



First Lutheran Church

Gospel of Matthew

Summer 2026 Reading Challenge



Deep Dive: Doublets in Matthew

Week 8: Matthew chapters 15 and 16

Talking to the Kids
Have you ever played a game of telephone, where everyone sits in a circle and you have to whisper a short sentence into the ear beside you, and by the time the sentence gets around the circle it is totally different?

Or ever hear a fisherman tell a story and each time the fisherman tells the story the fish gets bigger?

Sometimes this is what happens in the Gospels, too. Matthew tells some very similar stories as the other Gospel writers, but he adds to them. This is for flair, for drama, for heightened sense of importance in the moment -- the wow factor. Wow! Jesus didn't just heal one guy, he healed 2! Wow, Jesus didn't just feed 5000, he also fed another 4000 on a different day, too.

The wow factor of Matthew helps us really connect with the Wow factor of who Jesus is.

- If we simply read one Gospel at a time, we may not pay much attention to how the Gospels relate to one another. It may be obvious with John, whose story telling is so unique the other three get a special name for them "the Synoptics" which set them apart from John. But the Synoptics (a word that means "with one view point" or "with a similar view point" don't always line up with each other either. And the differences are quite telling.
- Matthew, for instance, has the Gospel of Mark with him as he is writing. And there are certain stories that Matthew makes an intentional difference. He doubles the character or repeats the story a second time. For instance, Mark writes about Jesus healing a demoniac and the "legion" going into the pigs to drown. Matthew makes this story about 2 men cured. Mark writes about a blind man, Matthew retells the story with two blind men. Mark writes that Jesus entered Jerusalem on Palm Sunday riding one animal, Matthew says Jesus rides two animals.
- Matthew also repeats stories. He writes about divorce twice, about the religious leaders demanding a sign twice, about Jesus being accused of working with Beelzebub, yep twice. The feeding of the 5000 is also repeated when Jesus feeds an additional 4000. Jesus also walks on water, twice.
- For those who want to say the Bible is free of contradictions, they will claim that Mark and Matthew are simply recording different events, there was a time Jesus healed the one blind man, another time Jesus healed two of them. Or they might make the claim that Matthew was a disciple, he witnessed the events, so he is right -- Mark and Luke who were later disciples abbreviated the story because they were not there. But this is not what is happening. The Bible is full of contradictions, and these stories are part of the proof.
- Matthew is emphasizing the nature of Jesus as the presence of God among us, and so he wants the power of God to be fully dramatized. Matthew may also be leaning on an ancient tradition that two witnesses were needed as proof that something happened, so two men healed of blindness or of demons, means the story is verified as legal testimony.
- And in the case of the Palm Sunday animal ride into Jerusalem, Matthew was trying to quote an ancient prophecy. And while Matthew's need to get that prophecy to fit the story doesn't really make any sense (how can Jesus ride both a colt and a donkey simultaneously) Matthew's need to have Jesus fulfill prophecy for narrative and theological purposes outweighs Matthew's need for the story to make narrative sense. So, when we read these doublets in Matthew, the wow factor of who Jesus is really is Matthew's ultimate point.

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

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