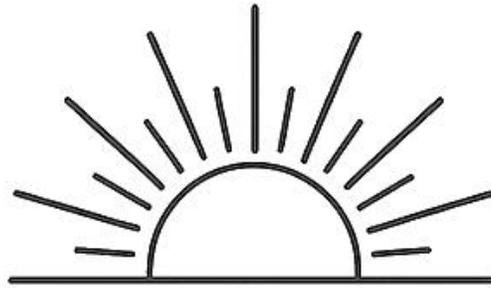


MIDSUMMER
WITH
MATTHEW



SUMMER 2025

WEEK 7

July 6 – July 12

Matthew 11:25 – Matthew 13:43

#43
Sunday, July 6, 2025
Matthew 11:25-30

Hey everyone, Pastor Nate Abrahamson here with Abiding Shepherd Lutheran Church in Cottage Grove & Fort Atkinson, Wisconsin. Today, July 6th is the day that we are reading Matthew chapter 11:25-30. It's also the day, I mentioned it, I think twice now in these videos, the day that Camp Rise starts, of which I'm the director.

So today as you're looking at this, I got my mind fixed on camp. I've got a clipboard or other things because I'm going to be in charge of and overseeing over a hundred people and just organizing and coordinating can be good. Hopefully I have just had a good night's rest because I'm gearing up for a week where by the time we get done, I am going to be very tired. Many of the people there will be too. I always tell people that if your campers don't come home and sleep and sleep and sleep, I didn't do my job. We do so much during the week and it's such an amazing week, and at the end of it, we're going to need to sleep. We're going to need to rest.

In our verses today, Jesus talks about, "Come to me all who are weary and, and burdened, and I will give you rest." As we think about rest in the Bible, it's so much more than just getting some sleep after something. When we think about rest, it all goes back to that first Sabbath rest where God, He finishes everything and then He stops and He looks around and He enjoys his job well done. He enjoys His creation.

For me, that's my favorite part of rest at the end of camp. It's not just, okay, I'm going to go take a nap or sleep late. It's that at the end of the week, I stop and go, "Ah, look what happened. Look, what's done. Look what's accomplished." That's the rest that we have too. It's an opportunity for us to stop and sleep. That's good. But also, to stop and to look at Jesus and look at what he has accomplished, look at what He's done for us and what that means for us.

In the verses that come before what we're reading today, we see all these cities that weren't willing to turn to Jesus. That were not seeing what He accomplished. In the verses that come afterwards, we see Jesus showing how He's Lord of the Sabbath. He's the One who has accomplished the greatest things today and every day. Let's pause for a bit. Let's stop and look and see what Jesus has done.

We couldn't set ourselves right with God, but He is everything we were meant to be but aren't. He laid on his life and died and rose again to set us right with God. He has secured eternity for us with God. He has given us a new relationship today with God, a new life today. He's guiding us. He's providing for us every step of the way.

He has done so much and he will continue to be there for us and fulfill all of his promises he has made to us. Look what he's done. Look at what is as good as done because of his promises. Rest, really rest in him today.

#44

Monday, July 7, 2025

Matthew 12:1-21

Did you ever have to go to bed while it was still light out? Sometimes young children have to do this at this time of year, even near the end of the school year in May.

When you were young your parents made decision on your behalf, decision they believed to be in your best interests. When you are older, with their instruction as a foundation to build upon,

Now you go to bed when you want to and/or when you need to. You're no longer subject to a certain bedtime.

Like bedtime, the Sabbath was made for us, to serve us; not for us to serve it and be subservient to it. In today's reading, Matthew 2:1-21, Jesus is criticized for not following a bunch of man-made rules about the Sabbath, even about church services.

In His day people were told you were sinning if you walked more than a mile on a church-day. If your ailing relative lived a mile and a half away, you were told it was a sin to go and help them.

Sadly people still think these ways today. Some in our own communities would tell us that even though Jesus died and rose for you, if you don't worship Him on the seventh day of the week (hint hint), you are sinning by worshipping Him.

In today's reading you'll see Jesus say that He is Lord of the Sabbath. Like me, choosing to go to bed at the time that best serves me, Jesus points out that the Sabbath is about God's love and mercy. It is about rest .

This follows, and builds on, the things Jesus said in yesterday's devotion, calling people to "Come to Me all you who are weary..."

Read today's verses confident that Jesus is Lord of the Sabbath. And if you are a Gentile/non-Jewish person like me, rest secure in the last verse, Matthew 12:21.

#45

Tuesday, July 8, 2025

Matthew 12:22-37

Near the waterfront in Tacoma, WA, up above Ruston Way, is a shed with the word JESUS on the side...

It's a big "JESUS."

In today's reading you'll see Jesus Himself talk about something small...a finger...God's finger.

Reference to God's finger is first found way back in the book of Exodus. By the time the third plague rolls around, the magicians of Pharaoh find that they can't duplicate the things of God. "This is the finger of God," they say/warn. (Exodus 8:19)

Later, Moses tells us that the Ten Commandments were engraved in solid rock "by the finger of God." (Exodus 31:18)

So there is great comfort in Matthew 12:22-37, today's reading. In this life we are so often surround by strong and powerful forces; sorrow, heartbreak, depression, disease, war and violence, evil and death.

These things are all so much more powerful than we are.

But not more powerful than God and not more powerful than God the Son. When the Gospel of Luke tells today's account, he includes the detail that Jesus refers to His work as "the finger of God."

Thinking of those things which are so much stronger than you, read today's section and see Jesus say that "the Kingdom of God has come upon you."

