



The
Kingdom

of HEAVEN



**“The kingdom of heaven
is like treasure hidden in
a field. When a man found
it, he hid it again, and then
in his joy went and sold all
he had and bought that
field.”**

Matthew 13:44

How to use this book:

Personal Devotions

- Use this book to help you read your Bible every day. You will find a guide that will help you read through scriptures related to our sermon series. Scribble down your thoughts and questions and remember to pray and ask God to speak to you by His Spirit, through His Word. Additionally, we've recommended a verse to contemplate and even memorise each week.
- There are also readings for the season of advent, plus family advent resources.
- Listen to our Spotify playlist by searching for the 'The Bridge Church – Songs We Sing' playlist.

Connect Groups

- Take this guide with you to your Connect Group each week. Bible Studies based on the Sunday Bible talks have been provided for each week, so you could use this space to write down comments, questions and prayer points that come from the study that week and prayer requests from the members of your group.

Church

- Keep this guide with your Bible and bring it with you to church.
- Scribble down sermon notes in the space provided.

Dear Church,

“Taste & see that the Lord is good” (Psalm 34:8) has been our theme verse for the year, as we’ve created space and time to ponder God’s goodness in our lives and in his church, as well as noticing opportunities we’ve had to do good to others. It’s been wonderful to hear stories of people’s hearts and minds being shaped by God’s goodness. It’s not too late to start this wonderful daily discipline of journaling 3 ways you’ve seen God’s goodness and 1 way you’ve done good. God willing it will be a habit that lasts a lifetime.

As we step into the final quarter of the year, there is so much to lean into for our spiritual encouragement and edification.

- The Bridge Church Weekender (Oct 21 and 22) will be a wonderful opportunity for all 10 congregations to gather together in one place as one church to worship our one God. We are so blessed to have Sam Allberry as our guest speaker, preaching from 1 John and sharing his life and grace-shaped ministry with us.
- Sam Allberry evenings: Sam will also be speaking to our youth on the topic of ‘our bodies’ as well as at a teaching evening for adults (Oct 25 or 26) on ‘why does God care who I sleep with?’. That will be a great opportunity to invite friends!
- Alpha starts again on Tuesday 10th October, and we are praying for 100 guests and an outpouring of the Holy Spirit to radically transform lives. Whom might you invite?
- 10th October is also World Mental Health Day, so we will reflect on that during the month.
- As we approach Christmas, we have a number of outreach events, such as Men’s Golf Day, Women’s Wreath Making, Gingerbread Decorating, some musical evenings, as well as our regular Playtime, Bridge Kids, Ignite, Everyday English, Greenway and Aged Care ministries.

- Christmas! Our theme this year is 'The Heart of Christmas', as we unpack God's heart in sending his precious Son, our Saviour, the Lord Jesus into the world, and the joy of giving our heart to back to Him! Christmas is such an easy invite, and I'm excited to see how God might move in power amongst his people.

I'm so thankful for God's rich provision, especially during this time when we are short on ministry staff and stretched in many different ways. He continues to provide exactly what we need, when we need it. He truly is our 'Jehovah Jireh'. And He continues to build His church, His perfect way and in His perfect timing.

Praying for every member of The Bridge Church to encounter Jesus this term as we walk through Matthews gospel!

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Paul Dale', with a horizontal line underneath the name.

With love in Christ
Paul Dale

Overview of the Gospel of Matthew

Author:

While Matthew did not sign his own name to “his” gospel, the early church uniformly attested to the apostle’s authorship of the book. As early as AD 140, a Christian named Papias wrote that Matthew had compiled the sayings of the Lord in Hebrew (presumably before Matthew translated them into Greek for a larger audience).

Audience:

The apostle Matthew, a Jew himself, offered a decidedly Jewish perspective on the ministry of Jesus. Matthew’s extensive connections between Jesus and the Old Testament, provide ample prophetic evidence for Jesus’ ministry, but also give contemporary readers a glimpse into how first-century readers approached the Old Testament with a Christ-centred mind-set.

Matthew is the most Jewish-centric of the four gospels. The apostle regularly invoked the writings of the Old Testament prophets to illustrate Jesus’s identity as Israel’s long-awaited Messiah. Given that the account was written in Greek, not Aramaic, and that much of the language in the book assumes the readers are familiar with Jewish customs and terminology, **the audience seems to be former Jews who have converted to Christianity, probably those living in an urban area such as Palestine or Antioch.**

Date:

The gospel of Matthew has been notoriously difficult to date. Several factors speak to a date ranging from AD 60–65. First, the book makes no mention of the destruction of the temple, an event which occurred in AD 70. Such a cataclysmic event likely would have received some comment, particularly in a book so clearly influenced by Judaism. The largely Jewish character of the book also suggests it was written at a

time when much of the evangelism by Christians was directed more exclusively at Jews, something that became less and less common as the decades passed. Finally, many scholars believe Mark to have been the first gospel composed, making it most probable that Matthew was written soon after.

