



Bedok  
Methodist  
Church

# GOSPEL OF MATTHEW

D E V O T I O N S

J U N E T O N O V E M B E R 2 0 2 1

## **Our Vision**

To be disciples of Jesus Christ

## **Our Mission**

We exist to make disciples who love God, love one another and love the lost

Bedok Methodist Church<sup>©</sup>

June 2021

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## **Note to Users:**

- This e-devotions booklet serves only as a guide based on selected passages from the Gospel of Matthew, BMC sermon series for the second half of 2021.
- It is to encourage readers to connect to Christ daily using the S.O.A.P. format for their journaling. You may use the S.O.A.P. template provided on page 6.
- Do take time to write out your personal application/s. In the prayer segment, write out your prayers as you respond to God.
- Make your devotional time with God a delight and a daily spiritual discipline.

# Foreword

## *Learning from the Gospel of Matthew to be Disciples Making Disciples for Jesus*

Before His return, our Lord Jesus Christ left His followers with a job to do: “Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.” (Matthew 28:19-20)

These words provide the basis for our understanding of Matthew’s aim: to help disciples by teaching them what Jesus commanded. In short, the Gospel of Matthew is a **discipleship manual** for those who enter the kingdom **so that, while on earth, they can live in the Kingdom of Heaven.**

According to Rev David Pawson, Matthew collected the sayings of Jesus into five sermons, forming summaries of His teaching on discipleship. The Sermon on the Mount is best known, but there are four others on the connected theme of the Kingdom.

Using Rev Pawson’s classification in “Unlocking the Bible”, these are the five sermons of Jesus in Matthew:

1. **The Lifestyle of the Kingdom** (Matthew 5 – 7)  
How believers are to live, now that they are in the Kingdom of Christ, their King.
2. **The Mission of the Kingdom** (Matthew 9:35 – 10:42)  
When a person enters the Kingdom of Heaven, they have a mission to go and bring others in.
3. **The Growth of the Kingdom** (Matthew 13:1-52)  
What we should expect concerning the spread of the Kingdom: the teaching is through a series of parables, such as the Parable of Wheat and Tares (Matthew 13:24-43) – the kingdom of the enemy will grow alongside the Kingdom of Heaven, until they are separated at the final harvest. So let us not be surprised at the presence of evil in the world, nor be discouraged and angry with God why He has not acted to remove Satan and evil.
4. **The Community of the Kingdom** (Matthew 18:1-35)  
As the Kingdom grows, we must be aware of issues, even conflicts, that might arise from within the community.
5. **The Future of the Kingdom** (Matthew 24 – 25)  
By the time Matthew wrote his Gospel, many Christians were asking when Jesus would be returning. So, Matthew included a section helping his readers to know what they should be looking for by way of signs of the Lord’s second coming.

# BMC Pulpit Sermon Overview

*27 June to 28 November 2021*

There will be **20** sermons based on the Gospel of Matthew.

- Sermon #1 will be an overview of the Gospel of Matthew – highlighting the Gospel as a **Discipleship Manual** for believers of Jesus Christ to be His disciples, and for them to continue to make other disciples.
- Sermons #2 and #3 will be on Matthew 3 and 4.
- Sermons #4 to #6 (Matthew 5 to 7) will cover the teaching regarding **“The Lifestyle of the Kingdom”**.
- Sermons #7 and #8 will be on Matthew 8 and 9 respectively, which include deeds of Jesus emphasising compassion, healing, faith, sacrifice, power and forgiveness.
- Sermon #9 will cover the teaching regarding **“The Mission of the Kingdom”**.
- Sermons #10 and #11 will be on Matthew 11 and 12 respectively.
- Sermon #12 (Matthew 13) will cover the **“The Growth of the Kingdom”**.
- Sermons #13 and #14 will be on Matthew 14 and 15 respectively.
- Sermon #15 can be from either Matthew 16 and/or 17.
- Sermon #16 (Matthew 18 and 19) will cover the teaching and deeds connected with **“The Community of the Kingdom”**.
- Sermon #17 can be based on Matthew 20 and/or 21.
- Sermon #18 can be based on Matthew 22 and/or 23.
- Sermon #19 (Matthew 24 and 25) will cover the **“The Future of the Kingdom”**.
- Sermon #20 can be from Matthew 26, 27 or 28.

