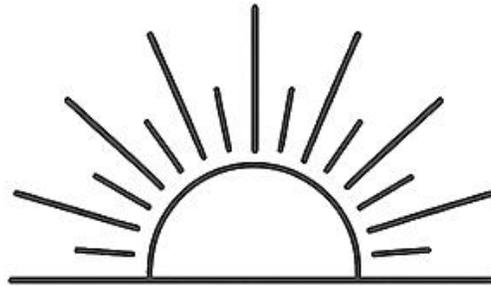


MIDSUMMER
WITH
MATTHEW



SUMMER 2025

WEEK 12

August 10 – August 16

Matthew 22:23 – Matthew 25:12

#78

Sunday, August 10, 2025

Matthew 22:23-33

Hello, I'm Pastor Jerry Gernander of Hope Lutheran Church in Leander, Texas. This is the preview of Matthew 22:23-33.

Jesus keeps getting tested by people in the few days before His death. That's where we are in this. This time it's the Sadducees.

The Sadducees bring a silly example of a woman who's widowed and, to keep the law of Moses, each brother marries her after the last one dies, so seven brothers end up as her husband. They say, "In the resurrection, whose wife will she be?" – air quotes around "resurrection."

They don't believe in it, it says here. The Sadducees were the theological liberals. They were the skeptics. They present the resurrection as a fiction.

But what they say is fiction and fantasy, Jesus quotes back to them as reality: "For in the resurrection," He says. Then He says what it's not like. Because He knows.

When Jesus says, "they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like the angels," He is not saying that you become an angel when you die. Nor is He saying that in heaven you won't know that each other was your husband and wife.

He's saying that the physical, earthly part of marriage isn't part of it at that point. What's heavenly and eternal in your marriage, what faith gives you, remains. We will know each other. I think we'll thank our spouse for rebuking our sins and comforting us with the Gospel. Our love for each other will perfectly place Jesus first. We'll love Him best. And be reunited. A Christian marriage gives you this!

But Jesus' point isn't about marriage. It's about the resurrection. He repeats their phrase, "in the resurrection," and says that He is "not the God of the dead, but of the living." That's our comfort. Jesus is risen! Because He lives, you – by faith in Him – will live also. Alleluia!

#79

Monday, August 11, 2025

Matthew 22:34-46

I'm Pastor Nate Abrahamson and I was recently at our Synod's Youth Convention with Pastor Pittenger. When it was all said and done, if I found something of his, say a picture of him and his family, and just tossed it aside, that would be disrespectful.

I wanted to share that illustration because with our reading today from Matthew 22:34-46. A picture is a reflection of the person, or people, it depicts and today Jesus says that the greatest command is to love the Lord your God with all of your mind, your soul, your strength.

Then He says that the second command is like it, to love your neighbor as yourself. That second command, why is it like the first command? Why is the command to love your neighbor like the command to love God?

First of all, it has to do with the fact that He did create us, that we are His special creation, but then also we have this special role. When you go back to the beginning, God created humanity to be in His image, to live in a way that shows what He, the invisible, God is like. We are created to be a reflection of Him.

Now, because sin came into this world that we aren't able to truly reflect the goodness and character of God. But Jesus is God Himself who became human. He is the image of God who laid down His life and rose again. Through faith in Jesus, you're forgiven. But now by the power of the Spirit, you're being renewed in the image and the likeness of God. When you're baptized into Christ, God now sees you through Jesus and there will be a day where you are able to really live in a way that looks like God.

God looks at us and He sees someone who belongs to Him and who is a reflection of Him. When we treat other people in a way that is disrespectful, we really are disrespecting the Creator, the One who created them, and the One who they are meant to reflect.

With our verses today, we see Jesus not only really pushing us to level up the way we look at other people, but then He talks about David and David talking about his Lord. In those verses, again, Jesus is pushing us to level up. You think David is great? Think of someone greater.

David was referring to someone who's his Lord. David is a great example of that. David had some awful things he did in his life, but Jesus is that one who is the image of God, who always loved his Father, always loved the humanity that God created, loved us to the point that He died for us, rose again so that you are forgiven.

You are renewed, you are restored to this beautiful relationship with God, and you have that beautiful eternity of being a reflection of God in front of you. Thankfully, Jesus is the one who levels us up. Keep that in mind as you read these verses today.