Purpose:

Matthew wrote his account of Jesus' ministry to show that Jesus was and is indeed the King, Israel's long-awaited Messiah. "This is the genealogy of Jesus, the Messiah, the son of David, the son of Abraham" (Matt 1:1). From there, Matthew consistently takes his readers back to the Old Testament, providing Old Testament testimony regarding the birth of Jesus, Bethlehem as the location of Jesus' birth, the flight to Egypt, Herod's slaughter of the infants, and the beginning of Jesus' ministry. In a world where many in the Jewish community had claimed the role of Messiah for themselves, Matthew's commitment to grounding the life of Jesus in the Old Testament raised Jesus above the multitude of these false messiahs.

Matthew's gospel answers the question on the mind of every Jewish reader: "If Jesus is the King of the Jews, then where is God's promised kingdom?" Matthew reveals that Jesus did offer the kingdom to Israel, but the offer was rejected (Matt 4:17, 16:13-28; 21:42-43). God's primary work in the world is now accomplished through the building of Christ's church, after which Jesus will come again to earth and establish His kingdom - ruling the world from Israel.

Structure:

Most scholars agree that structurally Matthew divides his own text into five major sections, with an introduction section at the beginning and a concluding section at the end. Throughout his Gospel, Matthew pairs a series of narratives about Jesus with a lengthy discourse (teaching) of Jesus. He then ends that discourse with the words, "After Jesus finished saying these things . . ." (Matthew 7:28, 11:1, 13:53, 19:1, and 26:1). The next

set of narratives about Jesus then begins, paired with a discourse, and so on.

The introduction section, which begins Matthew's Gospel (Matthew 1-4), contains the genealogy of Jesus, the birth narratives, and the introduction to Jesus' ministry (baptism, temptation, calling of the disciples, early miracles, etc.). The concluding section is made up of the Passion and Resurrection narratives, ending, of course, with Jesus' Great Commission.

If we put all the pieces together, the structural outline of Matthew looks something like this:

- I. Section 1 – Introduction to Jesus and the Gospel (1:1-4:11)
 - A. Genealogy and Birth (1:1-2:23)
 - B. The Beginning of Jesus' Ministry (3:1-4:11)

- II. Section 2 – The Gospel of the Kingdom (4:12-7:29)
 - A. The First Set of Narratives (4:12-25)
 - B. The First Discourse – the Sermon on the Mount (5:1-7:29)

- III. Section 3 – Jesus' Messianic Credentials (8:1-10:42)
 - A. The Second Set of Narratives (8:1-9:38)
 - B. The Second Discourse – Instructions for the Twelve (10:1-42)

- IV. Section 4 – The Proclamation of the Kingdom (11:1-13:53)
 - A. The Third Set of Narratives (11:1-12:50)
 - B. The Third Discourse – Parables of the Kingdom (13:1-53)

- V. Section 5 – Rising Conflict (13:54-18:35)
 - A. The Fourth Set of Narratives (13:54-17:27)
 - B. The Fourth Discourse – Life in the Kingdom (18:1-18:35)

- VI. Section 6 – The Kingdom and the End (19:1-25:46)
 - A. The Fifth Set of Narratives (19:1-23:39)
 - B. The Fifth Discourse – Life in the Kingdom (24:1-25:46)

- VII. Section 7 – The Passion and the Resurrection (26:1-28:20)
 - A. Passion Narratives (26:1-27:66)
 - B. The Resurrection and the Great Commission (28:1-20)

Making Sense of Parables

Jesus' parables take up the familiar details of everyday life in ancient Galilee and Judea. They sound like what we might call a story or an illustration. But rather than offering clarity to a teaching, or making a moral point, they instead often leave his hearers in confusion.

Why is this? Why tell a story that seemingly confuses on purpose? Well, that gets us to the very essence of parables.

Jesus explained that parables intentionally veil his message such that some would not understand, while others would (Matt 13:11-17). The point is not complete confusion. The point is for his message to take root in the imagination of the right people.

Parables carry 'the knowledge of the secrets of the kingdom of heaven' (Matt 13:11) in a way that subversively bypasses the opponent to find a home in the mind of the open. Matthew Henry says of parables: 'the things of God were made more plain and easy to those willing to be taught, and at the same time more difficult and obscure to those who were willingly ignorant.'

Why are they powerful? Parables are simple. They stick. They provide imaginative fuel for the faithfully expectant. Take the parable of the mustard seed (Matt 13:31-32) as a case study.

- Immediate response of the critic: this guy teaches a kingdom that starts tiny but ends big. Cool. Believe it when I see it.
- Thoughtful response of the believer: we're waiting for God's

kingdom... What do you think he's getting at? Remember Isaiah 55: God's word of covenant is a seed that doesn't return empty... Remember Daniel 4: The giant tree of Babylon shading animals and birds cut down until the kingdom of God was elevated? Jesus is heralding something essential here...

- Hopeful Christian reading: the way of Jesus is so hard at this moment. But remember how it started? A deserted, destitute messiah written off in death became an explosive movement of life at his resurrection. We hold hope in hard places because this is the kingdom way. Mustard seeds become towering trees.

Can you see that these parables carry layers of meaning designed to come to life upon meditation and reflection? They are not moral fables, nor simple allegories where we just work out that X can be mapped onto Y in the story. They are stories of rich spiritual depth.

