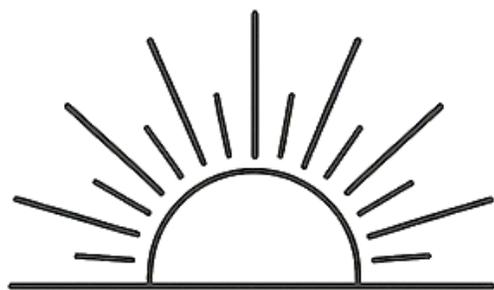


MIDSUMMER
WITH
MATTHEW



SUMMER 2025

WEEK 3

June 8 - June 14

Matthew 4:12 - Matthew 5:48

#15
Sunday, June 8, 2025
Matthew 4:12-17

I'm Pastor Pittenger from Bethany Lutheran Church in Port Orchard, WA and one of the great things about Washington this time of year is the weather.

Another is the daylight. Seattle is further north than Duluth, MN which means that at this time of year we get plenty of daylight; almost 16 hours between sunrise and sunset.

But...conversely that means that in December it's pretty dark. Under 8 hours. Add lots of cloud cover to that and well, some locals call winter "the big dark."

Today's reading from Matthew talks about an even bigger dark...the darkness of being separated from God. Remember, the separation has its origins in sin and even though sin doesn't always seem like darkness, in the end it would certainly prove to be.

BUT...today's section, Matthew 4:12-17, says that light is coming. The Gospel of John says that Jesus Himself is that light, light of the world so that we no longer are lost, stumbling around in the darkness of sin.

Maybe that's something for you to remember this time of year. As you enjoy those late evenings and those bright mornings, let that remind you that in Jesus God has kept His promise to rescue us from darkness and even bring us into the light of Heaven itself.

#16
Monday, June 9, 2025
Matthew 4:18-25

Hi my friends – Aaron Hamilton again, pastor at Redeemer Lutheran Church in Scottsdale, Arizona. Here's a little devotional introduction for Matthew's gospel, Mat 4.18-25.

Down here in Phoenix, it's a desert. There are not a lot of rivers, lakes or streams. There's certainly no ocean front. Monsoon season comes with its rains, but we still don't see a lot of fish around. But when our Lord says to the disciples: "**I will make you fishers of men,**" it's just like when he says: "**lift up your eyes and see how the fields are ripe for harvest.**" We don't have much standing grain in Arizona either. What we do have is people! People who are loved by God, people redeemed by Him at the High Price of the blood of His Son; people He intends to show His grace and mercy to, just like He shows it to you and me.

So, He calls you: **Follow me!** And He said to His disciples: **I will make you fishers of men.** Usually if you are a fish and you get caught, it doesn't go all that well for you. You're taken up out of your comfortable happy lake, put in a bucket, and before too long, you're gutted, fileted, pan-fried, and served up as a meal for someone else!

But in the gospel, God's word calls you—He calls you away, it's true, from your sin; away from your own righteousness. He calls you *to* something instead: to the forgiveness of your sins and to life and eternal salvation. Your sins are washed away, and you're given a place at the table where Christ becomes a meal for you!

Already in the gospel for today you see His miracles signs picture ahead of time the great work He will do on the last day, when He raises us up and gives all who have believed in Him everlasting life in glory. In the reading for today, Jesus performed wonderful signs: a picture ahead of time of the great work He will do at the last day, granting eternal healing and health to all who have believed in Him.
God bless your devotional reading today in Matthew's gospel! **Mat 4:18-25.**

#17

Tuesday, June 10, 2025

Matthew 5:1-16

When I was in seminary, learning to be a pastor, my sainted professor Dr. Wilhelm Walther Petersen, told us we should begin every sermon with the phrase "Dear Fellow Redeemed..."

Not "My friends" because it is possible that not everyone there consider you a friend. But, he said, all are "dear" to Christ and all are redeemed by Him.

"Dear Fellow Redeemed." Start off by reminding them who they are, especially as you preach God's law which will reveal that they are also sinners.

I wouldn't be surprised if Professor Petersen got that from today's verses from Matthew, chapter 5:1-16; Jesus' sermon on the mount.

Jesus begins His sermon on the mount by telling you who you are. You are blessed. In spite of how spiritually poor you are, how hungry and thirsty you are for a righteousness you can't accomplish, in spite of the fact that the world sees you as nothing but a speedbump, and they mock and persecute you because of your faith in Jesus...

He—the Creator of Heaven and Earth—and the One Who will lay down His life for you... He says you are blessed.

Dear Fellow Redeemed, remember how Jesus begins this sermon, Matthew 5:1-16. Remember who He says you are.

#18

Wednesday, June 11, 2025

Matthew 5:17-26

The previous reading in Matthew got us started on what we call Jesus' "Sermon on the Mount." Remember how Jesus began the sermon with "the Beatitudes," he repeated **"Blesséd are, blesséd are, blesséd are ... you!"**

"Blesséd" is what He'll say on the Last Day, to you who believe in Him: **"Come, you blesséd of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you."**

This is Good News to hear Jesus say this to you. It says what Jesus has done for you, to save you. We call that the Gospel.

