

MATTHEW 18-22

Ethics and Encounters



 **KIAMA ANGLICAN CHURCHES**

Term 1 2023 Bible Studies

Matthew 18:10 – 22:14

Ethics & Encounters

Jesus' Ethics & Encountering Jesus

Study leaders:

In this series, we are aiming towards a fairly 'open-ended' Bible study experience.

In the past I have used study schemes like **COMA** (Context, Observation, Meaning and Application), but there is a kind of 'exciting chaos' that comes from allowing a little more latitude to where the study might go.

So while I use what's called '[The Swedish Method](#)'¹ as a basic framework for letting the text speak, the key thing is to ask: "What is God saying to his people *today*, as we encounter him in Word and Spirit?"

I have offered some thoughts in each study, but this is only to prompt your own thinking.

The two key disciplines for leading these studies well are 1) knowing the text yourself and 2) getting a feel for how much to let people 'have their head.' It can be easy for a study to run off on a tangent when there is not a strict form to follow. However, one powerful question you can always ask is, "Where do you see that in the text?" Or, "What was it about what Jesus is saying here that brought that up?" These are helpful questions because sometimes they will bring your group back from a tangent, while other times it will turn out that it is not a tangent at all - indeed, rich new horizons in your own understanding of the text may open up before you!

¹ <http://thebriefing.com.au/2009/01/the-swedish-method/>

So please enter into this series with a sense of *encountering Jesus*, looking to where the Spirit may take you and your group in your ongoing journey of discipleship, both in mind and in deed.

By way of users' notes: Where you see '**Pre-read**' - these are passages which are helpful to have in mind as you come to the primary Matthew reading attached to the study.

I am keen for you to leave room for what Jesus is saying to you through the Matthew passage, so the questions in the study-proper will be more 'open'.

However, these **Pre-read** passages are attached to what you might call 'leading questions' ('leading the witness'), in order to draw out their significance as they are brought to bear upon the Matthew passages.

Additionally, each passage includes the "**Preached on...**" date. This is not to say that you have to wait for the sermon, nor fully depend upon the preacher's own work. However, reflecting on the sermon may be an aid to you in your preparation, or it may help to expand your thinking on a passage. Our preachers are men and women who have 'studied to show themselves approved workers' (2 Tim. 2:15). Yet it remains true that they, like us, are fellow disciples—learning to discern the face and voice of God in the text: at times perceiving 'in part, as in a mirror' (1 Cor. 13:12). So please use the sermons as a resource, even as you yourselves 'search the scriptures, to see if these things are so' (Acts 17:11).

The Swedish Bible-Study Method



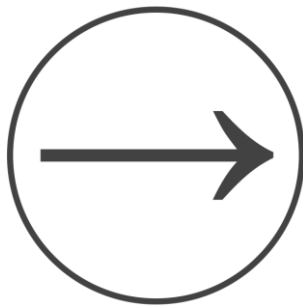
A '**light bulb**' is anything that 'shines through' in the passage. What stood out when you read it? What struck you? What grabbed your attention? It could be an idea, a literary device, a fact... Anything!



A '**question mark**' is anything that puzzles you, or raises a question for you (however basic or simple). It is extra important to ask how this might connect to the rest of the Bible. You might not have all the answers yourself, but as the group pools their resources, you may get closer to an answer together!



The '**cross**' is asking how this passage relates to Jesus. Where is Jesus in this passage? How does this passage help us understand his nature, his work, or his purpose? How does this passage help you to know Jesus more?



The **'arrow'** is asking, 'so what?' This is where we think about what preachers call 'application.' How might this change my life? One prompt is S.P.E.C.K.: is there a Sin to avoid, a Promise to know, an Example to follow, a Command to obey, or new Knowledge of God or ourself? The arrow asks, "What difference will this make to you?"

Ideally, in running the Swedish method, you will allow a time for the group to read the passage, and to reflect on it. Members might individually jot down some thoughts next to the icons in the study. When it comes time to share, you then initiate the discussion by asking, "So what were some of the things people noticed?" The study will flow on from there as you work through the categories.