With all that being said, here are some tips for approaching the parables:

1. They are presented as parables intentionally. Jesus could have taught them explicitly (e.g. Sermon on the Mount, Matt 5-7) but instead he used parables. So, take them as they are!
2. Immerse yourself in them where you can. Get into the mindset of a 1st century person hearing them for the first time. Then consider them from a position within the parable itself: are you watching from the sideline? Do you identify with a character?
3. Meditate on them. Chew on them over time. Come at them from different angles. Consider potential biblical parallels or imagery.
4. Let them reshape your expectations and thoughts. Allow not only the 'teaching' but the 'imagery' to have its way on our perceptions of the kingdom.

Series Terminology Explained

Titles of Jesus in Matthew ‘Son of ..’

‘Son of David’

Jewish tradition was centred on the Messiah coming from the line of David, which was fulfilled through the birth of Jesus. King David’s reign over the nations points towards Jesus’ ultimate reign over all of Israel and the world (Matt 2:6; 19:28).

‘Son of God’

This title reveals Jesus’ relationship and role in the trinity. He is the heavenly, eternal Son who is equal to God himself, sent by the Father and has authority from the Father to give life, pronounce judgment and rule over all (Matt 11:25-30, 17:5).¹ It was also used in the Old Testament to describe the people of Israel and their relationship with God.

‘Son of man’

Jesus’ humanity, humility and his deity are revealed in the title ‘The Son of man’. This was the primary title used by Jesus himself (Matt 12:32). Jesus is God in the flesh (1 John 4:2) and is the perfect example of God’s intention of humanity. This title is also a fulfillment of prophecy such as in Daniel 7:13-14 where Daniel sees one like a ‘Son of man’. The Son of man is given dominion, glory and an eternal kingdom.

Kingdom of God/Kingdom of Heaven

Jesus taught on the Kingdom of God more than 60 times! This was his most taught subject in the Gospels. Matthew mentions the ‘Kingdom of Heaven’ thirty-two times, and ‘Kingdom of God’ four times. There seems to be no difference in the two expressions as both are used in identical contexts. God’s kingdom is both present now, and in the future. The Kingdom is God with his people (Matt 18:20; 28:20). The Kingdom has come in Jesus, and with Jesus. But it is only in Christ’s final return that

¹Grudem, W. *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine*. 1994 p546.

the kingdom will be brought to full fruition in the new heaven and the new earth. The Kingdom of God is the sphere where the kingly rule of God is experienced.²

“You enter the kingdom, you are a child of the kingdom, you receive the kingdom, by responding to his kingly rule and surrendering to the King. The kingdom points to a future when God will be all in all, and his will shall be done on earth as in heaven”- ‘Matthew’ By Michael Green

Transfiguration

The transfiguration of Jesus in Matthew 17:1-8 was a significant event in revealing Christ’s divine glory. The divine-human underwent a momentary transformation which points us towards the events that will unfold when he returns. It’s a glimpse of God in all his glory. God, once again, affirms Jesus as Messiah and that the Kingdom of God is in the midst of his people through Jesus.



²Grudem, W. *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine*. 1994 p862.

**“So the last will be first,
and the first will be last.”**

Matthew 20:16

Sermon 1: Matthew 13:1-23

Sunday 8th October

Bible readings:

Monday: Matthew 13:1-23

Tuesday: Matthew 13:10-17

Wednesday: Matthew 13:18-23

Thursday: Matthew 13: 24-30

Friday: Matthew 13:31-35

Verse for contemplation:

Matthew 13:23 - But the seed falling on good soil refers to someone who hears the word and understands it. This is the one who produces a crop, yielding a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown.

Sermon 2: Matthew 13:24-52

Sunday 15th October

Bible readings:

Monday: Matthew 13:36-43

Tuesday: Matthew 13:44

Wednesday: Matthew 13:45-46

Thursday: Matthew 13: 47-52

Friday: Matthew 13:53-58

Verse for contemplation:

Matthew 13:44 - The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field. When a man found it, he hid it again, and then in his joy went and sold all he had and bought that field.

Next week we're away at The Bridge Church Weekender!

On Sunday 22nd October there will be no services in our regular buildings as we will all be at our Weekender.

Sermon 3: Matthew 13:53-14:33

Sunday 29th October

Bible readings:

Monday: Matthew 14:1-12

Tuesday: Matthew 14:13-21

Wednesday: Matthew 14:22-33

Thursday: Matthew 14:34-36

Friday: Matthew 15:1-9

Verse for contemplation:

Matthew 14:27 - But Jesus immediately said to them: "Take courage!
It is I. Don't be afraid."

Sermon 4: Matthew 14:34 – 16:12

Sunday 5th November

Bible readings:

Monday: Matthew 15:1-20

Tuesday: Matthew 15:21-28

Wednesday: Matthew 15:29-39

Thursday: Matthew 16:1-4

Friday: Matthew 16:5-12

Verse for contemplation:

Matthew 15:25 - The woman came and knelt before him. "Lord, help me!" she said.