#80

Tuesday, August 12, 2025

Matthew 23:1-39

Some 500 years ago, as Martin Luther was rediscovering that God's Word actually teaches that we are saved by God's grace alone, others were also breaking away from the Roman church. Some were bothered by the misconception that a Christian could sin all they wanted and then just go to confession later on, or do penance, or something else.

They were bothered by what seemed to be a lack of seriousness about the Christian life.

If Wittenberg, Germany was ground zero for Scripture Alone, Faith Alone, and Grace Alone, then some 600 miles SW of there, Geneva, Switzerland, became ground zero for something else, something other than Grace Alone.

And that road, the road from Wittenberg to Geneva was paved with good intentions.

Paved with good intentions. Because drunkenness is a sin, with good intentions the religious leaders in Geneva decided to ban alcohol. You can't get drunk if there's nothing to drink. Because God commands us to keep His day of rest holy by gladly hearing His Word, Geneva had a police force going door to door to prevent people from sleeping in on Sunday.

Paved with good intentions, Geneva nevertheless became a city of new Pharisees and well-behaved heathens.

Well-behaved heathens because what was preached became about outward behavior, doing the right thing, avoiding the wrong, even listening to the right music. You could be in good standing without knowing a thing about what God had done for you in His Son Jesus Christ.

And new Pharisees. Because everything was about your behavior, your confidence for salvation was found in yourself.

Keep that little bit of history in mind as you read today's section of Matthew, all of chapter 23. Read this remembering the good intentions but the error of those who left Wittenberg for Geneva, read it while seeing yourself in the mirror asking where you put your faith and trust.

The life of faith does matter. Of course it does. But the object of that faith and that life is Jesus. Jesus who lived and died and rose for you. That's how, He's how, you are a child of God.

#81

Wednesday, August 13, 2025

Matthew 24:1-14

Hi there. My name is Andrew Ronholt. I grew up at Bethany Lutheran in Port Orchard, WA. and am now wrapping up my third year of seminary at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary. God-willing, after one more year of classes I will be called and assigned to serve a congregation like yours as their pastor.

And this afternoon I have been sitting out on my deck, an hour due west of Oshkosh, Wisconsin, I am greeted with the beginning of EAA. I've been watching airplane after airplane fly over towards Oshkosh, including several old World War 2 Bombers. While it's cool to see these old planes flying overhead, I am reminded that years ago those were weapons of war. War was and still is a reality in our lives. You'd think by now with all the wars that have been waged, we would've solved all our problems right?

In our reading for today we see Jesus giving a warning to the disciples. He shows them the buildings in Jerusalem and tells them these buildings would fall. There would be wars, there would be false prophets, there would be all sorts of natural disasters that mark that they were living in the end times. Sound familiar?

We are living in the end times, just like the disciples were. It would be a very terrifying reality if we were left only with Matthew 24:1-13. But that's not all we or the disciples were given. Verse 14 reads "And this Gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations." The reality of war, famine, natural disasters, betrayals, persecution, problems within families, and every other malady in the world exists, but so does the Gospel. Jesus's warning is not without a greater comfort in the Gospel. There is no force on earth, physical or spiritual which is able to overcome the statement "it is finished" And that statement belongs to you. I think that secular saying "Come hell or high water" really connects to our section today. As a Christian, as a redeemed child of God you can say "Come hell or high water, my savior still reigns."

The hardest part of reading this section I believe is that, we realize that the end times are our reality. And it might not get better this side of heaven. It might get worse in our lives. But don't tell Pastor Pittenger I told you to skip ahead to Matthew 28:20. Jesus says "surely I am with you always to the very end of the age." No matter how the worldly battles go for you, your eternal battle has already been won. Rejoice and look forward to Christ's return.

#82

Thursday, August 14, 2025

Matthew 24:15-35

I'm Pastor Pittenger, from Bethany Lutheran Church in Washington State but today, August 14, 2025, I am on the road somewhere in Montana.

Two days ago, my daughter moved into the dormitory for her freshman year at Bethany Lutheran College and yesterday my son, whom you'll see right here next week, moved into his dorm at Martin Luther College.

Most of our road trip, there and back again, is on Interstate 90. Now I-90 runs from Seattle to all the way to Boston. Once we're on it we follow it for 1,566 miles, exiting at Worthington, MN. and according to the internet, we passed over 800 exits.

800 opportunities to go astray, to go in just a slightly different direction, down a different road than the road we were supposed to be on...