Finish by praying that we will be changed by what we learn. Pray that we would not be like one who looks in a mirror and then walks away, immediately forgetting what he looks like (James 1:24). Pray that we might see the face and hear the voice of God in the text, and that we might be changed by it.

Our series in Matthew continues...

For the past number of years at KAC, in term one, we have been preaching from Matthew's account of Jesus. We move forward this term to address many key ethical questions, seeking to find answers as we encounter Jesus. Imagine not the ABC or SBS television versions but a live face to face 'Q&A' engagement with Jesus. We will engage with various audiences and how they interpreted Jesus' answers to their questions.

The world has changed since Matthew's account so 'How do we face change?' as we encounter Jesus today...

Our series approaches Easter and the 'the triumphal entry' in Matthew 21:1-11. Some further parables of Jesus leave us mouthwateringly closer in Matthew's account to Jesus' death and resurrection, the fulfillment of his life.

My prayer is that each of us will grapple afresh with the purpose of our life on earth until we are called to our future heavenly eternal glory. What is God's Mission and Vision for us until that day?!

We each have been called 'to glorify God, making Jesus known as we love and serve together'. We are disciples of Jesus, as Matthew's account urges us, within our ethical understanding and the encounters he provides for us. 'We are to be prayerful, inter-relational, connecting within our community and maturing in our faith as we are being transformed by Jesus.'

May this term and series challenge each of us to face changes that God puts before us and as the Spirit moves each of us to become more like Jesus. Thanks, Matthew, for this account of Jesus.

Grace and peace... Steve

Books

France, R.T. Matthew (Tyndale New Testament Commentaries) (IVP, Leicester, 1985). *One of the standards.*

Osborne, G. R. Matthew (Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament) (Grand Rapids, Zondervan, 2010). *Somewhat technical but very helpful.*

Blomberg, C. Matthew (The New American Commentary) (Nashville, B&H Publishing, 1992) (*Semi-technical but very helpful insights.*)

Wilkins, Michael J. Matthew (NIV Application Commentary) (Grand Rapids, Zondervan, 2004). *Excellent exposition and application sections.*

In addition this is a more technical commentary but regarded as the best:

Carson D.A. "Matthew" in Expositors Bible Commentary (Revised) (Grand Rapids, Zondervan, 2010)

Preached on 5th February

1. Congregational Ethics – Other-Centred Love

Matthew 18:10-35, Deuteronomy 19:15-21

A one in one hundred chance; what does it mean to you? It can be found in relationships expressed through love. One in one hundred makes a difference and mattered to Jesus. He showed mercy and forgiveness, as explained in the parable of the lost sheep. Being truly forgiven urges us to seek to forgive; Jesus modelled this as the way for us. Turning back to God and recognising our need for forgiveness should never leave us. The grace of forgiveness is found in Jesus Christ's love for us... a love that is always other-centred. Jesus' example shows that love and forgiveness always belong together, individually and for all of us as the congregation of KAC.

Read Matthew 18:10-35

1. Describe the character of God displayed in Jesus' concern for the loss of one in one hundred sheep? (v10-14)
2. Who is Jesus speaking to and for what outcome? (v15-20)
3. What does Jesus' answer (v22-35) to Peter's question (v21) emphasise about forgiveness?

4. What is essential in forgiveness and love that is centred in a Christ-like faith?

5. Where does your prayer life belong within the scripture we have studied today?

6. Discuss how you might forgive someone who has deeply hurt you?

Read Matthew 18:10-35



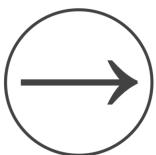
What shines out?



What raises questions?



How is Christ revealed?



What difference will it make?

Preached on 12th February

2. Domestic Ethics - Love

Matthew 19:1-15, Deuteronomy 24:1-4

Jesus is put to the test by some Pharisees from *'the other side of the Jordan'*, on the question of the permanence of marriage versus the Mosaic allowance for divorce. Jesus argues his case, supported by Old Testament quotations (which the Pharisees would have known), and then proceeds to deal with a further question from his disciples. This passage speaks to us and our own marriages (past, present or future), and perhaps it also helps to inform us in relation to the ongoing debate on the definition of marriage in Australia today.