Sermon 5: Matthew 16:13 – 17:23

Sunday 12th November

Bible readings:

Monday: Matthew 16:13-20

Tuesday: Matthew 16:21-28

Wednesday: Matthew 17:1-13

Thursday: Matthew 17:14-23

Friday: Matthew 17:24-27

Verse for contemplation:

Matthew 17:22-23 - When they came together in Galilee, he said to them, "The Son of Man is going to be delivered into the hands of men. They will kill him, and on the third day he will be raised to life." And the disciples were filled with grief.

Sermon 6: Matthew 17:24 – 18:35

Sunday 19th November

Bible readings:

Monday: Matthew 18:1-5

Tuesday: Matthew 18:6-9

Wednesday: Matthew 18:10-14

Thursday: Matthew 18:15-20

Friday: Matthew 18:21-35

Verse for contemplation:

Matthew 18:4-5 - Therefore, whoever takes the lowly position of this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. And whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me.

Sermon 7: Matthew 19:1-12

Sunday 26th November

Bible readings:

Monday: Matthew 19:1-12

Tuesday: Matthew 19:13-15

Wednesday: Matthew 19:16-30

Thursday: Matthew 20:1-16

Friday: Matthew 20:17-34

Verse for contemplation:

Matthew 20:16 - So the last will be first, and the first will be last.

Sermon 8: Matthew 19:13 – 20:16

Sunday 3rd December

Bible readings...

for Advent Sun 3 Dec – Sun 24 Dec: see Appendix at back of booklet on
25 Days of Christmas with Handel's Messiah

Sermon 9: Matthew 20:17-34

Sunday 10th December

Bible readings...

for Advent Sun 3 Dec – Sun 24 Dec: see Appendix at back of booklet on
25 Days of Christmas with Handel's Messiah

Connect Group Study 1:

Matthew 13:1-23

Read the article at the beginning of this booklet to help understand the role of parables.

Read Matthew 13:1-23

Jesus describes this (and the other) parables as imparting the knowledge of the secrets of the kingdom of heaven (Matthew 13:11). Why begin with this parable?

How do unseen spiritual realities factor into people's reaction to the message of Christ?

Have you felt the pressure of trouble or persecution upon your faith? What form does this take in the modern world?

Jesus could have referred to all sorts of things that choke the word. Why do you think 'the worries of this life' and 'the deceitfulness of wealth' are so prominent?

The expectation is that the seed in good soil will produce something. What do you think the 30, 60, 100-fold 'what was sown', might be referring to?

How does this parable help us make sense of the kingdom in our world today?

What sorts of questions does this parable lead you to ask about yourself?

Note one thing from the text that God has brought to your attention to store up for the week ahead.

Connect Group Study 2:

Matthew 13:24-52

As you consider Jesus' repeated term 'the kingdom of heaven', what questions do you have?

Read Matthew 13:24-30 and 36-43

What do we learn about the kingdom from this parable?

His explanation is quite stark: good seed are the righteous shining like the sun in the kingdom; weeds are people of the evil one to be burnt, with weeping and gnashing teeth. How does that make you feel?

What do you think Jesus wants his disciples to take from this parable? What about us?

Read Matthew 13:31-35

What do we learn about the kingdom from these parables?

Why do you think these are sandwiched between the parable of the weeds and its explanation?

Read Matthew 13:44-46

What do we learn about the kingdom from these parables?

What's different between the parable of the treasure and the parable of the merchant?

Read Matthew 13:47-52

What do we learn about the kingdom from this parable?

This feels similar to the parable of the weeds. Why do you think Jesus taught another that is so similar?

Why has Matthew placed all these parables together? Is there a holistic picture of the kingdom of heaven forming? What do you take away as you sit with them all together?

He finishes on 13:52. What do you make of that?

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Connect Group Study 3:

Matthew 13:53 - 14:33

Read Matthew 13:53 - 14:33

The teaching of the parables is linked to this section by v53, and the observations on faith (13:58, 14:1-5, 14:16-17, 14:31-33) invite reflection on the parables in Jesus' ministry. How do you see the parables come to life in these stories?

Focus on 14:1-12

How does John the Baptist prelude Jesus?

Matthew's first readers were the Christians of the early church, many persecuted and facing hardship for their faith. What would they take from this story? What should we take in our context?

Focus on 14:13-33

What do you notice about Jesus in these stories? His habits? His character? His interactions? Does anything surprise you? In your following of Jesus, does anything challenge your walk?

What sort of expectations does Jesus fulfil in feeding the 5000 in 'a solitary place'? What does it say about him?

What do you make of this miraculous interaction between Peter and Jesus on the water? What strikes you about faith?

Speculative question: what tone do you imagine Jesus uses with Peter in v31? Is he angry? Frustrated? Rebuking him? Laughing? Kind?

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Connect Group Study 4:

Matthew 14:34 – 16:12

Read Matthew 15:1-20

Quick point of context: the Pharisees had a practice called korban, a sacred vow of property/finance to the temple, considered so sacred that once made it could not be revoked under any circumstance (including the need of one's elderly parents). This is behind the conversation on tradition vs command.

Why is Jesus so strong in this discussion with the Pharisees?

One does not speak (v18) or think (v19) something that hasn't first been born in the heart (biblically speaking, the centre of who you are). What should we take away from this teaching for our lives?

Read Matthew 16:1-12

Jesus has already invoked the sign of Jonah among the Pharisees (12:39-45) and now does so again. What is the connection between the person of Jonah and the Pharisees?

