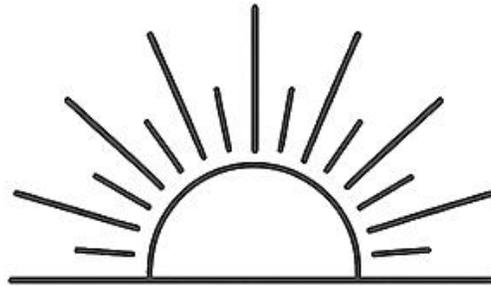


MIDSUMMER
WITH
MATTHEW



SUMMER 2025

WEEK 8

July 13 – July 19

Matthew 13:44 – Matthew 15:39

#50
Sunday, July 13, 2025
Matthew 13:44-58

Imagine you go to the beach and on one little stretch of it there is a “For Sale” sign. That whole section is available for purchase.

So you start looking around and you see the biggest pearl you’ve ever seen. Wouldn’t you put it back, run home and get as much cash as you needed, even sell other things, in order to buy that beach and acquire that pearl?

Today’s reading, Matthew 13:44-58, includes Jesus’ parable about a pearl and another about treasure in a field and often these two parables are taken to mean that Heaven is so valuable that we should be willing to do whatever it takes to hold on to it.

And we certainly should because it certainly is. There is nothing in eternity more important and more valuable than it.

But as you read today’s section I encourage you to keep John 3:16 in mind: “God so loved the world that He gave His only Son...”

Imagine God opening an oyster shell, or digging through the dirt, and finding the world hidden there. A world He sees as so valuable that He gives up the thing He loves most—God the Son—in order to have what’s otherwise just lost there in the sand or dirt.

You are part of that treasure, that “pearl of great price.” You are the reason Christ Jesus came to seek and to save.

God bless your reading today!

#51
Monday, July 14, 2025
Matthew 14:1-12

Maybe you remember hearing about it, maybe your heart broke, maybe—even—your heart was filled with fear...

Ten years ago, on February 15, 2015, 21 Egyptian Christians were lined up on the Libyan seashore, each of them wearing a prison-orange-jumpsuit, while 21 executioners brutally ended their lives.

It was a horrific reminder that these things still happen. Even in my little synod, the ELS, our missionaries and the souls they serve, are in danger. Facial recognition software is being used to identify Church-leaders in other parts of the world, this horrible use of technology helps the devil target those he hates.

I thought of modern persecutions as I was looking at the reading for today, Matthew 14:1-12. I won't give it away, the other pastors and I are praying that these introductions serve to encourage you to open the Bible and read through Matthew yourself.

So, as you open your Bible to Matthew 12 today, as you see what those 21 Egyptian Christians have in common with verses 1-12, let me assure you of something else...

They were actually only 20 Egyptian Christians. The other man, the 21st, was from Ghana and up to that day had been an atheist. By God's grace he was the last to be executed. As he saw those other 20 men give up their lives rather than give up their faith, as he heard their unwavering confession, that man was also brought to place his trust—even his life—in Jesus.

While today's reading is no less horrific than what happened on February 15, 2015, it ends in God's grace and in eternal life purchased for us when Christ Jesus gave up His life for you.

#52

Tuesday, July 15, 2025

Matthew 14:13-21

Welcome back to Midsummer with Matthew! Today, we hear of an amazing miracle Jesus performs – the feeding of the (more than) five thousand.

Yesterday, we learned that Jesus had just received devastating news. His cousin and forerunner, John the Baptist had been put to death. We are told that Jesus sought a moment of solitude, but the crowds pressed in, eager for His presence. Yet, even in His grief, we witness the profound compassion of our Lord.

My family knows that when we go hiking, I'm often the one eager to press on. Unless we're on a trail loop, they'll inevitably ask, "When are we going to turn back?" It's easy for enthusiasm to get the better of me. I want to keep pressing on, to see what is just ahead, around the corner; but as it has happened, before we know it, we're far out in the middle of nowhere, unprepared, missing a meal, or perhaps caught in unexpected weather. Perhaps you've experienced something similar – or maybe Pastor Pittenger, who I know enjoys hiking and camping, has a story or two of being caught out in the middle of nowhere without a meal or food!