Remember all that in today's reading, Matthew 24:15-35. This reading takes place just days before Jesus lays down His life to save us.

Jesus wants you in Heaven. His cross is proof of that. That's where He is heading just a few days after He said the words of today's reading.

Keep watch, don't be fooled, don't go wandering, or speeding, down some side road. He wants you in Heaven and is about to do everything necessary for you to be there.

1500 miles with more than 800 different roads and paths all leading somewhere, anywhere, but the place we're supposed to be going. Read these verses in that light. Read them with that same sense of urgency and focus.

God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit wants you in Heaven. So then may He bless His Word and may He bless you and keep you.

#83

Friday, August 15, 2025

Matthew 24:36-51

I'm Pastor Nate Abrahamson and I remember when I was in seminary, driving down the freeway I saw a billboard. It mentioned a day in June that the world was going to come to an end, even with an exact time. I remember thinking, "I wonder what time zone 6:00 PM? Central, Pacific?" It was such a ridiculous billboard, not just because well, okay of the time zone thing, but because of what we're reading in our Scripture lesson today from God's word. Here, Jesus makes it clear that no one knows when he's going to return.

No one. If anyone claims they've figured out some code, they've cracked it, they're either lying or just really, really mistaken. Jesus says that the Son doesn't even know. That's one of those things that can be like, wait, how can God the Son not know? I don't know how can be both fully human and divine, how He can be God and take on human flesh? There's a lot we don't know about how the interplay between the Trinity - Father, Son Holy Spirit works. Jesus says that at this point He doesn't know and we just kind of leave it there.

The point here with this section that Jesus is making is that you don't know and people don't know for sure. So we should always be ready. I get that because, well, for me, if I know when something's due, I have this tendency to hold off and get it done just before. You know, I know someone's coming to my house and the cleaning will likely happen the night, the morning, the minutes before they arrive. God doesn't want that for us.

God doesn't want us to just hold off until that time. I'm thankful He doesn't because God's ways are good, being ready for. For the future, for eternity with Him is a good thing. The things of this world, sometimes we forget. Sometimes what the enemy tries to tell us is that, well, the stuff of this world that's fun and the God stuff that's not fun, do that later.

But the truth is, God's the one who designed us. God's the one who knows how life works best. God's the one who loves us, who created us, and who now through Jesus, His death and resurrection has redeemed us and is now sending His Spirit to renew us. We're looking forward to a day where we'll finally be everything we were meant to be.

Instead of being like, okay, I don't want to think about that day, we want to be ready for that day because, well, that day is a great day. I saw a devotion video a while back where someone said that they get up each morning and they look to the east and they say, "Maybe today, Lord," like maybe today is the day you will return.

I've started doing that too, unless I'm like camping or in a roommate situation. Then I don't want to say that because that might creep out my roommate. But otherwise, I do that. I get up and I go, "Maybe today, Lord", because it will be a great day for us who are in Christ when Jesus returns. So, let's live ready.

Let's embrace that any day might be the day where we see our Savior face to face. Any day might be the day where Jesus returns and everything is set right. Let's be ready every day.

#84

Saturday, August 16, 2025

Matthew 25:1-12

I'm Pastor Pittenger from Bethany Lutheran Church in Port Orchard, WA.

In these chapters, these last few chapters and parables about the end of the world, the last things Jesus taught before eating the Passover with the disciples, praying and being betrayed by one of His own, being crucified...

These last chapters and paragraphs before that always feel fervent, passionate, so intimately intense like Jesus is leaning right up to you, putting His hand on your shoulder, and looking straight into your eyes...

"The Kingdom of Heaven will be like ten virgins who took their lamps and went to meet the Bridegroom..."

These words were spoken during the same week that Jesus went...willingly went and purchased that Kingdom for you. Bought it at the cost of His own life so that He could give it to you.

This parable of His tells us how easily we can take it for granted, like those ladies invited to the wedding feast but were so lackadaisical about it that they didn't remain ready when the time came.

Oh my friends! How desperately Jesus does not want that to be you! Again, He purchased it for you with His blood. So in this parable, in Matthew 25:1-12, He pulls you close, puts His hand on your shoulder, looks deep into your eyes, to tell you that you're invited, you're on the list.

He wants to see you there.

Since the oil—the light of faith—comes by-and-through His Word, God bless the time you spend in it today!