



First Lutheran Church

Gospel of Matthew

Summer 2026 Reading Challenge



Introduction

Week 1: Matthew chapters 3 and 4

Chapter Outline

Matthew 3:1-12	The Proclamation of John the Baptist
Matthew 3:13-17	The Baptism of Jesus
Matthew 4:1-11	The Testing of Jesus
Matthew 4:18-25	Jesus Begins His Ministry

What to Expect

We open chapter 3 with a massive time jump. The story as written doesn't tell us the exact details of the time jump. But suddenly Jesus is an adult, and he journeys to meet this John who is baptizing at the River Jordan. The description of John lets us know he is not of the priestly class, and his location places him outside of the religious center which is Jerusalem.

What's more, Jesus is driven even further from the heart of established religious boundaries as his testing takes him into the wilderness ... a word for a space that is out of civilized control. Imagine Jerusalem as the heart of religious influence and protected by Roman guards. Now walk as far away from that as possible, where religion has no influence, where not even Roman guards patrol. This is where Jesus goes for the testing.

Jesus returns to Galilee, though by passing through other established territories in order for Matthew to cite more prophecies which need to be fulfilled. And there Jesus begins by first calling two sets of brothers: Simon and Andrew, James and John. His ministry really takes off with preaching, healing, and traveling around in ways that attracts attention from people throughout a large area.

As we read these two chapters, we need to remember that the Gospel writer Matthew is not writing a biography, in the sense of how we might read a biography of a historical figure today. A biography about George Washington, for instance, will go into great detail about facts, motives, influences, key moments. The Gospels do not do that. They are written as theological treatises. They are attempting to frame Jesus not with exact historical information, but with theological constructs. This is why Matthew so often will say, "to fulfill prophecy or scripture".

2026 Summer Reading Challenge

Throughout this summer, First Lutheran Church will engage the Gospel of Matthew.

Each week we will read 2 chapters of Matthew.

Resources will be available along the way, including:

- An introduction to the week
- A Deep Dive into a big theme of Matthew's Gospel
- A Deep Dive into one part of this week's reading
- A Devotional based on one part of this week's reading
- A Video to read along with Pastor Jamie.

Check out our website and our Facebook page for weekly and daily postings related to this reading challenge.

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

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