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# Devotional Template

*Using S.O.A.P. format*

TITLE: \_\_\_\_\_

Date/Day/Time: \_\_\_\_\_

**S**CRPTURE:

**O**BSERVATIONS:

**A**PPPLICATION/S:

**P**RAYERS:

## The Visit of the Magi to Worship Jesus

Date/Day/Time: \_\_\_\_\_

**S**CRIPTURE: Matthew 2: 1 – 12

**O**BSERVATIONS:

Although we do not know much about the magi (actually we do not even know if there are three or more of them), three things we do know:

- Their journey was a **journey of Faith** (v2)  
Travelling in those days was arduous and treacherous, yet when they saw His star in the east, they believed and set out to look for Him who was born 'King of the Jews'.
- Their journey was a **journey of Worship** (v11)  
Unlike King Herod who also enquired about where the Messiah was to be born, the magi came to worship Him. When they saw the Child, they fell to the ground, worshipped Him and presented to Him gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh; precious gifts fit for a King.
- Their journey was a **journey of Obedience** (v12)  
They came, they worshipped and having being warned by God not to return to Herod, the magi simply obeyed and left for their own country by another way.

**A**PPPLICATION/S:

So how has your journey to honour King Jesus been? Do you believe who He says He is? How have you worshipped Him in spirit and in truth? How will you obey Him joyfully?

**P**RAYER/S:

*DEVOTION*  
**Jesus' Baptism**

02

Date/Day/Time: \_\_\_\_\_

**S**CRIPTURE: Matthew 3: 1 – 17

**O**BSERVATIONS:

As John the Baptist preached a baptism of repentance for sins, people in Jerusalem and Judea were going out to be baptised by him at the Jordan River and they were confessing their sins. Though Jesus is the sinless Son of God, He humbled Himself to be baptised by John to “fulfil all righteousness”, that He could identify with sinful man.

Because of His obedience, the heavens opened and Jesus “saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and coming to rest on Him.” He experienced the pleasure of the Father who said, “This is My beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased.”

Jesus was about to begin His public ministry and everything He would do was according to the Father’s will and in the power of the Holy Spirit. What do you notice in this passage about the three Persons of the Trinity: God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit?

**A**PPPLICATION/S:

In which areas has God called you to humble yourself before Him? What will you do so that “He can be well pleased with you?”

**P**RAYER/S:



*DEVOTION*  
**Come, Follow Me**

03

Date/Day/Time: \_\_\_\_\_

**S**CRIPTURE: Matthew 4: 18 – 22

**O**BSERVATIONS:

Jesus' calling of His first four disciples involved two pairs of brothers. They were in the middle of their daily tasks when Jesus called out to them to follow Him and make them fishers of men. Peter and Andrew were casting a net into the sea when they immediately left their nets and followed Jesus. James and John were in the boat with their father mending their nets. Immediately, they left their boat and their father and followed Jesus.

These first disciples responded immediately to Jesus' call without any hesitation. They left behind their means of livelihood, priorities, plans, security, and even family to follow Jesus fully. Luke 9:23 says: "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me."

Unlike the first disciples, today, we may not be following Jesus in the flesh, but we do know that following Him means leaving a life we might have planned. It is no longer living a self-centred life.

To be His faithful disciples, Jesus must have priority in our lives. We confess to Him to be the Lord of our lives, love Him, read His Word and become like Him. This is to fulfil the Great Commission in Matthew 28:19-20.

**A**PPPLICATION/S:

How have you been following Jesus in His call to you?

**P**RAYERS:

*DEVOTION*  
**The True Gift**

04

Date/Day/Time: \_\_\_\_\_

**S**CRIPTURE: Matthew 5: 23 – 24

**O**BSERVATIONS:

In many cultures, the gift-bearer often expects to be treated with respect; his gifts looked upon with appreciation. And the recipient tends to measure the sincerity of the giver by the value of the gift. **Not so with God.**

Cain brought before the Lord some of his produce as an offering. Yet the Lord did not look upon his offering with favour. Cain got angry. God's words that followed revealed what was truly on his heart (Genesis 4:3-7).

