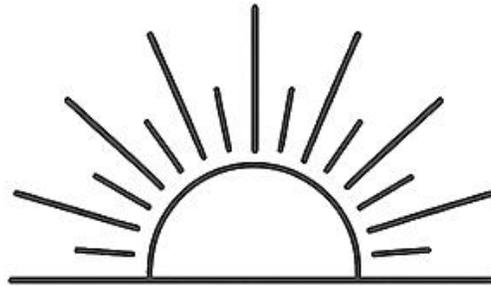


MIDSUMMER
WITH
MATTHEW



SUMMER 2025

WEEK 14

August 24 – September 1

Matthew 27:1 – Matthew 28:20

#92

Sunday, August 24, 2025

Matthew 27:1-10

Hi everyone — it's Day 92 of *Midsummer with Matthew*. Thanks for joining us as we've made our way through this first of the Gospels. I've really appreciated being part of this journey with you. Today, we're reflecting on Matthew 27:1–10.

This is a really powerful and sobering section — full of remorse and a clear picture of how broken human hearts can be. As the chapter opens, Jesus has just been betrayed and arrested. And in these verses, we see Judas — the one who handed Jesus over — completely overcome with guilt. He rushes back to the chief priests with the thirty pieces of silver they had given him, and he confesses: *"I have sinned. I have betrayed innocent blood."* But instead of receiving any grace, they respond with cold indifference: *"What is that to us?"*

In his despair, Judas believes that his sin is unforgivable. He feels completely lost — beyond forgiveness, beyond help from a merciful and gracious God. And in that despair, he takes his own life. How incredibly sad and tragic that is!

This passage really causes us to pause and ask: *What are we to do with our guilt? What do we do when we feel like we're in the depths of despair? When we have messed up terribly and see no way out?*

It's also a section that shows us something important about the value of being part of a religious system — a church — that emphasizes mercy. Judas sought out mercy. He wanted to hear a word of forgiveness. But the religious leaders of his day weren't concerned about him. They weren't about mercy. They weren't about forgiveness. They didn't care about his pain or his heart.

But that's not the case in the Church you and I belong to. That's not the case in the Church of Jesus Christ. Even those who were responsible for putting Jesus on the cross — including you and me — are offered His forgiveness! That's the comfort we have. That's the hope we cling to. And that's what we want to share with others.

So I encourage you today: take time to sit with the weight of this passage. Reflect on the ways that we all need grace. Yes, there are times when we fall far short — times when we've betrayed God, Christ, and others. But we rejoice in knowing that, in spite of it all, we have a Savior. And in Jesus, we find grace — not rejection.

So today, let's pray that God would keep our hearts from despair. That as we acknowledge our sin, we would also remember that we can ALWAYS turn to Him for grace, mercy, and love. We can run to Jesus — the very one who took our sin upon Himself.

I pray that this section of Matthew blesses you today. Peace be with You!

#93

Monday, August 25, 2025

Matthew 27:11-23

Would you ponder with me today? I have found that often in Scripture, what is most helpful for me is just to sit and ponder, meditate on things, and not necessarily to walk away with a super clear answer all the time. Today in the verses we're reading, Matthew 27:11-23, it'd be a great time for us to do that.

Hopefully you've got your cup of coffee or whatever you have, your Bible in front of you, and we can ponder this together. There are a lot of just intriguing things that happen in these verses.

The people choose to have Barabbas freed instead of Jesus. The name Barabbas is really a couple words together. It's "Bar Abba." The word Abba means "father", bar means "son".

So Jesus, the Son of God, the son of the Father, is being handed over to be killed in the place of Barabbas, "son of father". Hmm. It's worth meditating on.

The crime Barabbas had committed was "murder in the insurrection," meaning he had been part of the violent rebellion against Rome and had killed someone. Well, what did people want Jesus to be? They wanted him to be a king that led a violent rebellion against Rome. So, they actually handed Jesus over and they had a man freed who was really part of what they wanted Jesus to be part of. They chose Barabbas rather than Jesus, even though Jesus refused to be part of it.