The disciples get confused about Jesus' comment about yeast (16:6), and Jesus attributes their confusion (16:7) to having little faith. What's the connection?

Hypocritical unbelief is likened to yeast: starting small it pervades the whole. How do we 'be on [our] guard against the yeast of the Pharisees and Sadducees'?

We're quick to rag on the Pharisees and those resembling their legalistic attitude. But Jesus' words lead us to ask hard questions of our own hearts. How do we know what's under the surface in ourselves? And what do we do when we're confronted with things we don't like?

Note one thing from the text that God has brought to your attention to store up for the week ahead.

Connect Group Study 5: Matthew 16:13 – 17:23

Read Matthew 16:13-20

Peter's confession is rooted in revelation. We also read this with the context of the parable of the sower in the back of our minds. How do people come to living faith?

V18-19 are hotly debated across theological lines. Brainstorm together some of the options of what these verses 'could' mean.

Why does Jesus tell his disciples to keep his identity under wraps in v20 (also look at 17:9 after the transfiguration)?

Read Matthew 16:21-28

We've moved from Jesus' elevating of Peter as the rock upon which the church will be built, to now calling him Satan. What's the deal?

V24-27 are both confronting and drastic. What is Jesus calling us to in these words?

How do we become 'cruciform disciples' in our 21st century Sydney context?

Take a moment to write a reflection down for yourself: how do these words challenge you? After a few minutes, share together and pray for each other.

Connect Group Study 6:

Matthew 17:24 – 18:35

Read Matthew 18:1-35

This chapter is filled with many different teachings and parables. Are there any threads or themes that suggest why Matthew put them all side-by-side?

Jesus uses the imagery of 'little children' for those who enter the kingdom of heaven. What do you think he's getting at?

The millstone/drowning language is drastic. Who are 'the little ones' in this picture? What point is Jesus trying to make?

He then moves to more graphic language of cutting one's own limbs off if they cause you to stumble. Why is he speaking so strongly? What sorts of action is he encouraging us to take in our lives?

From millstones, maiming, and the fires of hell to a wandering sheep. What does Jesus have in view with the parable of v12-14? And how does v10 about 'their angels' fit in?

Have you ever experienced v15-17 play out in the life of the church? How is this different from a natural or worldly approach to conflict?

How does binding/loosing fit in with the heading: 'Dealing with Sin in the Church'? What about the teaching on prayer v19-20?

Jesus' parable in v21-35 is memorable on the topic of forgiveness. What details strike you from the story? How does this challenge our approach to God? To each other?

Having looked through each aspect of Jesus' teaching in chapter 18, how would you summarise?

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Connect Group Study 7:

Matthew 19:1-12

Many of us come to a discussion about marriage, divorce and singleness with history and lived experience. Please engage together with the kindness and love of Jesus.

Read Matthew 19:1-12

How is the image of marriage and divorce presented by Jesus, different from the common approach in our society?

The Pharisees (as usual) come with a loaded question for Jesus. They're not earnest seekers of spiritual truth, '[they] came to him to test him'. Why do you think they ask the question the way they do in v3?

What do you think is on view in the language 'be united' and 'one flesh'? Is there a deeper reality than a familial relational structure? (feel free to go back and read Genesis 2 for further context).

Married people are still two separate people – Jesus later teaches there will be no marriage in the resurrection (Matt 22:29-32) – yet Jesus says, 'they are no longer two but one flesh'. What are we supposed to do with this?

What do you think Jesus means by Moses' allowing divorce because of Israel's hard hearts? Why does he allude to the beginning?

There are two distinct (though related) issues raised by Jesus' response: that of divorce, as well as re-marriage. Jesus teaches re-marriage apart from grounds of sexual immorality is equivalent to adultery. But why do you think he doesn't offer the same clarity for divorce?

Has Jesus overturned Moses or further interpreted Moses? (see Deut 21:1-4)

It is not possible for the ethics of the kingdom to be articulated in anything less than ideal terms. And yet the Lord is consistently compassionate to those who fail, repent, and come back to him for restoration. This passage follows hard on the heels of one that expresses the unbounded mercy and forgiveness of God. So legalistic rigorism is as inappropriate for the Christian community as is casual divorce. (Michael Green)

Marriage is a high calling. Divorce is therefore a significant action. The disciples' conclusion? 'It is better not to marry'. Jesus' response? 'Those who can accept this should accept it.'

Summarise what Jesus is teaching about singleness here. Do you think the church approaches singleness in the same way that Jesus does? Why/why not?

If anyone single in the group would like to share: what do you wish other Christians would understand/consider about singleness?

Connect Group Study 8:

Matthew 19:13 – 20:16

Read Matthew 19:16-22

Do you think this man was earnest as he questioned Jesus, or was there something else behind his question? Why/why not?

Jesus mixes up a selection from the 10 commandments (Ex 20:1-17) and weaves a command from Leviticus about our neighbour (Lev 19:18). What do you think Jesus is doing in answering like this?

Why is wealth such a stumbling block for coming to Christ?

Read Matthew 19:23-30

How does Jesus use the example of this man as a living parable? What is he teaching about the kingdom of heaven?