1. Read verses 1-3(a). What do these verses suggest about Jesus' changed circumstances, compared to 17:22-24 and 18:1 (which seems to include all of chapter 18)?

Use a map of Judea at the time of Jesus' life and ministry to establish where he is for this chapter. Does this help to explain the context and purpose of the dialogue in verses 3-9?

1. The conversation changes at verse 10. What is the change, and what do you notice Jesus does differently in the second half of this passage?

Why do you think that is the case?

2. In response to two questions from the Pharisees (vs 3 and 7), Jesus quotes from two Old Testament passages (Genesis 1:27; 2:24 and Deuteronomy 24:1-4). What does Jesus affirm here about the nature and significance of marriage?

3. Why do you think the disciples responded as they did in verse 10, and how would you explain Jesus' reply to them (vs 11,12 – compare 1 Corinthians 7:1-7)?

Does the inclusion of children in this context (vs 13-15) seem deliberate or accidental (see also 18:1-6)? Why or why not?

4. Is Jesus defining marriage in this conversation, or is he responding to questions deliberately intended *'to test him'* (v.3) – or both?

Is it appropriate to use these sayings of Jesus in the current debate about the changing definitions of marriage in our culture, and if so, do you think we can use only what he said, or also what he didn't say?

Read Matthew 19:1-15



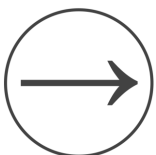
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Preached on 19th February

3. Domestic Ethics - Money

Matthew 19:16-30; 1 Timothy 6:6-10

Industrialist and philanthropist John D. Rockefeller famously responded when asked how much money is enough: "Just a little bit more."

Money is merely a medium of exchange for buying goods and services. The Bible teaches that money is a good gift, a major temptation and a terrible master.

For many, money is simply necessary to live. However, our finances can become much more than that, even colouring our perception of the world. The Bible regularly unmasks the false promises of money. Money promises security, but it can't protect you against God's judgment. It promises lasting happiness, but it can disappear overnight - and you can't take it with you when you die! Money promises freedom and ease, but it brings anxiety and worry - the more you have, the more you have to lose. How then should we handle our money and possessions?

1. How did the man who came to Jesus think he could get eternal life?

2. Compare Jesus' answer with the ten commandments (Exodus 20:2-17). What was Jesus seeking to emphasise? Hint: consider especially v.19b

Key issues:

3. Does Jesus' advice to 'sell your possessions and give to the poor' apply to all Christians? Why or why not?
4. What does the reaction of the disciples reveal about their understanding?

Application – Where to from here?

5. Do you ever feel there is something lacking in your life? If so, what might it be? What do you think Jesus may be asking you to do about it?

Read Matthew 19:16-30



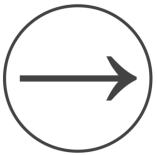
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Preached on 26th February

4. Ethics – Spiritual Pride

Matthew 20:1-16, Leviticus 19:10-16

Matthew 18 explored the place and purpose of the Kingdom of Heaven. Now in Matthew 20 we discover what the Kingdom of Heaven is like. The classic pun is found here - the vine or divine! The parable in worldly terms can easily draw us into the value of trade unions. Justice and fairness are desired in the real world. We could all recount situations in our experience that are unfair and unreasonable, but Jesus gives us a new lens to understand true justice, where the Kingdom of Heaven reigns in truth. This parable reminds us that we cannot achieve perfection on earth where there is social, economic and political inequity. The spiritual solution is that justice and righteousness can only be found in Jesus. This parable is not about a contract to serve God, it is about a covenant. It's not measured by frames such as first or last, but rather it is for all by faith in Jesus Christ through the Spirit. This is the divine in this parable of the vine!

1. Imagine yourself in each of the groups of workers described. How would you feel and respond in these different circumstances in (v1-16)?

2. What principles can we learn from the fact that they were all paid equally?

Did they all deserve equal pay?

3. What does the parable of the workers teach us about grace, work, and compensation in the Kingdom of God in (v1-16)?

4. How do we understand as a Christian believer the teaching, "So the last will be first, and the first will be last" ? (v16)

5. There is a tension between Kingdom wealth and worldly wealth. How might that tension express itself in your life today?

