to others? How does this impact the news that you seek to spread?

3) How do you view the **harvest**? Is it plentiful and white and ripe for the picking? Is it lean and withering? Do you see a need for more workers? Do you pray for existing workers? Do you pray that God would raise up more (from amongst us)?

**Starter**

What difference do you hope / expect Jesus to make in the world today?

OR

When you think of Jesus meeting us at our point of need (as we so often hear), what point of need do you have in mind?

## Week 5 – 10:1-42 – Mission and Martyrdom

### Day One

#### **Read Matthew 10:1-4**

**Think** – It's not hard to see that Jesus' commissioning of the Twelve engages them in exactly the very same ministry that he has been exercising. An important window on discipleship! (compare v.25).

What do you think is the significance of having the Twelve identified as they are?

**Pray** – that we might be caught up in Christ's mission to the world.

### Day Two

#### **Read 10:5-16**

**Think** – What do you make of the various instructions Jesus gives his disciples for the conduct of their mission? What principles do you think you are able to identify? And how readily (or not) do you think these principles translate over into mission today?

In particular, meditate on verse 16, what might be required in hearing and heeding this?

**Pray** – for the spread of the gospel and for responses of welcome.

### Day Three

#### **Read 10:17-25**

**Think** – Again, in amongst the specifics of this time and this mission, what do you think we have to learn from this about Christian mission in general?

In particular, meditate on verses 24&25, what expectations does this set? And how might we fall foul of this?

**Pray** – for humility to follow in the way of Christ, and courage to do so in the face of opposition.

### **Day Four**

**Read 10:26-31**

**Think** – How do you think these words stood to impact the way in which the disciples thought about and approached the mission Christ was sending them out on? How much is ‘fear’ a factor in your thinking about mission? What are you afraid of?

**Pray** – for a healthy fear of God which is able to drive out other fears.

### **Day Five**

**Read 10:32-39**

**Think** – These are some of the harshest words of Christ – so uncompromising! How do you think we are supposed to hear them? How radical would you consider your discipleship with regard to the kind of terms Jesus mentions here?

**Pray** – that we might be genuinely willing to lose our life for Christ’s sake, in order to find it.

### **Day Six (SORRY!)**

**Read 10:40-42**

**Think** – Jesus’ teaching about ‘reward(s)’ is consistent and clear – touching on both the prophet and the one who gives even a cup of cold water. How much does this kind of thinking occupy your attitude to mission and ministry. Why?

**Pray** – that we might be motivated to do all that we can, on whatever scale for Christ’s sake.

## **For group discussion**

1) There is a clear '**urgency**' to the task of mission which Jesus sends his disciples out on here. Do you think the same urgency exists today? Do you think it applies to us today in the same way? What might we do to recover and increase some of the urgency of our mission to the world?

2) When Jesus's words seem **radical** in our ears, what temptations naturally arise for us? How ought we to handle this? How do you?

### **Starter**

Do you think the world sees Christ's disciples today as "on a mission"? Yes? No? Why/why not? How/in what way?

## Week 6 – 11:1-30 – Responding to Jesus

### Day 1

**Read Matthew 11:1-30**

**Think** – Note the many different responses to Jesus seen in this chapter. How many can you find? Take a moment to consider why people respond in such different ways.

**Pray** – for a heart ready to receive the truth about Jesus- both for yourself and for others.

### Day 2

**Reread 11:1**

**Think** – Jesus teaches and preaches in Galilee. He wanted people everywhere to hear the good news of the Kingdom.

Where might you have opportunity today to bring the good news of the Kingdom?

**Pray** – for open eyes and a ready word .

### Day 3

**Read 11:2-19**

**Think** – John the Baptist was confused about who Jesus was. Messiah? What do you do regarding doubts you may have about Jesus or God, or unanswered questions about kingdom matters? When your hopes or prayerful expectations are not met?

**Pray** – for the wisdom to seek answers in the right place.

### Day 4

**Read 11:20-24**

**Think** – Jesus performed many miracles. If miracles don't guarantee repentance ...then what does?

**Pray** – for a heart soft towards God and His ways. Pray this prayer for someone you know who is not walking in faith.

### Day 5

#### **Read 11:25-30**

**Think** – When we are yoked with Jesus He says the burden is light. What do you understand the burden Christ places on his disciples to be? How can it be light when we are to give up all?

**Pray** – that in the business of today you will remember to come to Jesus in order to learn from Him.

### **For group discussion**

1) How does Jesus deal with John the Baptist's doubts? How do you tend to deal with **doubts** – your own &/or others? What is most likely to cause doubts in your experience?

2) Our **expectations** colour what we see. This much seems unavoidable. How might you put your finger on expectations or assumptions that you (or others) have which affects your understanding of Christ? More importantly, how do / can you rise above your own expectations and assumptions when they might stand to get in the way?

3) What principle of **judgment** governs Jesus' denunciation of Korazin and Bethsaida? Do you think the same principle applies today? How might this principle apply now? And to whom? Do we have anything to learn from it?

### Starter

What do you suspect most people expect God's judgment to be based upon?  
What do you expect to be the basis of God's judgment?

## Week 7 – 12:1-50 – Accusations and Expectations

### Day 1

**Read Matthew 12:1-14**

**Think** – Most Christians understand the Sabbath of the Old Testament to be Sunday under the New Covenant. What sets this day apart for you? Have you made some rules that you think everyone should follow? Would you more easily align with the Pharisees, or with Jesus and his disciples?