Peter's question is bold (v27, so what do we get for leaving everything behind?), and yet Jesus' response is incredible (v28-30). What stands out to you?

Read Matthew 20:1-16

How does this parable speak into the past two sections?

The theme 'the last will be first, and the first will be last' is repeated, seemingly as a banner over these sections. What does Jesus mean by that?

How should 'the last will be first, and the first will be last' inform our vision of God? How should it define our Christian life?

Take a moment to write a reflection down for yourself: how do these words challenge you? After a few minutes, share together and pray for each other.

Connect Group Study 9:

Matthew 20:17-34

How do you define greatness? Illustrate it with examples from our world.

Read Matthew 20:17-34

Is this passage forbidding high levels of leadership in the world for Christians? Why/why not?

Is Jesus teaching that it's okay to desire greatness as long as you pursue it through service (v26)? Or something else? What does Jesus mean here?

When Jesus says, 'whoever wants to be first must be your slave', the language of 'slave' is strong. What do you think he means when he calls us to be like slaves?

We observe the humility in someone's actions/decisions, but it comes from their heart (Prov 4:23). How do we cultivate a servant-shaped heart from which that life pours forth?

Ultimately the Christian path is the path of Jesus (v17-19). The disciples drink his cup (v23) and serve 'just as the Son of Man... give[s] his life as a ransom for many' (v28). What does this actually look like for the 21st century disciple?

How does the story of the two blind men (v29-34) inform our picture of Jesus as a servant?

Note one thing from the text that God has brought to your attention to store up for the week ahead.

Family Advent Resources

Here are some great family resources for Advent to checkout

Family Devotionals

The Adventure of Christmas (Ed Drew) & Advent Calendar

Prepare Him Room (Marty Machowski)

A Jesus Christmas (Barbara Reaoch)

The God of Amazing Gifts (Lizzie Lafferton)

Unwrapping the Greatest Gift by Ann Voskamp

The Light Before Christmas (*New by Marty Machowski)

A Better than Anything Christmas (* New by Barbara Reaoch)

Toddlers/Pre schoolers Devotionals & Books

Beginning with God at Christmas (Allison Mitchell/ Good Book Company)

Jesus the Best Baby (Catherine Mackenzie)

The Song of the Stars (Sally Lloyd Jones)

The Christmas Promise (Book & Advent Calendar)

Music


Check out our 'The Bridge Church Kids Church' Spotify Playlist

25 Days of Christmas with Handel's Messiah

December 1


“Comfort, comfort My people,” says your God. “Speak tenderly to Jerusalem and announce to her that her time of forced labour is over, her iniquity has been pardoned, and she has received from the Lord’s hand double for all her sins.”

A voice of one crying out: “Prepare the way of the Lord in the wilderness; make a straight highway for our God in the desert. Every valley will be lifted up, and every mountain and hill will be levelled; the uneven ground will become smooth and the rough places, a plain. And the glory of the Lord will appear, and all humanity together will see it, for the mouth of the Lord has spoken. (Isaiah 40:1-5)

 1. Symphony 2. Recitative (Tenor) “Comfort Ye...” 3. Air (Tenor) “Every Valley...” 4. Chorus “And the Glory ...”


December 2

For the Lord of Hosts says this: “Once more, in a little while, I am going to shake the heavens and the earth, the sea and the dry land. I will shake all the nations so that the treasures of all the nations will come & I will fill this house with glory,” says the Lord of Hosts. (Haggai 2:6, 7) “See, I am going to send My messenger, and he will clear the way before Me. Then the Lord you seek will suddenly come to His temple, the Messenger of the covenant you desire—see, He is coming,” says the Lord of Hosts. But who can endure the day of His coming? And who will be able to stand when He appears? For He will be like a refiner’s fire and like cleansing lye. He will be like a refiner and purifier of silver; He will purify the sons of Levi and refine them like gold and silver. Then they will present offerings to the Lord in righteousness. (Malachi 3:1-3)

 1. Recitative (Bass) “Thus saith the Lord...” 2. Air (Bass) “But who may abide...” 3. Chorus “And he shall purify...”

December 3

Therefore, the Lord Himself will give you a sign: The virgin will conceive, have a son, and name him Immanuel (Isaiah 7:14) Zion, herald of good news, go up on a high mountain. Jerusalem, herald of good news, raise your voice loudly. Raise it, do not be afraid! Say to the cities of Judah, “Here is your God!” (Isaiah 40:9,) Arise, shine, for your light has come, and the glory of the Lord shines over you. (Isaiah 60:1)

 1. Recitative (Alto) “Behold, a Virgin...” 2. Air (Alto) “O, thou that tellest...” 3. Chorus “Arise, Shine...”

December 4

For look, darkness covers the earth, and total darkness the peoples; but the Lord will shine over you, and His glory will appear over you. Nations will come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your radiance. (Isaiah 60:2-3) The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; a light has dawned on those living in the land of darkness. For a child will be born for us, a son will be given to us, and the government will be on His shoulders. He will be named Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace. (Isaiah 9:2, 6)

- ④ 1. Recitative (Bass) “For behold, darkness...” 2. Air (Bass) “The people who walked in darkness...” 3. Chorus: “For unto us...”

