



First Lutheran Church

Gospel of Matthew

Summer 2026 Reading Challenge



Deep Dive: The Structure of Matthew

Week 6: Matthew chapters 11 and 12

Talking to the Kids

When we talk with our kids about the Gospel of Jesus, we need to make sure we talk about the definition of Gospel.

In one sense, Gospel is an old English word that means "Good News." So certain messages shared in these four books tell the Good News that Jesus is Risen, and share what impact this message has on us.

In another sense, Gospel describes a whole genre of writing that tells the story of Jesus' life. We have four Gospels. They do not agree on the details of Jesus, they kind of have certain similarities, and Matthew draws from Mark, shares some of Luke. But Matthew has a lot of its own stories not found in the others.

So, what do we do? We read the "Gospel" (the book) to hear the "Gospel" (the message that Jesus is Risen). And we study to help us understand the Gospel (both senses).

- Let's talk about how the Gospel of Matthew is organized. And there are many ways we can organize Matthew's Gospel.
- We can look at Matthew's Gospel from a geographic perspective, and this comes in three parts: the Pre-Galilean Preparation (1:1-4:16); the Galilean Ministry (4:17-18:35); and, the Judean Conflicts, Death, Resurrection, and Return to Galilee (19:1-28:20)
- There are framing devices around Jesus' ministry, again, we could view Matthew in these three parts: The Presentation of Jesus (1:1-4:16); The Ministry of Jesus to Israel and Israel's Repudiation of Jesus (4:17-16:20); and, Jesus' Journey to Jerusalem and His Suffering, Death, and Resurrection (16:21-28:20)
- There is a structure device in ancient literature known as a Chiasmic Structure. This title comes from the Greek letter Chi, which is basically the English letter X. It is a literary format that has a pattern that builds to a center, and then flips the themes to work back out toward where the narrative started. So for instance theme A, theme B, Theme C, Theme B again, though with a new twist based on Theme C, and Theme A again, though again, reframed slightly.
- One of these chiasmic structures found in Matthew's Gospel also incorporates the alternating uses of narrative and discourse:
 - A chps 1-4 Birth and Beginning (Narrative)
 - B chps 5-7 Blessings, entering the Kingdom (Discourse)
 - C chps 8-9 Authority and Invitation (Narrative)
 - D ch 10 Mission discourse (Discourse)
 - E chps 11-12 Rejection by this generation (Narrative)
 - F chp 13 Parables of the Kingdom (Discourse)
 - E' chps 14-17 Acknowledgment by disciples (Narrative)
 - D' chp 18 Community discourse (Discourse)
 - C' chps 19-22 Authority and Invitation (Narrative)
 - B' chps 23-25 Woes, coming of the Kingdom (Discourse)
 - A' chps 26-28 Death and resurrection (Narrative)
- Notice how the letters correspond with similar themes or even the exact same themes. D and D' flip broaden the mission from the 12 to the whole community. C and C' are the same themes. B and B' flip blessings and woes. A and A' flip the coming of Jesus at birth to the coming of Jesus at resurrection.
- These are just a few ways to understand the structure of the Gospel. And seeing the Gospel as a whole narrative, and not just as slices we hear occasionally on Sunday mornings helps us to understand the whole message. These structures are exemplified in the New Interpreters Bible Commentary, the Matthew section written by M. Eugene Boring.

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

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