



First Lutheran Church

Gospel of Matthew

Summer 2026 Reading Challenge



Deep Dive: Jewish Law and Christian Faith

Talking to the Kids

When you listen to a sermon, you are listening to a "proclamation event". This is an opportunity to hear how God is active in the world around us today. Proclamation events like sermons include explanations of the faith.

Take time to prepare your children about how to listen to a sermon. What is the story that the pastor uses to help people hear the message? What is the Bible passage the pastor is addressing? After all, we read several lessons in worship, so which one are we focusing on?

Listen for how the message helps us understand our faith better, how to live as God's people better, and where to see God at work in the world around us better.

Ask your kids what they heard the pastor say? Sometimes they hear things so differently, but so wonderfully.

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

Week 4: Matthew chapters 7 and 8

- Let's talk about the law in the Gospel of Matthew and how it relates to our Christian faith. The sermon on the mount is a great example of hearing Jesus interpret God's law for the listener. Jesus says murder is not just the act of taking another person's life, but even the act of cursing at someone is murder. Jesus says, adultery is not just a physical act with another person, but just lust in the heart is the committing of adultery.
- Jesus seems in many places to be doubling down on the law. But in many other places, Jesus is freely letting up on laws. Jesus eats grain he plucks on the sabbath, Jesus heals on the sabbath, Jesus eats with sinners, and he even touches dead people. All these things are strict prohibitions in the law ... or are they?
- See for generations, since the law was first written, religious leaders have been pondering what each law means and how to apply it. And for as long as religious leaders have been interpreting the law, there have been conflicts in how to interpret the law. So, in Jesus' own day there were groups like scribes, Sadducees, Pharisees, rabbis, priests, and sects like those at Qumran or those who followed John the Baptism or those who followed Jesus.
- Matthew, in presenting Jesus, is in a time when Christian-Jews and Pharisee Jews and others were fighting over who had the right interpretation of the law. And Matthew asserts that Jesus has the correct interpretation, and not only Jesus but the Church that rightly follows Jesus.
- Matthew asserts Jesus is the correct interpreter of God's Law, because Matthew presents Jesus as the one bringing God's kingdom into today's time. We are living the Kingdom of God today because of Jesus.
- Matthew asserts the church is also the correct interpreter of God's Law, because twice he has Jesus identify the Church as the source for loosening or binding the law.
- Loosening the law means understand how laws have less weight, and binding the laws demonstrates when laws have more weight over us.
- Matthew also gives us keys to understanding when to loosen and when to bind. The first key is from the sermon on the mount - the Golden Rule, do unto others as you would have them do unto you, this is the whole of the law and the prophets. And the second key is like it, the double rule to love God and love neighbor, this is the greatest commandment. When we loosen or when we bind, these are the keys, Matthew's Gospel asserts. This is how we are to interpret laws, be it as simple as what work to do on the sabbath, as complex as who to love or what gender identity to accept from others.
- The law, especially according to Matthew's Gospel, is still relevant and always will be. It just cannot be used as a barrier to keep people out of God's kingdom, only as a way to bring people in.