Likewise, in Matthew 5:23-24, instead of affirming the gift-bearer and showing immediate appreciation for the gift he brought to the altar, Jesus required him to first be reconciled with the brother or sister who has something against him. Like Cain, bitterness and unforgiveness can become a stronghold and separate us from the very One to whom we are offering the gift. In fact, Jesus equated anger toward one another as murder (5:21-22).

Just as God lovingly sought to restore Cain by revealing his impure heart, Jesus lovingly reveals the unforgiveness we harbour that might hinder our fellowship with Him. He is not rejecting our gifts but is offering the way to draw closer to Him as He guides us to restore our relationships with others in His Body. God the Father has graciously offered us the precious gift of peace through Jesus, that we may be reconciled to Him. We, in turn, are to offer peace and seek reconciliation with others.

**A**PPPLICATION/S:

Who has the Lord revealed to you to seek forgiveness and those to whom we need to offer forgiveness?

**P**RAYER/S:

Lord, I lift up my relationship with \_\_\_\_\_ to You. Soften my heart and remove my pride, so I may humbly seek forgiveness from this brother/sister. Likewise, for \_\_\_\_\_ who has wronged me. Lord, I surrender the hurt and the anger in my heart to You. You are my Restorer and Healer. Let the peace of Christ rule in my heart. As one that has been forgiven much, I will forgive by the power of the Holy Spirit. In Jesus' Name I pray, Amen.

*DEVOTION*  
**Do You Know Jesus?**

05

Date/Day/Time: \_\_\_\_\_

**S**CRIPTURE: Matthew 7: 21 – 23

**O**BSERVATIONS:

This is one passage where Jesus affirms His status as Lord: ‘Not everyone who says to *ME*, ‘Lord, Lord’...’. However, merely calling Him ‘Lord, Lord’ does not qualify one for heaven. Only those who, not only *truly* believe in His name, but also do the Father’s will, will enter the kingdom of heaven.

This sobering declaration by Jesus is further evidence that our belief in Jesus Christ must be buttressed by doing the Father’s will. “What good is it, my brothers, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can that faith save him?” (James 2:14)

Only true faith is salvific. And true faith is evidenced by good works, doing the will of the Father. Recently, our Bishop Dr Gordon Wong, preached about loving God by loving our neighbour. This is the Great Commandment as defined by Jesus. Love God with all your heart, soul and mind, and love others as yourself.

So, if we possess true faith, we will desire to, and we will carry out the Father’s will, by loving God, and also loving Him through our love and doing good for others.

**A**PPPLICATION/S:

What are some things I and/or my DG can do to love others, and in so doing, love God and do the Father’s will?

**P**RAYER/S:

*DEVOTION*  
**Does Jesus Know You?**

06

Date/Day/Time: \_\_\_\_\_

**S**CRIPTURE: Matthew 7: 21 – 23

**O**BSERVATIONS:

Jesus says: “Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven.” In His stern warning to false prophets, Jesus tells them: “I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.” It is a sobering call on the importance of being a true disciple of Jesus Christ.

Jesus is the vine and we are the branches (John 15:5). A true disciple is one who bears good fruit and will be recognised by it. Whoever abides in Christ bears much fruit; apart from Him we can do nothing. Whatever we do in our lives – our worship, our service, our acts of kindness, our efforts in discipleship – must all stem from a sincere relationship with God.

Jesus says in John 10:27: “My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me.” The Lord desires for us to be authentic disciples who would incline our ears and hearts to His leading and counsel. He longs for us to pursue a genuine, intimate relationship with Him – a relationship where we know Jesus, and Jesus knows us.

**A**PPPLICATION/S:

How will I live my life so that Jesus will say to me: “Well done, good and faithful servant!”?

**P**RAYERS:

## The Faith of the Centurion

Date/Day/Time: \_\_\_\_\_

**S**CRIPTURE: Matthew 8: 5 – 10, 13

### **O**BSERVATIONS:

What was it that the centurion said that prompted Jesus to commend him for ‘such great faith’? We have a glimpse of the kind of man the centurion is through his concern for his servant that leads him to seek out Jesus for help. He also probably understands the culture of those days, where Jews will not step into the house of Gentiles.