**Pray** – that you will be able to set aside some special time to love and serve God.

### Day 2

**Read 12:15-21**

**Think** – What encouragement do you find in Jesus’ words quoted from Isaiah?

**Pray** – for some of the “bruised reeds” or “smouldering wicks” you know.

### Day 3

**Read 12:22-37**

**Think** – How do the Pharisees excuse Jesus this time?

Verse 35 allows the Pharisees to answer their own accusation. Their own actions have condemned them. What will your actions and words say about what you believe this day?

**Pray** – that Jesus will transform your life today to bring forth good fruit. Pray for the church’s witness in the world.

### Day 4

**Read 12:38-45**

**Think** – The Pharisees ask for another miraculous sign. What have they already seen in this chapter? What sign does Jesus now point them towards?

Have you delayed acting on what you do know?

**Pray** – that you will not refuse the knowledge you have already been given. Remember someone you know who likes to put up yet another argument or question. Pray for an honest seeking.

### **Day 5**

#### **Read 12:46-50**

**Think** – If whoever does the will of God in Heaven is our family...how will you participate in family life today? Have you been limited in your view of family?

**Pray** – give thanks for God’s family of which you have become part.

### **For group discussion**

1) How does Jesus overhaul the prevailing attitude towards the **Sabbath**? What had they misunderstood? With what implications? Can you see ways in which Jesus’ disciples today might be guilty of something similar?

2) To accuse Jesus of being on the side of the devil seems pretty monstrous. But he is adamant that people can be forgiven for that (v.32). So what is that unpardonable sin of blasphemy against the Holy Spirit? How do you understand this?

3) What do we have to learn from Jesus’ indictment of his generation? Where was their failure most acute? What do we have to learn from this?

### **Starter**

Jesus was asked what was most important to God – and he responded, ‘love’ (God with everything; and your neighbour as yourself). If you were asked what is most offensive to God – the worst crime you could commit against him – how would you answer? Why? What options would be in the mix?

## Week 8 – 13:1-23 – The Parable of the Sower

### Day 1

**Read Matthew 13:1-23**

**Think** – Jesus teaches in parables which have been described as “spiritual hearing tests.”

Where do you find comfort or challenge today as you read?

**Pray** – that God’s Spirit will open his Word to you today.

### Day 2

**Read 13:1-9**

**Think** – Consider the different outcomes of the seed sown. What are the contributing factors? Does the quality of the “seed” alter?

**Pray** – for those who scatter the seed of the gospel both here and far away. Pray also for those who receive it.

### Day 3

**Read 13:10-17**

**Think** – Why did Jesus speak to the people in parables? What do they accomplish that direct speech doesn’t?

How do you find reading the parables? Are they more likely to help you to understand the Kingdom of heaven, or are you left wondering?

**Pray** – for a teachable and willing heart.

### Day 4

**Read 13:18-23**

**Think** – Where is there potential for a “thorn” to prevent the growth of the kingdom in your life?

Can you remember a time when your own concerns overtook your concern for the growth of God's Kingdom?

**Pray** – that God's people will have His interests uppermost in their hearts and engage in the growth of His Kingdom.

### **Day 5**

#### **Read 13:1-23**

**Think** – What kind of harvest outcome was Jesus speaking of when He used the term “crop?” What will a fruitful life look like, in your view?

**Pray** – that the seeds sown into the lives will be received, nurtured and productive.

### **For group discussion**

1) What challenges to **hearing** the word of God does Jesus identify here? Which have you seen in others? Which challenge is most pertinent to you? What might be the signs of competition drowning out God's word?

2) How do you understand Jesus' explanation of his use of parables in verses 11-13. How is this both a warning and an encouragement to listen carefully?

### **Starter**

Crowds flocked to Jesus, and many were obviously impressed with him. But not many stuck as followers and disciples. How do you explain this?

## Week 9 – 13:24-53 – Parables of the Kingdom

### Day 1

**Read Matthew 13:24-30**

**Think** – Many have observed “hypocrites” in the church. How might this parable help to explain? How might you answer such an accusation?

**Pray** – for both gracious and wise words for those who have opportunity to explain the presence of wheat and weeds in the field.

### Day 2

**Read 13:31-35**

**Think** – What do the mustard seed and the yeast have in common? Are you ever overwhelmed by the enormity of the task of spreading the gospel? Does it sometimes seem that the success rate is insignificant? How might these parables encourage?

**Pray** – for faith that trusts God to multiply growth.

### Day 3

**Read 13:36-43**

**Think** – Does the picture of the world with its intermingled good and evil motivate you to share the gospel? Or are you more likely to beat a retreat into what you know is good and avoid those caught up in evil?

**Pray** – thanking God for days of grace. Pray for courage to go wherever God sends you.

### Day 4

**Read 13:44-52**

**Think** – What do you value most in life? What do you find yourself thinking about when your mind slips into “neutral”?

What are you most likely to talk about when you are with others?

**Pray** – for eyes to see what matters most.

## **Day 5**

**Read 13:53-58**

**Think** – How are you received in your family and “hometown” when you speak of the Kingdom of God?

What kind of credentials do you expect from those who speak to you before giving your full attention?

**Pray** – for ears that hear whomever God sends to speak into your life.

## **For group discussion**

1) What issues arise from having **the weeds and the wheat** growing up all mixed and mingled in together? What temptations naturally arise in such a situation? How are we supposed to view it? And how are we supposed to respond to it? And why?

2) What common themes are there to these **parables of the kingdom**? What do the mustard seed and the yeast teach us? What about the hidden treasure and the pearl? And what of the net (with the weeds and the wheat)? What do you understand to be some of the practical outworkings and applications of these parables?

3) What confronting truth do we find in Jesus facing in his **hometown** and amongst his acquaintances? What causes this? And what can be done to guard against it?

## **Starter**

How does the kingdom of heaven appear in your eyes NOW? Why? How do you explain this?