December 5

In the same region, shepherds were staying out in the fields and keeping watch at night over their flock. Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, “Don’t be afraid, for look, I proclaim to you good news of great joy that will be for all the people: Today a Saviour, who is Messiah the Lord, was born for you in the city of David. This will be the sign for you: You will find a baby wrapped snugly in cloth and lying in a feeding trough.” Suddenly there was a multitude of the heavenly host with the angel, praising God and saying: Glory to God in the highest heaven, and peace on earth to people He favours! (Luke 2:8-14)

- ④ 1. Pifa 2. Recitative (Soprano) “There were shepherds...” 3. Recitative (Soprano) “And, Lo, the angel...” 4. Recitative (Soprano) “Ad the angel said...” 5. Recitative (Soprano) “And suddenly...” 6. Chorus “Glory to God in the highest...”

December 6

Rejoice greatly, Daughter Zion! Shout in triumph, Daughter Jerusalem! Look, your King is coming to you; He is righteous and victorious, humble and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey. I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim and the horse from Jerusalem.


The bow of war will be removed, and He will proclaim peace to the nations. His dominion will extend from sea to sea, from the Euphrates River to the ends of the earth. (Zechariah 9:9-10)

- ④ 1. Air (Soprano) “Rejoice greatly...”

December 7

Then the eyes of the blind will be opened, and the ears of the deaf unstopped. Then the lame will leap like a deer, and the tongue of the mute will sing for joy, for water will gush in the wilderness, and streams in the desert; (Isaiah 35:5-6) He protects His flock like a shepherd; He gathers the lambs in His arms and carries them in the fold of His garment. He gently leads those that are nursing. (Isaiah

40:11) “Come to Me, all of you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. All of you, take up My yoke and learn from Me, because I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for yourselves. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.” (Matthew 11:28-30)

-  1. Recitative (Alto) “Then shall the eyes of the blind...” 2. Aria (Alto) “He shall feed...” and “Come unto me...” 3. Chorus “His yoke is easy...”

December 8

The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, “Here is the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world! (John 1:29)

-  1. Chorus “Behold the Lamb...”


December 9

He was despised and rejected by men, a man of suffering who knew what sickness was. He was like someone people turned away from; He was despised, and we didn’t value Him. (Isaiah 53:3) I gave My back to those who beat Me, and My cheeks to those who tore out My beard. I did not hide My face from scorn and spitting. (Isaiah 50:6)

-  1. Air (Alto) “He was despised...”


December 10

Yet He Himself bore our sicknesses, and He carried our pains; but we in turn regarded Him stricken, struck down by God, and afflicted. But He was pierced because of our transgressions, crushed because of our iniquities; punishment for our peace was on Him, and we are healed by His wounds. We all went astray like sheep; we all have turned to our own way; and the Lord has punished Him for the iniquity of us all. (Isaiah 53:4-6)

-  1. Chorus “Surely he hath borne...” 2. Chorus “And with his stripes...” 3. Chorus “All we like sheep...”


December 11

Everyone who sees me mocks me; they sneer and shake their heads: “He relies on the Lord; let Him rescue him; let the Lord deliver him, since He takes pleasure in him.” (Psalm 22:7-8)

-  1. Recitative (Tenor) “All they that see him laugh...” 2. Chorus “He trusted in God...”

December 12


Insults have broken my heart, and I am in despair. I waited for sympathy, but there was none; for comforters, but found no one. (Psalm 69:20) Is this nothing to you, all you who pass by? Look and see! Is there any pain like mine, which was dealt out to me, which the Lord made me suffer on the day of His burning anger? (Lamentations 1:12)

-  1. Recitative (Soprano) “Thy rebuke has broken...” 2. Arioso (Soprano) “Behold and see if...”

December 13


By oppression and judgment, he was taken away. Yet who of his generation protested? For he was cut off from the land of the living; for the transgression of my people he was punished (Isaiah 53:8) ...because you will not abandon me to the realm of the dead, nor will you let your faithful one see decay. (Psalm 16:10)

Lift up your heads, you gates; be lifted up, you ancient doors, that the King of glory may come in. Who is this King of glory? The Lord strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle. Lift up your heads, you gates; lift them up, you ancient doors, that the King of glory may come in. Who is he, this King of glory? The Lord Almighty— he is the King of glory. (Psalm 24:7-10)

-  1. Recitative (Tenor) “He was cut off...” 2. Air (Tenor) “But thou didst not leave...” 3. Chorus “Lift up your heads...”


December 14

For to which of the angels did God ever say, “You are my Son; today I have become your Father”? Or again, “I will be his Father, and he will be my Son”? And again, when God brings his firstborn into the world, he says, “Let all God’s angels worship him.” (Hebrews 1:5, 6)

-  1. Recitative (Tenor) “Unto which of the ...” 2. Chorus “Let all the angels...”

December 15

The Lord announces the word, and the women who proclaim it are a mighty throng: When you ascended on high, you took many captives; you received gifts from people, even from the rebellious— that you, Lord God, might dwell there. (Psalm 68:11, 18)

-  1. Air (Bass) “Thou art gone up...” 2. Chorus “The Lord gave the word...”