There are two main teachings in the Bible: the Law and the Gospel. The Law says what you must do and not do in order to be "righteous" – in the right with God. The Gospel says what God has done for you, to save you. The Law shows our sin; the Gospel shows our Savior.

Starting in today's reading, Jesus will begin to teach the Law, the Commandments.

Why does Jesus – who said He came not to condemn but to save sinners – teach the Commandments, the you-must-do's?

He does this because when you see your own sins, you see how much you need a Savior. Jesus teaches the Law so you will cry out for God's forgiveness. Jesus teaches the commandments so you will rejoice that all your sins are died for – by Him!

As you hear Jesus showing how these commandments – even "you shall not murder" – show you your own sins, remember He's leading you to bring your sins to Him, your only Savior!

#19

Thursday, June 12

Matthew 5:27-32

Hey everyone, pastor Nate Abrahamson here with Abiding Shepherd Lutheran Church in Cottage Grove in Fort Atkinson, Wisconsin. When you look at this section, Jesus gives some pretty strong statements about how we apply this to ourselves. He talks about, cutting off your hand and, and gouging out your eye if it leads you to sin. Are those things that we're actually supposed to go and do?

To help us understand what Jesus is getting at here, I'm actually at a beautiful location called Gibraltar Rock in the Wisconsin River Valley. It's got this just gorgeous view of the Wisconsin River. Imagine there's something really amazing way down the cliff on the edge of a branch and I wanted to go and grab it.

Now, if I went after that to grab it, if I looked at it and I just thought, "Oh, it looks so good", and then I just needed to go down after it, I would fall down a very high cliff and I would probably not make it and it wouldn't be worth it.

Here's the point, it's like, "Okay, do not grab it. Do not try to get it with your hand. You know what, actually don't even look at it. Okay, because that is too dangerous. You would lose your life." That's where we're at here with this set of verses: don't. It's not worth your hand, it's not worth your eye if you lose your whole self.

Now also in these verses, Jesus goes deeper than just, "Don't touch, don't look." He talks about how lust and all these things start in the heart. There's something inside of us that leads to these other issues. That's part of why even too, thinking about this spot, it's really helpful for me with these verses. Last week, my wife and I came here for our anniversary. Part of the reason why this was a good hike for our anniversary is with these cliffs, they're not a great place for kids because kids don't have that wherewithal necessarily to say, "Okay, that's dangerous."

If they see something on that tree, they might just go for it. There has to be a different maturity to prevent us from doing the dangerous thing. Now, the problem when we think about our hearts is that we all have sinful hearts. So where does this lead us? Well, first of all, it reminds us that we need a Savior in Jesus who has that perfect heart who lived for us, us who lived the life we were meant to live. He laid it down and died on a cross. He then rose again to set us right with God. Then we look to him and we pray to him, just like David did, "Create in us a clean heart, oh God, and renew a right spirit within us."

We look to our Savior, we look to the Spirit, work in us, and we look forward to that day where we'll be set free from sin all the way down to our hearts.

#20
Friday, June 13
Matthew 5:33-37

I'm "Pastor Tony Pittenger from Bethany Lutheran Church in Port Orchard, WA." That sentence tells you a lot about me. It tells you my job. With my last name you could connect me to my family, my children and my sisters. My wife graciously gave up her last name to take mine when we married.

With the name and location of the church you could find us in real life, join us for worship, inquire about God's love for you. Or you could get on the internet and learn about the group—or synod—that Bethany is a part of.

Names and titles say a lot about people.

In today's short little reading, Matthew 5:33-37, Jesus speaks especially about misusing names, misusing God's name. When we misuse it, when we use God's name in foolish oaths, we send a message about how seriously we do—or do not—take Him.

Just. Don't. Do. It. Say's Jesus. Have so much integrity that your "yes" is known to be yes and your "no," no.

Of course that's not to say we can't or shouldn't use God's name. Oh no! His name is how we know Him, how we know about Him, who and what He is. So the Bible is filled with verses in which people call on God's name.

Psalm 124:8 "Our help is in the name of the Lord, who made heaven and earth."

Matthew 21:9 & Psalm 118:26 "Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord."

That's Jesus. God the Son who came to save us.

I'll leave you to read the section yourself, Matthew 5:33-37, but take the words of Psalm 50:15 with you: "Call upon Me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you shall glorify Me."

#21

Saturday, June 14, 2025

Matthew 5:38-48

Revenge, loaning things to people, giving things to others, helping them out...

Why do God's people do these things? Is it for reward?

Heaven and eternal life have been secured for you. What more could God give?

Oh He could give me more money, a better car, fancier house but...

...but isn't that my sinful nature doing the talking?

Today, as you read Matthew 5:38-48 remember that you are already a child of God.

You already are. That was something done for you, by grace through faith, gift of God, not works, no boasting allowed.

You already are. And because you are, now Jesus tells you about revenge, about loaning and giving the blessings He's given you, about helping others out and even...

...even about how to treat those who consider themselves to be enemies.

God bless your reading today and God help us as we reflect His love to all those around us.

Since today is Saturday that means tomorrow is Sunday. At the congregation I serve we gather for worship at 9am. Fathers! Start this Father's Day off right by bringing your family to the Father's house.