Being in the Roman military, the centurion is a man who understands the power of authority, having soldiers under him who obey his orders without question. His words here reveal that he believes Jesus does not even need to be present at his home but only to ‘say the word’ and his servant will be healed.

He recognises the spiritual authority that is upon Jesus and that healing shall be done according to His Word. This is the kind of faith that Jesus commends – that we know Jesus is the Son of God and we believe what He says will come to pass.

### **A**PPPLICATION/S:

Do you have the kind of faith shown by the centurion – that we know Jesus is the Son of God and we believe what He says will come to pass? How will you develop/further this faith?

### **P**RAYER/S:

## Jesus Called Matthew to Follow Him

Date/Day/Time: \_\_\_\_\_

**S**CRIPTURE: Matthew 9: 9 – 13

**O**BSERVATIONS:

Discipleship begins with a call of those who need the Lord to follow Him, and then to go out and call others too.

- Jesus called Matthew (a tax collector) to...  
People need the Lord. Matthew, being a tax collector for the Roman empire, was likely shunned by his fellow Jews. To Jesus, Matthew – a man, a tax collector, and a sinner – was exactly who He came for. Jesus did not come to call the righteous but the sinners.
- Follow Him (Jesus) and then to...  
Jesus' call to Matthew was a specific one; to follow Jesus Himself, and no one else. To Matthew who recognised Jesus as the King of the Jews, He would have been his much-awaited Messiah. To follow Jesus is simply to be more Christ-like.
- Go out and call others too...  
In the concluding chapter of Matthew, Jesus gave to all His disciples the Great Commission: "go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." (Matthew 28: 18 – 20) This call to follow Jesus results in us, being His disciples, to call others to follow Him as well.

**A**PPPLICATION/S:

How have you been a disciple making disciple/s?

**P**RAYERS:

## There is No Salvation Without Mercy and Forgiveness

Date/Day/Time: \_\_\_\_\_

**S**CRIPTURE: Matthew 9: 10 – 13

**O**BSERVATIONS:

The Pharisees misunderstood Jesus' mission. It was not about elevating the righteous and condemning the sinful, but about saving sinners and restoring them to righteousness. Consequently, it earned the Pharisees a harsh rebuke from Jesus in verse 13: "Go and learn what this means: 'I desire mercy, and not sacrifice.'"

Jesus' mission of restoration begins with mercy and forgiveness for "while we were sinners, He forgave us." (Romans 5:8) So, we, as agents of His mission, must recognise the immense importance of forgiving others. The tax collectors and sinners will never rise above their condition of guilt and shame unless they are freed by the knowledge that God has forgiven them. The entire gospel rests on mercy and forgiveness. For without forgiveness, what Good News do we have to offer?

Our relationship with God is restored through the Good News that our sins have been forgiven. Hence, if we are to truly represent Christ as His ambassador to reconcile God and man (2 Corinthians 5:20), we must first learn that it is driven by His desire to show mercy and forgiveness. And secondly, we must develop that same willingness to forgive others.

**A**PPPLICATION/S:

We cannot share the Good News with someone we have not forgiven. Are we condemning anyone through our unforgiveness? What can I do to move on?

**P**RAYER/S:

## God Reveals His Truth to those who Depend on Him

Date/Day/Time: \_\_\_\_\_

**S**CRIPTURE: Matthew 11: 25 – 27

**O**BSERVATIONS:

In these verses, Jesus was praying to the Father and He praised Him for His wisdom and His grace in how the Father has chosen to reveal His truth to some, while withholding it from others. The first group are those who are wise and learned. We would naturally expect them to be the ones who grasp the truth. However, shockingly, the truth has been hidden from them while it is revealed to the second group: those referred to as little children.

The contrast between these two groups is stark. For most of the part, the wise and learned tend to become proud and self-sufficient, whereas little children have nothing to depend on except on those who care for them.

It is those with childlike dependency on God who go on to become disciples of Jesus. Let us learn not to depend on ourselves, becoming proud and self-sufficient, but to depend on God always.