6. What is your take-away message from this parable in one or two sentences?

Read Matthew 20:1-16



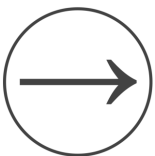
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Preached on 12th March

5. Leadership Ethics – Spiritual Discipline

Matthew 20:17-28, Romans 12:1-8

This passage challenges us to consider both our future destiny and the importance of our current social standing. Our lives need to reflect the truth of the cross and the reality of the resurrection.

1. Who are the leaders in our community?

2. What are the qualities of strong leaders?

3. How comfortable are you with being a slave?

4. Can we learn humility?

5. How do we live lives of humble service?

Read Matthew 20:17-28



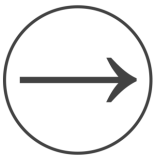
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Preached on 19th March

6. Encounters in Ethics - Healing

Matthew 20:29-34, 1 Kings 17:17-24

Jesus is heading on from Jericho to Jerusalem when he is recognised and shouted down by two (in Matthew's account) blind men, who have clearly heard about him and believed what they have heard. Undeterred by the rebukes of the crowd, they impose themselves on Jesus who, in spite of the weight of the world (literally) on his shoulders, stops and engages with these persistent men, clearly demonstrating the value of persistent faith, Jesus' compassion and power to heal, and the appropriate response of following him to whatever the future holds.

1. It is helpful to read both Mark's and Luke's accounts of this miracle (Mark 10:46-52 and Luke 18:35-43). What similarities and differences do you notice?

Are the differences important, or do they simply represent the same story told by different people?

2. Note that Jesus is nearing the end of a very specific journey – see 19:1; 20:17, 29 – if you can, trace the journey on a relevant map. Where is he going, and why (note 20:17-19)?

How does this context enrich the circumstances of this healing miracle?

3. The blind men cry, “*Lord, Son of David, have mercy on us!*” (vs 30,31). What does this show about their understanding of who Jesus was?

Why do you think the crowd rebuked them, and why did the men persist?

4. Why did Jesus ask, “*What do you want me to do for you?*” (v.32) when you’d think it was so very obvious what they wanted?

What prompted Jesus' compassion, and how did he express it (there could be five or six different ways)?

5. Note the final sentence, *'Immediately they received their sight and followed him.'* (v.34). This is a different response to so many recipients of Jesus' earlier miracles (eg, Matthew 8:1-4; 28-34; 9:1-7; 27-34; 14:13-22). Why do you think this time it's different (read on to the beginning of chapter 21), and what might it mean for us in terms of how we exercise faith, and respond to Jesus' compassion and healing power (eg, James 5:14,15) towards us and others today?

Read Matthew 20:29-34



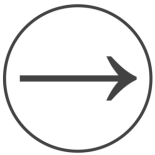
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Preached on 26th March

7. Encounters in Ethics - Finding

Matthew 21:1-9, Psalm 118:1-29

Have you ever made or witnessed a triumphant entry? It is an amazing moment to be remembered. We are viewing the greatest triumphant entry in history. Jesus enters on a donkey. The crowd are waving palms. Jesus' popularity was at its zenith. The crowd were filled with anticipation as he entered Jerusalem. Matthew 21:1-9 certainly captures the greatest triumph of all! Quite a party and celebration. In the midst of public acclamation, Jesus is 'occupying' Jerusalem. Surprising? The clash of religiosity and entrenched authority would soon come to the fore. Mixed emotions ensued. For the crowd, there were as many questions as answers! The rest of the New Testament unpacks the solution to this conundrum in the revelation of the Kingdom of God. Today we investigate the conundrum with Colossians 3:12-14 in view as the practical outworking of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection.

1. What do you think the disciples would have been discussing as they sought to follow through on Jesus' commands (v2-3)?

2. If you and I were standing on the road as Jesus passed by today compared to what v9 records, what would you have called out?

3. Have you ever been swept up by God as you found or rediscovered Jesus as your King? If so, as in Matthew 21:1-9, how would you describe this moment in your life?