As Jesus then went to the cross. What, was it then that he was really being killed for? Jesus failed to be what the people wanted him to be.

I don't know if you want to call it ironic or what it is that here Barabbas gets freed and in exchange that the Son of God is the one who dies. Here the one who's freed, is one who is really guilty of what the people wanted Jesus to be.

It makes me wonder, how often today when we get upset with Jesus is it because we are seeing him as failing to meet our expectations, that we are choosing the things in this world, other things that really we wanted Jesus to be... When he refused to be it, we chose those other things instead. It makes me wonder.

Then it also makes me really stop and go, wow, even though we've done those things, Jesus was willing to take our place on the cross. He took Barabbas' place. He took Nate's place, he took your place. He laid down his life, and died and rose again so that you and I could be forgiven, that we could be right with God and have life with God and truly be children of God.

He has made the greatest exchange, laid down his life to give us life. That's worth meditating on and pondering today.

#94

Tuesday, August 26, 2025

Matthew 27:24-31

Hello, I'm Pastor Jerry Gernander of Hope Lutheran Church in Leander, Texas. This short video is to prepare us to read Matthew 27:24-31.

At this point in Jesus' Passion, He is not far from the moment when Pontius Pilate will send Him to be crucified. This section is hard to read. It's filled with very painful things done to our dear Jesus.

In this reading I want to address where the Jewish mob says, "His blood be on us and on our children." Throughout history, some have wrongly used this as an excuse to hate and persecute Jewish people. They've called them "Christ killers" and cited this verse.

On the part of Christians, this is really wrong: It's misunderstanding Jesus' suffering. But this verse actually can teach us to understand it.

First, this statement – "His blood be on us and on our children" – is a preaching of God's Law. Instead of being angry at Pilate or the Jews, who is guilty of Jesus' blood? You are. Isaiah 53 says: "He was wounded for our transgressions. And the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all." Our sins are why He died.

But second, the statement, "His blood be on us and on our children," is Gospel. It forgives our sins. The Bible says in 1 John: "The blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanses us from all sin." This is what you need: for the blood of Jesus to be on you, to cover you and your sin.

Jesus' innocent blood redeems you – it completely paid for all your sin. This is the picture of the Mercy Seat, the Atonement Cover, that was on the ark of the covenant.

Inside the ark were the 10 Commandments on two stone tablets, they represent all the sins. But the Atonement Cover, the Mercy Seat, covered it up so God saw nothing of His people's sins. Psalm 32 refers to this: "Blessed is the man whose sin is covered." That's what Jesus' blood is: an Atonement Cover.

His blood covers up all sin in your life so that God sees none of it for Jesus' sake. He cleanses you from all sin. You are clean. Isn't that Good News?

#95

Wednesday, August 27, 2025

Matthew 27:32-44

90 days ago, way back in May, on Thursday, May 29th, Matthew showed us foreigners who came to Jerusalem looking, actually looking for, the King of the Jews.

That was in the second chapter.

Today, in the second-to-last chapter, Matthew will show us another foreigner who is using that phrase for Jesus.

Sadly, this guy isn't looking for Him. This guy's actually found Jesus, the King of the Jews and as Pastor Gernander's section from yesterday showed us, this guy has literally washed his hands of Jesus.

There's a tragic poetic parallel between today and May 29th. Back then, it was the Jewish king Herod who tried to kill Jesus. Today's reading has the Jewish religious leaders succeed in the same plan.

Back in May we saw ancient Old Testament prophecies fulfilled as people followed a star with gifts like gold and incense. Today Old Testament prophecies are fulfilled as the chief priests and scribes quote Psalm 22 to mock what Jesus is doing.

"What Jesus is doing." As you read today's weighty material for yourselves keep that phrase in mind. He doesn't have to be here. Even as it is happening, He can escape. Legions of angels would jump at the chance to prevent this from happening to their Creator and their Captain.

He can come down from the cross.

But if He does, then you and I will have to face something similar ourselves. And not just for one dark day of our eternity. You and I would have to face something like this for all eternity.