**A**PPPLICATION/S:

- What are some areas of your life that you have not fully surrendered to God? (e.g. career, family, health, etc.)
- How can you learn to fully rely and depend on God in these areas of your life?

**P**RAYERS:



DEVOTION  
Words Reveal Character

11

Date/Day/Time: \_\_\_\_\_

**S**CRIPTURE: Matthew 12: 33 – 37

**O**BSERVATIONS:

Jesus, knowing the thoughts of the Pharisees, said these words to them: “Either make the tree good and its fruit good, or make the tree bad and its fruit bad; **for the tree is known by its fruit.**” (Matthew 12:33) The Pharisees were the elite religious leaders of the day who knew the Torah well (Torah is translated as instruction or law and it refers to the first five books of the Old Testament), but often their behaviours contradicted what they professed to believe.

Earlier in the chapter, Jesus had healed a man whose hand was withered and another demon-possessed man who was blind and mute on a Sabbath (and this was a no-no for the Pharisees). Furthermore, the Pharisees accused Jesus of healing them by the power of Beelzebul, the ruler of the demons. Therefore, to say that Jesus was a good man who healed but by an evil power is contradictory. It is tantamount to saying a good tree brings forth bad fruit or vice versa.

The key question is: **What is in your heart?** The good works that Jesus did were evidence of His goodness, just as good fruit is evidence of a good tree. Likewise, the evil works of the Pharisees were evidence of their evil hearts.

**A**PPPLICATION/S:

What is in your heart? Are you exhibiting good fruit or bad fruit? What will you do about it?

**P**RAYERS:

## The Parable of the Sower

Date/Day/Time: \_\_\_\_\_

**S**CRIPTURE: Matthew 13: 1 – 23

**O**BSERVATIONS:

**Parable of the Sower (Matthew 13:1-23)**

This parable is about the various kinds of hearts and how they reject or receive Christ's Word. The reality is our Pride, Pains and Pleasures can affect our receptivity to God's Word.

**A wayside-hardened heart sidelines God (v4, 19)**

What makes the human heart hard? If it is pride, we leave little or no room for God and our hearts can be hardened against His Word. Pride suppresses the truth which leads to spiritual ignorance and practices of sin harden the heart.

**A rocky-shallow heart forgets God (v5, 20-21)**

Shallow hearts are attracted to the joy and excitement of a church when much is happening. But when difficulties come – loss of job, sickness, or relationship problems – they fall away. What makes the human heart shallow? Selective hearing and forgetting God!

**A thorn-strangled heart neglects God (v6-7, 22)**

In a materialistic culture, the quest for possessions and pleasures can choke us, making us barren. Jesus warns in Luke 12 against the obsession of over-preparing yourself by building bigger barns and having an 'Eat, drink and be merry' attitude, indicating a neglect for God.

**A**PPPLICATION/S:

**A good, open heart leads to fruitfulness (v8-9, 23)**

The open heart receives the Word and produces a good crop. Is your heart an open heart? Are you receptive to God's truth? In our Pains, do not forget God, instead, Respond to the Word with a prayer of commitment. In our Pleasures, do not neglect God, instead, Prioritise being rich in eternal things. Ask for help from our Divine Gardener to loosen the hard ground, uproot the rocks, and remove the thorns; for He has promised to remove your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh (Ezekiel 36:26). What is impossible with men is possible with God.

**P**RAYERS:

*DEVOTION***Stepping out of the Boat and  
Walking on Water**

Date/Day/Time: \_\_\_\_\_

**S**CRIPTURE: Matthew 14: 28 – 31

**O**BSERVATIONS:

Peter had faith in Jesus to be able to ask Jesus to call him out of the boat. However, when he “saw the wind” and trouble arose, he began to doubt his faith and started to sink. Some may view this incident as a case of doubting faith, but there is a greater message that lies beyond.

God wants us to have faith in Him, even if it is as small as a mustard seed (Matthew 17:20) and to respond to His call to step out of the boat. He does not guarantee that once we step out, we will not have moments where we get surmounted by the “wind” of life. However, He will be there whenever we cry out to him, like what Jesus did when Peter cried out to him for help.