December 16

And how can anyone preach unless they are sent? As it is written: “How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!” (Romans 10:15)

-  1. Duet (Soprano, Alto, Chorus) “How beautiful...”

December 17

But I ask: Did they not hear? Of course they did: "Their voice has gone out into all the earth, their words to the ends of the world." (Romans 10: 18)

- ④ 1. Arioso (Tenor) "Their sound..."

December 18

Why do the nations rebel and the peoples plot in vain? The kings of the earth take their stand, and the rulers conspire together against the Lord and His Anointed One: "Let us tear off their chains and free ourselves from their restraints." (Psalm 2:1-3)

- ④ 1. Air (Bass) "Why do the nations..." 2. Chorus "Let us break..."

December 19

The One enthroned in heaven laughs; the Lord ridicules them. You will break them with a rod of iron; You will shatter them like pottery." (Psalm 2:4, 9) Then I heard something like the voice of a vast multitude, like the sound of cascading waters, and like the rumbling of loud thunder, saying: Hallelujah, because our Lord God, the Almighty, has begun to reign! (Revelation 19:6) The seventh angel blew his trumpet, and there were loud voices in heaven saying: The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of His Messiah, and He will reign forever and ever! (Revelation 11:15), And He has a name written on His robe and on His thigh: KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS. (Revelation 19:16)

- ④ 1. Recitative (Tenor) "He that dwelleth in heaven..." 2. Air (Tenor) "Thou shalt break..." 3. Chorus "Hallelujah!!"

December 20

But I know my living Redeemer, and He will stand on the dust at last. Even after my skin has been destroyed, yet I will see God in my flesh. (Job 19:25-26) But now Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. (I Corinthians 15:20)

- ④ 1. Air (Soprano) "I know that my Redeemer..."


December 21

For since death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead also comes through a man. For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all will be made alive. (I Corinthians 15:21-22)

- ④ 1. Chorus "Since by man..."


December 22

Listen! I am telling you a mystery: We will not all fall asleep, but we will all be changed, in a moment, in the blink of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we will be changed. For this corruptible must be clothed with incorruptibility, and this mortal must be clothed with immortality. (1 Corinthians 15:51-53)

-  1. Recitative (Bass) “Behold, I tell you a mystery...” 2. Air (Bass) “The trumpet shall sound...”


December 23

When this corruptible is clothed with incorruptibility, and this mortal is clothed with immortality, then the saying that is written will take place: Death has been swallowed up in victory. Death, where is your victory? Death, where is your sting? Now the sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. (1 Corinthians 15: 54-56)

-  1. Recitative (Alto) “Then shall be brought...” 2. Duet (Alto, Tenor) “O Death, where...” 3. Chorus “But thanks be to God...”

December 24

What then are we to say about these things? If God is for us, who is against us? He did not even spare His own Son but offered Him up for us all; how will He not also with Him grant us everything? Who can bring an accusation against God’s elect? God is the One who justifies. Who is the one who condemns? Christ Jesus is the One who died, but even more, has been raised; He also is at the right hand of God and intercedes for us. (Romans 8:31-34)

-  1. Air (Alto) “If God be for us...”

December 25

They said with a loud voice: The Lamb who was slaughtered is worthy to receive power and riches and wisdom and strength and honour and glory and blessing! I heard every creature in heaven, on earth, under the earth, on the sea, and everything in them say: Blessing and honour and glory and dominion to the One seated on the throne, and to the Lamb, forever and ever! (Revelation 5:12-13)

-  1. Chorus “Worthy is the Lamb...”

**“Blessing and honour and
glory and dominion to the
One seated on the throne,
and to the Lamb, forever
and ever!”**

Revelation 5:13

Giving at Church:

This term, we are exploring 'The Kingdom of Heaven' in Matthew's gospel.

"The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field. When a man found it, he hid it again, and then in his joy went and sold all he had and bought that field." Matthew 13:44

Christ's message is that the kingdom of heaven is worth trading for everything we own, in order to come into "possession" of it.

We are called to be generous with our earthly possessions. Giving to the work of The Bridge Church in spreading the gospel in our local community and around the world through our mission partners, is one way of showing this and thanking God for his goodness and the gifts he has given us. The generosity of our ten congregations across the three sites of Kirribilli, Neutral Bay and Macquarie Park, generates nearly all of our income.

We are blessed with a gifted, dedicated, and loving Ministry Team to lead our ever-growing church. We have ministries in our local communities – through scripture in schools and kids, youth and young adult ministries tailored to support our younger members through their spiritual journey, as well as the support provided to our mission partners doing gospel work around the world. We have outreach into the Greenway Community, and our local aged-care homes and Everyday English to help those from overseas improve their English and understand the Bible. All that, alongside many other events in the life of our church, demonstrate the Goodness of God across the lower north shore and beyond.

It is with your continued support that we can continue to grow as a church and reach more people to share the gospel. If you don't yet give to this work and would like to, we'd encourage you to consider giving electronically using the details below or to talk to any of the staff team to find out more.

We thank you for your continued and intentional generous giving.

You can give by using our bank account details or the QR code below, or head to our website for more details, including the option to give by credit card - thebridgechurch.org.au/give.

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