And so, tragic poetic parallels or not, read today's section knowing that Jesus did this, stayed there and endured this, for you.

God bless you and God bless His Word!

#96

Thursday, August 28, 2025

Matthew 27:46-56

It's Thursday, August 28th, and this is our 96th meditation on St. Matthew's Gospel for this summer. The readings we come to especially today are about the day Christ died.

On that day all creation was shrouded in darkness all around Christ as He suffered on the cross for us. On that day the earth trembled and shook beneath our feet and under and all around His cross. On that day in the temple the curtain was torn in two, opening the way to the Holiest of All—just when the body of Christ is opened up to the piercing of His very heart, as He makes Himself our way to the Father in heaven.

Somehow this death doesn't bring any harm to the sinners He came to save. They live to tell what they saw: soldiers stood in awe and fear, because nobody ever lived like this man; and now nobody ever died like He did. *Truly He was the Son of God.* Many women were there and saw what happened. Many of the blessed dead come up alive and well—so far is this day from doing us harm, but only Good.

Now here we are: condemned sinners who because of Him can die in peace. Now here we are, open-eyed with all His witnesses to see all that Christ did, and all He endured for us. Now here we are, the dead who rise to live with Him.

We pray: Dearest Jesus you carried our sins. You were covered in our darkness. You suffered our punishment. You died our death. Be then for us always our righteousness, our light; our vindication, and our whole life. Amen.

The toil is done which our sins made for him. My Jesus, good night! O blessed limbs, see, how I weep for Thee with penance and remorse that my fall brought Thee into such distress. My Jesus, good night! Take, while life lasts, a thousand thanks for Thy Passion, that Thou didst prize my soul's good so dearly. My Jesus, good night!

—J.S. Bach, *St. Matthew's Passion.*

#97

Friday, August 29, 2025

Matthew 27:57-66

There's a phrase in today's reading that really caught my attention. Five words: "As secure as you can."

I started thinking about some of the most secure places there are in the world today. Would Fort Knox be one of them? The White House? The NORAD bunker deep in the Rocky Mountains which is designed to withstand nuclear attack?

Well, in today's case, the case of Matthew 27:57-66, "as secure as you can" meant armed guards, a door blocked with a giant stone, and a governmental seal which carried the death penalty for anyone who broke it.

THAT would keep those cowardly fisherman and tax collectors out! Those weepy women too!

And it would. None of them would have been able, strong enough or daring enough, to get in.

But that's OK. I hope you know that they won't need to. Whether you know what I'm talking about or not, please don't miss Pastor Gernander's introduction tomorrow. He gets the honor of telling all of us on this venture why no one needed to worry about getting into that tomb.

But that's tomorrow. For today, don't miss the man who owns this tomb. Joseph of Arimathea. The Gospel of Luke tells us that here is a man who was part of the Jewish Council. Someone who voted against killing Jesus. I like that. I like knowing that this terrible decision wasn't unanimous.

As secure as you can. Read today's material knowing that even if it was Fort Knox or NORAD, it won't matter! God bless and keep you!

#98

Saturday, August 30, 2025

Matthew 28:1-10

OK, this is the big moment. This is Matthew 28. If you know what that chapter is, you know this is big. This is what we've been waiting for. But if you see it through the eyes of the people in these verses, they didn't know it was a big moment. They were in the midst of sadness.

Hi, I'm Pastor Jerry Gernander of Hope Lutheran Church in Leander, Texas. This short video is to prepare us for Matthew 28, verses 1-10.

Mary Magdalene and the other Mary had watched as Joseph of Arimathea wrapped Jesus' body carefully and lovingly placed it into his own tomb.

Now it was early morning of the third day. They are preparing to go to the tomb before dawn, to properly anoint Jesus' body. It wasn't a big moment for them. They dreaded it. They went to dwell where death was.

But this moment was bigger than them. As Jesus lay in the tomb, there was a great drama. It's as if all creation – all of fallen creation – held its breath.