There will always be “wind” in our lives, but when we cry out to God and exercise our mustard seed-like faith to rely on His strength, He will reach out His hand to us.

**A**PPPLICATION/S:

Listen to God’s call for us to step out of the boat(s) in our life. Have faith that God is with us every step of the way, and He will be there whenever we cry out to Him.

What “winds” are you experiencing in your life now? Pray and cry out to God for help.

**P**RAYERS:

DEVOTION  
To Love is to Forgive

14

Date/Day/Time: \_\_\_\_\_

SCRIPTURE: Matthew 18: 21 – 35

OBSERVATIONS:

When there is conflict in the church community, how should we respond? Matthew 18:21-22 says to forgive not seven times, but 77 times. Seven is considered to be the number of spiritual perfection and completion. Hence, we are to extend forgiveness at all times.

Forgiveness plays an important role in our development as disciples of Christ. John 13:34-35 says: "A new commandment I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you also must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are My disciples, if you love one another."

When someone trespasses against us, we prove that we truly love one another when we exercise reconciliation and forgiveness. His love compels us to extend this grace of forgiveness to others. It is His grace, because we were first loved, forgiven, and perfectly reconciled to the Father through Jesus.

Therefore, because God first loved and forgave us, we are called to forgive others as well (Colossians 3:13). During times when we find it difficult to forgive, may His grace be found more than sufficient in our weakness, so the world will know that we are His disciples.

APPLICATION/S:

*"Forgiveness is an act of the will, and the will can function regardless of the temperature of the heart." - Corrie Ten Boom*

Is God calling you to make amends with someone today, and how will you obey Him?

PRAYER/S:

*DEVOTION*

## Jesus Heals the Blind Men

15

Date/Day/Time: \_\_\_\_\_

**S**CRIPTURE: Matthew 20: 29 – 34

**O**BSERVATIONS:

As Jesus was leaving Jericho and going up to Jerusalem, a large crowd followed Him. Two blind men, one named Bartimaeus (Mark 10:46; Luke 18:35), sitting by the road and hearing the crowd, inquired what this was. When they heard it was Jesus the Nazarene who was passing by, they cried out “Lord, have mercy on us, Son of David!” They were sternly warned to be quiet but they cried out all the more.

Jesus stopped, called them and said, “What do you want Me to do for you?” They replied that they wanted their eyes to be opened. “Moved with compassion, Jesus touched their eyes; and immediately they regained their sight and followed Him.” (v34)

Three things stood out:

- They acknowledged Jesus as Lord.
- They pleaded to their Lord, the Son of David, to heal them.
- Jesus had compassion on them and healed them.

It’s that simple: Jesus saves us from our sins (Matthew 1:21), Jesus heals and Jesus is Immanuel, God with us (Matthew 1:23).

**A**PPPLICATION/S:

Recognising Jesus as our Saviour, Lord and God Almighty, we will call upon Him in our moments of need. How are you encouraged or challenged in calling out to Jesus for help?

**P**RAYER/S:

## “Behold, your King is coming to you!”

Date/Day/Time: \_\_\_\_\_

**S**CRIPTURE: Matthew 21 – 22

**O**BSERVATIONS:

When COVID-19 struck and disrupted global systems, it felt like time to review where we are and the choices that got us there.

The Jews were not unfamiliar with that. When Alexander the Great conquered Persia in 334 BC and institutionalised Hellenism through Greek cities, should they conform? The Sanhedrin was structured after the governing council of a Greek city-state. Then the Seleucids came, should they rebel? The Maccabean revolt was mounted in 168 BC. And when the Romans set ruthless Idumean governors over the Jewish state from 48 BC, what were their choices?

During the Roman rule of Judea, something out of this world happened. The Jews were told: “Behold, your king is coming to you!” (Matthew 21:5 ESV) Indeed, some had thought Jesus would deliver them from the Romans. While the advent of Christ into Jerusalem foreshadowed His salvation of the world at the cross, Jesus represented a radically different kingdom, antithetical to the rule of the chief priests and elders. This theme, enacted in the teachings and actions of the agents of these two kingdoms, compels us to rethink our life-choices.

It is easy to dismiss the Pharisees and Sadducees. But, in reading the narrative and parables, let’s reflect whether we too have overlooked the kingdom of God in our daily living.