#46

Wednesday, July 9, 2025

Matthew 12:38-42

I'm Pastor Pittenger, from Bethany Lutheran in Port Orchard, WA, the place where I grew up.

I wasn't born here, I was actually born in White Sands/Alamogordo Air Force Base in New Mexico.

We moved to Washington the summer before First Grade. Other than eight years in Mankato, MN, for college and seminary, Washington has been my home.

Over the past 38 years I have driven back and forth between Washington and the Midwest. Soon I'll be packing up to do that road trip again, this time to help my daughter move in to her dorm room at Bethany Lutheran College in Mankato, MN.

No offense to anyone else out there but because Washington is my home, I love seeing signs that tell me I'm on the way back here. I like "I-90 West" signs better than I like "I-90 East." I love seeing mountains along the western horizon in South Dakota, then Wyoming, Montana, Idaho, and finally Washington.

I suppose you can tell that you truly are from my neck of the woods when you're thrilled to cross over the mountain pass, leaving the clear blue skies of eastern Washington behind and descend down the interstate into mist and fog and even light rain.

The west-bound road signs, the mountains breaking up the horizon, the dampness of it all...I love the signs that I'm on my way home.

In today's reading from Matthew 12:38-42, people ask Jesus for a sign which would show them that they are on the right road as they follow and believe in Him.

Read these verses and see it for yourself. See the sign Jesus said to look for which should tell anyone bothering to pay attention that they...that you...are on the road home to Heaven.

God bless your reading!

#47

Thursday, July 10, 2025

Matthew 12:43-50

I'm Pastor Pittenger, Bethany Lutheran Church in Port Orchard, WA, and I think almost everyone who know me knows that my wife, Melissa, has five younger siblings.

Fewer people know about her older sister, Barbara Ann. (No, it's not her mother)

Barbara Ann lives in Antigua, West Indies. If you meet her, or see a picture of her, you might not see any family resemblance. Barabara's ancestors come from Africa, Melissa's come from northern Europe.

It isn't biology which connects them, it's faith. Barabar and Melissa have such a common faith, part of the "One Apostolic Church" as we confess in the Nicene Creed, that other differences like pigment become inconsequential.

When her parents were busy at St. John's Lutheran Church and School, Melissa would often go home with Barbara where that common faith knit them so closely together that decades later they still refer to each other as "sisters."

Look for that sentiment in today's verses, Matthew 12:43-50. While there's lots more there, even Jesus' warning about not filling empty space with good things, I especially thought of my lovely wife and her lovely sister when Jesus speaks of what truly knits us together as His family.

God bless your reading of His Word!

#48
Friday, July 11, 2025
Matthew 13:1-23

We have rocky ground here in central Texas. My backyard has bedrock peeking up above the dirt and grass.

Our soil doesn't go down very far. When the rain beats down often it just runs and doesn't soak in, and it floods easily.

In today's reading, you'll hear about rocky ground. This is the beginning of Jesus' parables, how He taught using stories. It starts with this parable: the sower and the seed.

When Jesus explains this parable, He says: "The seed is the word of God." That's what we read about: what happens when God's Word is preached or shared? Jesus shows a man sowing seed on different kinds of "ground" – along a path, on rocky ground, among thorns, and on good ground.

The question is, like with this rocky ground, what chance does the seed that's spread there have? Why would he waste time casting it there?

But this is what God is like. Jesus is the Sower. He wants His Word spread liberally, to everyone. He doesn't consider anyone a hopeless case. Isn't that good news? It shows He wants everyone to be saved.

If sometimes I'm like rocky ground and God's Word isn't sinking in, if sometimes you're like thorny ground and the worries of life are choking out faith, instead of asking, "Why would He spread it there?" we say, "Please, spread it here! I need Your Word!" We say, "Thank You, Lord, for sending Your Word and not giving up on me."

Since this is about God's Word, you can turn it into a prayer for the Word: "Lord, plant Your Word in my heart," or "Plant Your Word in the heart of my loved one," or "Lord, reach all who don't know You yet with Your Word" – "so that we may cling to it in faith and bear fruit in our lives."

#49

Saturday, July 12, 2025

Matthew 13:24-43

All right. Are you ready for story time? Okay, let's go. Today, we're going to have a story, actually, a number of stories that we're going to go through that Jesus tells to help us understand the kingdom of God. Now, actually, I'm not going to read them for you here, but I wanted to sit down in this kind of story time, storytelling format to encourage you today as you read these words.

So it's here, it's we're at July 12th. We're at Matthew chapter 13, and as you read through, you see all these parables that Jesus has here and I really encourage you to read them through, like you would just read a story, a just a little short story, a number of stories. Sometimes we can forget. You know, as Lutherans, it's great that we have the catechism and these doctrines really laid out well but the Bible itself is really a big story. God loves to tell stories. There's something about hearing a story, pondering a story, thinking about those elements that help it sink in a different way and get into our minds and to our hearts in a different way. So today you have a number of stories.

These are stories that help us understand the kingdom of God, that help us understand how we live in a world where there are people who are right with God, but then we have people around us who don't believe in Jesus. A world where even though it might seem like the church isn't doing all that much or being that successful, the fact is Jesus died for our sins and rose again to set us right with God.

He is accomplishing and has accomplished the greatest work. He is winning. He's carrying out his plan. It might not look like a lot, but it's happening. Big things are happening by God's power. These stories help us really understand where we are, and so spend some time today, read these stories as part of the big picture story of God, and it'll help us understand our story as well.

So, Pastor Nate Abrahamson here with Abiding Shepherd Lutheran Church in Cottage Grove and Fort Atkinson, Wisconsin. It's great to be here with you and for us to have some time to consider God's story, to help us understand our stories too.