Here, the disciples found themselves in a similar predicament. They were in a desolate place, suddenly surrounded by an enormous crowd. "What in the world?" they must have thought. "How are we going to feed all these people? It's getting to be mealtime!"

It's striking that in this section Jesus simply tells them, "You give them something to eat." The disciples, realizing the complete impossibility of such a task, understood that this was entirely beyond their capabilities. They admit that they don't have what it would take to feed or provide for that crowd.

But Jesus, our Savior, possesses an incredibly compassionate heart. Even when grieving, He is willing to go out of His way to love people. And He provides for those people in the most miraculous, incredible way. He takes a tiny amount of food and multiplies it so that no one departs hungry.

Jesus cares. He is concerned about us. We see this heart of compassion He has for His people clearly in this lesson, and it remains the same for you and for me today.

As you read Matthew 14:13-21, take to heart how abundantly compassionate Jesus is towards you. He is willing to provide for you in all your needs. He is here, with a heart of compassion, always putting you before Himself, always willing to go out of His way to help you.

#53

Wednesday, July 16, 2025

Matthew 14:22-36

Hi everyone. Pastor Nate Abrahamson here with Abiding Shepherd Lutheran Church in Cottage Grove and Fort Atkinson, Wisconsin. Today, it's July 16th and we're checking out Matthew chapter 14:22-36, which takes us to the water. I made this fun little wave prop for a message a few years ago, and we're to that scene where Jesus walks on the water.

Then the other part that's amazing is that Peter also walks on the water. Often we focus on the fact that Peter ends up sinking at one point. But before we get to that, we should stop and acknowledge Peter walked on water and not only did he walk on water, it was his idea. It's amazing when I read through this and realized it wasn't Jesus who was like, "Hey Peter, you should try this." Peter is like, "Lord, if it's you, tell me to come to you." If I was one of the other disciples, I'd be like, "What are you doing? Stay in the boat, man." Like, come on, like what is this? You know?

But Peter does it and he steps out and for a bit, it actually, in the original language, it says he walked around on the water. So it's not like he took a couple steps. He actually walks around on the water. He gets about to where Jesus is. Then he looks at the waves and things, and that's when he starts to sink. And it just makes me think about too, what kind of boldness are we invited to have as Christians?

I mean, we are, yes, we're sinful people. Absolutely. We still struggle with sin. But our Savior, Jesus died for our sins and rose again. Those are removed, our guilt, our shame. They're gone. We are no longer separated from God. We're right with him. You are right with him. The Holy Spirit lives inside of you and is empowering you.

Scripture says that when we behold the glory of Jesus, we are actually being transformed more and more to look like him. In Ephesians, it talks about how there's a power that can do more than we ask or imagine inside of us. So if we were created to be in the image of God, if we can behold the glory of Jesus and be transformed to look more like him, maybe it makes sense for us more and more to say, "Okay, Jesus, I see you doing that. I want to be like that too. I see you loving people that way. I want to love like that too." Maybe it's not so crazy to say, "Jesus, if it's you, I want to step out in the water too."

Now, of course we're going to fail so many times. We're not going to be just like Jesus in this life. But here's the amazing thing. Even though we fail in those ways, God still sees you through Jesus and as far as he's concerned. You do look just like him, and there will be a day where you live and love without sin, meaning you're going to live and love just like he does. So why not start to step out of the boat today?

#54
Thursday, July 17, 2025
Matthew 15:1-20

54
Thursday, July 17, 2025
Matthew 15:1-20

In today's reading Jesus confronts some of the confusion between God's commandments and between traditions.

For example, are you supposed to, do you have to, refrain from stealing? Yes. God commands it. Exodus 20:15 says "You shall not steal."

So that's a command. That's required.

What about washing your hands before you eat, with running, or at least "moving" water? No good plunging them into a basin, you need to at least pour the water over your hands. And you can't eat, can't taste food until you've done this. And you also have to do it after every time you go to the store.

Know where that's commanded in the Bible? I hope you don't, because it isn't in the Bible.

It might be a fine tradition. I mean, you can do it if you want to, maybe even it's more hygienic, but you can't force other people to do it in God's name. You can't tell them that they are sinning if they don't, that if they keep doing—or not doing it—they won't be saved.

There were lots of things in Jesus' day like that. Rules made by man.

