



First Lutheran Church

Gospel of Matthew

Summer 2026 Reading Challenge



Deep Dive: only Found in Matthew

Week 13: Matthew chapters 25 and 26

Talking to the Kids
When talking with kids, they may ask why do we have 4 authors who tell us about Jesus. And it isn't the simplest answer. Because there are many more "gospels" that were written and the earliest church leaders had to choose how we would pass along the story of Jesus. They made the decision to include these four, and not several others.

When we study the Gospels, we do see there are differences. We wouldn't have four gospels if they were all exactly the same. Sometimes where an author puts a story is different, or certain details about how a story is told is different.

This is where we can look at how different news stories tell us about something that happened. Different perspectives on the same events often help us to know more about what happened.

So, take a recent news story. How do different reporters cover it in print or on social media. Why are these differences good or helpful?

One of the most consistent theories in how the four gospels developed is the source theory. This suggests that Mark was the earliest gospel written, perhaps in the late 60's or early 70's. Most scholars accept that Matthew was next, in the early 80's, and then Luke was written in the late 80's. And John finishes the four we have in the Bible being written around 100 CE. Scholars developed this theory based on evidence of when we see other early church leaders quoting these gospels, where they are found, and how the theology about Jesus develops across the stories.

Mark has no resurrection appearances, leaving the women running away from the tomb in fear. Matthew and Mark each add a couple, while John adds the most. Also, there are dramatic similarities between Matthew, Mark, and Luke, and John's Gospel is starkly different in approach and timing, and theological concepts about Jesus.

These same scholars have found how Mark, Matthew and Luke have shared stories, though each told slightly differently. Matthew and Luke have shared stories that Mark does not have, leading scholars to believe there was another source available to those authors, a source scholars call "Q" (which is the first letter of the German word for 'source'). Matthew and Luke also have unique stories not found in the others. And scholars refer to these stories as coming from unique sources labeled M and L for their respective gospel.

Matthew has 28 stories, parables, or sayings, that are unique to his gospel. In this week's reading, the parable of the bridesmaids and the separation of sheep and goats are two examples of unique stories in Matthew. Pilate washes his hands, unique to Matthew. Judas' death, while found also in Acts, is not recorded in the other 3 gospels. And Matthew and the author of Acts tell two different versions of Judas' death. When Jesus dies and saints are raised from the dead, that only happens in Matthew. The guard at the tomb, only Matthew, and the great commission, which is how Matthew ends, is only in Matthew.

How each author reports these events is important. It gives us a sense of the theology they are trying to teach about Jesus and what they think their own community needed to know. But it becomes hard to separate for us, when we want to harmonize the stories into one big grand adventure about Jesus. But we must resist the urge to hear something from Luke beside something from Matthew, or to incorporate John's last supper dialogues with the simple description of dinner in the three others. But this is where study comes into play and why we need to pause and read the gospel for what it says, and not for how we want it to align with the others.

Gathered by God, we live our faith with: Compassion, Grace, Gratitude, and Joy

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