4. Is it right to be emotional within our faith in Jesus? How would you best describe Jesus through your emotions?

5. Why does Colossians 3:12-14 use these words to describe and capture faith, and how can I be changed, so I can learn and grow?

6. Does Colossians 3:13-14 capture our Vision statement
“To glorify God, making Jesus known as we love and
serve together”?

Do these verses emphasise that Jesus is teaching us
today what he was exhibiting in Matthew 21:1-9?

Read Matthew 21:1-9



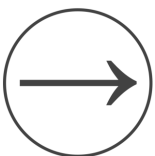
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Preached on 2nd April (Palm Sunday)

8. Encounters in Ethics – Questions & Answers

Matthew 21:10-27; Deuteronomy 18:15-22

The question in Matthew 21:10: “Who is This? Is a challenge to all of us to continue to seek to expand our answer to the questions. This passage challenges us to consider Jesus’ power, priorities and presence.

1. What is the first question asked in this passage? (v10)
2. List the several (??) other questions in the passage noting who asks them and what sort of answer is expected?
3. How do each of these relate to the initial question is Matthew 21:10?

4. How can we bear the fruit of faith that Jesus expects?

5. It almost seems natural to us to be like the priests and leaders and want to avoid the 'authority Jesus has over our lives (and this world). How should we react to the challenges Jesus presents us with?

Read Matthew 21:10-27



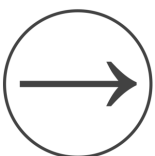
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Preached on 16th April

9. Ethics in Parables – Two Kinds of Tenants

Matthew 21:28-46; Isaiah 5:1-7

Jesus finds himself confronted by the Jewish religious leadership in the Jerusalem temple courts, where they are questioning who he is, and on whose authority is he acting. The two parables in this passage (the two sons, and the wicked tenants) are spoken directly to these leaders, clearly explaining in cleverly constructed stories, both how and why they have missed being able to recognise what they have been anticipating – the arrival of their promised Messiah. These stories were not only relevant to them in the first century, they also remain poignant today, as we learn from them how and why it is so important for us to remain faithful disciples of Jesus.

1. These two parables are spoken in a very specific context (see 21:23 and 45). How are the 'chief priests, elders and Pharisees' represented in each of the parables Jesus tells in this passage?

2. How does Isaiah 7:1-7 inform us of the significance of Jesus' choice to tell stories about vineyards? If it's not just about growing grapes, what is it really about?

What does this perspective add to these parables?

3. What is the clear warning to the Jewish leaders contained in the first parable (verse 31(b)-32)?

How could the same warning apply to each of us (or even 'us' collectively) today?

4. The second parable cleverly describes the history of Israel, known intimately by the priests and elders, yet from their eager response to Jesus' question (v.40,41), it seems they were so engaged with the story, they (at least initially) missed the point – especially in regard to the son! As Jesus quotes from Psalm 118:22,23, he agrees with their answer

and makes their dilemma clear (vs 33,34). What is his meaning, and what is the challenge for us?

5. Follow the use of the 'cornerstone' illustration (Psalm 118:22,23) through Isaiah's use of it (Isaiah 8:13-15 and 29:16) to Peter quoting all three passages in 1 Peter 2:4-10. How does this exhortation from Peter to the church of his day emphasise and apply the teaching of Jesus to our context today?

Read Matthew 21:28-45



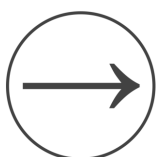
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Preached on 23rd April

10. Ethics in Parables – Two Kinds of Guests

Matthew 22:1-14, 1 Peter 2:4-10

This passage challenges us to consider our responses to God. Are we ready to attend the banquet on his terms or do we try to enter 'without wedding clothes'?

1. What's the most lavish event that you have ever attended?

2. Were your clothes and behaviour any different to what you're wearing now and how you're behaving today? Why/why not?

3. How do people respond to Jesus today?

4. How do you feel about eating with ‘the bad as well as the good’?

5. Who can we invite to God’s kingdom today?

Read Matthew 22:1-14



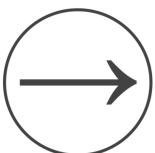
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