Are there any today? Things the general Christian community pressures others to do to be assured that they are saved, that God loves them, which are not commanded in the Bible.

Read today's section, Matthew 15:1–20, assured that everything required for you to be saved has been done by Jesus Himself.

#55
Friday, July 18, 2025
Matthew 15:21-31

Hi everyone. My name is Jack Pittenger. I am about to be a junior at Martin Luther College, where I am studying to be a Staff Minister, or an aid to a Pastor. Today, July 18th, our assigned reading is Matthew chapter 15, verses 21 through 31.

To begin, I want to tell you about my cousin. When she was 19, she worked with the police department doing sting operations at bars. She and an undercover cop would make their way into a bar and my underage cousin would try to order a drink. If the bartender failed to ID her and sold her the drink, the officer would step in and the establishment would be fined and their liquor license might even be revoked. Interesting way to test someone right? In today's reading, we hear of some interesting tests as well. The first and most obvious test is the one given to the Canaanite woman. She lays her problems at Jesus' feet as many before had done. But she was not met with the same response as those before her. But as you will read, her faith prevails as she continues to plead with her Savior.

The second test is noted by reading just one verse. Verse 23 records the disciples' failed test. As Jesus patiently tests the woman, the disciples become annoyed and selfishly beg for her to be sent away for their own comfort.

One test passed with flying colors, and one embarrassingly failed. Which one do you associate with? If you're listening to this and you're human like I am, I'm certain that you've been tested, I'm also confident that your faith has prevailed in some of those tests, and faltered in others.

So, what is there to take away from a story with tests with opposite results? See what role Jesus takes in each of these tests. No, not physically what he does in the reading, but consider this. The woman is said to have "great faith" because the object of her faith is truly great. He—Jesus, has been speaking the word of God, healing the sick, casting out demons and forgiving sins. Jesus' love, his power, his comfort, it demands trust and faith in him especially in a world so full of the effects of sin. Her great faith only points her and us towards our great Savior.

In a weirdly similar way, the disciples failed test shows us the exact same thing. It is a reminder to them and to us of the plan of Salvation. We are not meant to save ourselves. We are not meant to learn how to appease God. We are saved entirely by Jesus. The man who was tested in every way we were, and yet he did everything well. So, as you read this section of Matthew, as you go about your Friday, as you live the rest of your life, let your tests point you to your Savior.

#56

Saturday, July 19, 2025

Matthew 15.32-39

Good Saturday morning! Here's a little devotional opening for Matthew 15:32 and following. Today I wanted to share with you a little of what the desert looks like for us down here in Scottsdale: a few cacti, shrubs and the occasional desert tree, and a few scattered animals. There's nothing to eat. There are no restaurants, no vending machines. There are no grocery stores. Yet as I share these thoughts with you, from where we stand, there's a nice, well-stocked shopping center maybe a mile up the road where you can go and find any of those things.

That wasn't the case in the Gospel lesson we're reading for this morning. People had heard about Jesus Christ and His wonderful works of compassion and power, helping and healing the sick. His gracious words and works were gathering people! People would come find him even in the most remote places. So here the Lord Jesus stood before this huge hungry crowd.

This will be the second time in St. Matthew's gospel where we see the Lord Jesus perform a miracle to feed the multitudes. At this feeding of the 4,000, Jesus starts the conversation Himself. He sees the people in their need and He cares about them. He doesn't want to send them home to faint on the way.

And so we see *again* the great care that our God has for us, who brought us up out of Egypt and brought us through the wilderness for those forty years, providing for us continually so that we never hungered or thirsted (not for long) but He provided. Now in this little gospel lesson, you'll see how the Lord Jesus, the God of Abraham Isaac and Jacob, in the flesh and in the midst of us with His *Real Presence*, provides and answers all our bodily and spiritual needs.

So tomorrow as you go to worship you are there meeting the same Lord Jesus who cares about you and all your needs, and God the Father in His Word sets before you Jesus as the true bread of life. It's Jesus who is meeting you in the Word, it's Jesus who is absolving you as you hear the forgiveness of all your sins. It is the Lord Jesus Himself who is feeding you with His body and blood in the Holy Communion.

God bless your devotion. God bless your worship. God grant it, see you soon!