**A**PPPLICATION/S:

Have we chosen a life of status and privileges to give us our respectability and hardened our hearts when the Holy Spirit prompted righteousness in key areas? Is working hard for worldly success causing us to neglect being fruitful for His glory? How can you make a change in your life today?

**P**RAYER/S:

## “The end will come one day; what will we do today?”

Date/Day/Time: \_\_\_\_\_

SCRIPTURE: Matthew 24: 3 – 14, 25: 31 – 46

### OBSERVATIONS:

*“Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be famines and earthquakes in various places. ... <sup>14</sup>And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come. ...” Matthew 24*

In Matthew 24, our Lord Jesus is asked by His disciples about the sign of His coming and the end of the age (which the Greek word implies “the end of the world”). In reply, Jesus speaks about wars, famines, earthquakes, persecution of Christians, leading to many losing their faith in Christ, and the final sign of the time of the end of the world being the preaching of the gospel to the whole world.

I am sure many of us watch movies, and we know that there are many different genres of movies - action, romance, comedy, futuristic, war, animation. One genre would be the kind with end-of-the-world story-lines, where the world will face total destruction because of different reasons, such as from a meteorite hitting the earth, or a massive nuclear war. Nowadays a common type of the end-of-the-world movie is that the end is caused by a zombie apocalypse - where a dangerous virus turns humans into mindless, blood-thirsting creatures in seconds.

Those of us who watch such a movie watch it for entertainment; it will not cause us to think what we will do if the end truly comes near. Then in March 2020, an invisible virus in some sense brought the world the end of life as we know it (hopefully temporarily). Singaporeans could no longer go overseas (whether nearby Malaysia or faraway USA) for our holidays. At certain points, we couldn't even have a nice dinner at our favourite kopi-tiam with our good friends. What are we to do when the world and life as we know it ends (even temporarily)?

In the movies, the story is often about how the protagonists would somehow survive the end of the world. In the Gospel, there is no surviving God's ordained end of the world as we know it. What then are we to do?

We are to be ready for the Master's return, as Jesus teaches at the end of Matthew 24. To do that is to live out our faith like the sheep in Chapter 25: look after the physical, emotional and spiritual needs of others, even strangers, and those unwelcomed by society, such as those in prison.

In Matthew 24, Jesus teaches about the end of the world. It is not a question of 'If' but 'When' and 'What' we ought to do in preparation for the end. Jesus' answer to us is clearly written in the next chapter. He shares two parables (Parable of the Ten Virgins and Parable of the Bags of Gold) in Matthew 25 to emphasise this truth.

Then He reveals to us that when He returns in all His glory, all the peoples will be separated into two groups, one praised and accepted by Him, the other rebuked and sent away from His presence. Which group do we want to belong to? It depends on what we will do in response to His Word.

## APPLICATION/S:

Our world changed because of COVID-19. There are many ways to look at this virus. It is a disaster destroying many livelihoods and causing the lives of millions. We should try our best to end it. But another way to perceive COVID-19 is that it is a strong reminder that the world as we know will not last forever. Instead of only trying our best to quickly get out of this pandemic, let us use this time to prepare for the end of the world in the way Jesus taught us - even now, to look after the physical, emotional and spiritual needs of others, even strangers, and those unwelcomed by society, such as those in prison.

The end of the world will come one day, what will we do today?

## PRAYER/S:

Heavenly Father, in a pandemic, it is easy to often yearn for the day of post-COVID, so that we can live like pre-COVID days. Yet teach us through this time of trial, that our life as we know it, will not last forever, and may we instead live a life as You want us to, so that we may be ready for you, by being a blessing to others.

We know that, even when we are going through trials, as we keep our faith in You, seeking to do Your will, Your grace will be sufficient for us, and You will bless us, so that our body, soul and spirit will prosper in You. In Jesus' precious name we pray, Amen.



*DEVOTION*  
**Got Oil? Or Any Oil?**

18

Date/Day/Time: \_\_\_\_\_

**S**CRIPTURE: Matthew 25: 1 – 13

**O**BSERVATIONS:

It would be difficult to tell them apart at first, while the day was bright and all were looking to the upcoming wedding banquet with great excitement.