St. Paul says if Jesus did not rise from the dead, "you are still in your sins," the sins would be unforgiven. No getting into heaven. No life after death. If Jesus doesn't rise, then His death didn't pay for the sins of the world – including yours and mine. A lot was at stake!

If the women were able to anoint His body, it would still be a dead body. No sins would be forgiven, heaven would remain shut for all sinners, so: no comfort, no peace, no end to sadness, no hope. Ironically, to do what the women intended would just be so sad.

But not only was fallen creation holding its breath. The part of God's creation that isn't fallen – His angels – were waiting too. Waiting at the tomb. They knew already. They have the message of joy, and light, and life, waiting. But they wait to see if anyone would even believe.

As you read this, may it speak to your sin and sadness, so you receive joy. You'll hear a special Someone say: "Rejoice!" Let Him say it to you.

#99

Sunday, August 31, 2025

Matthew 28:11-15

Nice try, guys. I hate to break it to you, but you failed miserably.

Don't worry, I'm not talking to you watching the video. I'm talking to the people that we are reading about in our reading today from Matthew 28:11-15. I'm talking about the guards and the religious leaders, the guards who saw what happened with Jesus' Resurrection, who were there, and then the religious leaders who tried to cover it all up.

They failed miserably. Because here we are 2000 plus years later and we're still celebrating exactly what happened. But you know, throughout history, the enemy tries to cover up what Jesus did, and he's still trying today. As I read these verses, I'm reminded that man, he fails miserably. Jesus died on that cross and defeated our sin. Jesus rose again and conquered death. The enemy can't stop that the Spirit is working in us today, moving in us today. The church is spreading throughout the world.

I know sometimes the enemy can really start to psych us out and get us thinking, "Oh, you know, many churches are shrinking and there's this hostility around us." Yes, sometimes churches are shrinking. Sometimes there is hostility, but the enemy never wins. He can try to cover it up but Jesus still rose. God is more powerful than anything we face. The Spirit is moving. God's kingdom is coming. There will be a day Jesus returns and sets it all right. The enemy can try and try and try, and these verses are a pretty clear reminder that he always fails miserably.

So today, let's keep that in mind that he wins. Jesus wins every time. Keep that in mind as we read these verses.

It's been great to be with you this summer to be going through Matthew. I pray that you continue to be in God's word, that he continues to go with you and I trust the Spirit will continue to work as you spend time in his word. It's been a pleasure. Again, this has been Pastor Nate Abrahamson from the Abiding Shepherd Lutheran Church in Cottage Grove and Fort Atkinson, Wisconsin. God be with you.

#100

Monday, September 1, 2025

Matthew 28:16-20

This is it! It's Day 100! It's Labor Day, Monday, September 1st and some of you have been with us for all 100 days, or if you have been trying but things came up and you couldn't be here every single day, or maybe some of you have just joined this effort, these introductions to part of Matthew, just recently.

Whoever you are, this is the end of the Gospel of Matthew, the last five verses, the completion of a story that we began 99 days ago, the account of Jesus, who would save His people from their sin. Today it ends with that risen Savior showing Himself alive and sending His Church out into the world so that it will grow, increase, that they would share the good news we've been hearing about all summer long.

The Kingdom of God. How we are blessed. His parables. His miracles and more than all of that: His death for the sin of the world and His resurrection.

Go and make disciples. Baptize them and teach them.

You know, it seems kind of funny: More than 96% of Matthew takes place before Jesus' resurrection, leads up to it. The Good News, the whole point, the victory over everything that troubles and condemns us...this last chapter comprises less than 4% of the book.

But what a glorious chapter it is!

Your sin had been paid for. Your death, whether it happens because of tragic accident, horrible violence, ugly disease, or just old age...your weakness in the face of death will not be the end of you anymore than your sin will be your identity.

He is risen! He is risen indeed, hallelujah! And...

And...He has promised to be with you until to very end.

I'm Pastor Pittenger and on behalf of pastors Abrahamson, Gernander, Hamilton, Ulrich and the others who have helped with this project, we pray God's Word does what He promises, feeding and watering faith...faith in Jesus as your Savior.