All 10 were virgins, shunning sinful practices. All carried lamps, desiring to serve. All were eager to meet the bridegroom and be part of the glorious event.

But as night fell and it became apparent that the bridegroom was delayed, the difference showed. Five had oil and five did not. The oil of His presence - the one thing that would sustain them through the wait. The wise had, *long before this glorious moment*, collected the oil and treasured it, keeping it in jars. The foolish thought their lamps were sufficient.

**A**PPPLICATION/S:

Am I seeking the oil of God's presence? What must I do to have this oil?

**P**RAYERS:

*DEVOTION*  
**Death or Life?**

19

Date/Day/Time: \_\_\_\_\_

**S**CRIPTURE: Matthew 28: 1 – 7

**O**BSERVATIONS:

Death is a terrible end.

In our demise, we are confronted head-on with our sheer mortality, vulnerability, and loss.

The resurrection of Jesus Christ, however, is a game changer. It shifts entirely the trajectory of death. Having been raised to life, Jesus defied the mockery of death and despair.

Not just that, Jesus goes further to establish in John 11:25: “I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in Me, even though he dies, shall live again.”

What a glorious promise Jesus brings through His death and resurrection. In Christ, our physical death on earth is but temporal. A life of eternity awaits us – there will be no more death, mourning, crying or pain. Jesus makes everything new (Revelation 21). We have a living hope in Christ!

**A**PPPLICATION/S:

What are my thoughts on death? How can I share the Good News about death with someone today?

**P**RAYER/S:

*DEVOTION*  
Therefore, Go

20

Date/Day/Time: \_\_\_\_\_

**S**CRIPTURE: Matthew 28: 18 – 20

**O**BSERVATIONS:

“Go say *Hello* to your new friends,” I recall telling my hesitant toddler on her first day at preschool. “I’m just right behind you.”

As a parent, I can imagine in this Scripture passage Jesus commissioning His disciples in the special task ahead – not only as a commanding King, but also as a loving Shepherd who says reassuringly to His sheep: “Surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.” (v20b)

As followers of Jesus, we are not alone in the task of disciple-making. Not only is it our mission, but it is our motivation, because Jesus’ enabling Presence is with us wherever we go. He makes it a worthwhile journey, when together, we step out to bring a friend, a relative, or a co-worker to Christ.

**A**PPPLICATION/S:

Jesus has given me the authority and assurance to go and make disciples in my home, my neighbourhood and my workplace. How can I partner with Him today in this beautiful endeavour?

**P**RAYER/S:

## Alternative Divisions For The Gospel Of Matthew

| Chapter | Theme                                                                                                              |
|---------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1-3     | Introduction to the King                                                                                           |
| 4-7     | Announcing the arrival of the Kingdom                                                                              |
| 5-7     | The blessed life in the Kingdom; Identity of citizens of the Kingdom;<br>Living out the Laws of the Kingdom        |
| 8-10    | Power of the Kingdom in people's lives<br>Authority of the Kingdom demonstrated in healings, deliverance, miracles |
| 10      | Authority given to the disciples                                                                                   |
| 11-13   | Responses to Jesus                                                                                                 |
| 13      | Parables about the Kingdom                                                                                         |
| 14-20   | Different expectations about the Messiah                                                                           |
| 18-20   | The 'upside-down' Kingdom                                                                                          |
| 21-25   | Clash of the Kingdoms                                                                                              |
| 26-28   | Agony, death and resurrection of Christ                                                                            |
| 28      | Telling the world that Jesus is the true King                                                                      |

## A Note of Thanks

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1. **Introducing the King of the Jews and Arrival of His Kingdom** (Matthew 1 – 4)

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2. **The Lifestyle of the Kingdom** (Matthew 5 – 7)

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3. **The Power and the Mission of the Kingdom** (Matthew 8 – 10)

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4. **Responses to Jesus and the Growth of the Kingdom** (Matthew 11 – 13)

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5. **Expectations of the Messiah and the Community of the Kingdom** (Matthew 14 – 20)

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6. **The Clash and the Future of the Kingdom** (Matthew 21 – 28)

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