

Hello everyone,

PERCENT OF BIBLE COMPLETED: 72.6%

Weekly Readings will cover:

Sunday: Matthew 12:1 – 8, Luke 6:1 – 5, & Mark 2:23 – 28

Monday: Matthew 12:9 – 14, Luke 6:6 – 11 & Mark 3:1 – 6

Tuesday: Mark 3:7 – 12 & Matthew 12:15 – 21

Wednesday: Luke 6:12 – 16 & Mark 3:13 – 19

Thursday: Luke 6:17-20, Matthew 5:1-4

Friday: Preparation Day

Saturday: Sabbath

Current # of email addresses in the group: 726

I hope each of you are enjoying your weekly study. I'm learning a lot each week, and I hope you are as well.

As I mentioned in the email I sent out in the middle of the week, I have reduced this plan starting this week to a five-day program instead of seven. I know this will be disappointing to some, and a relief to others. For now, this is necessary for me to meet my responsibilities while trying to keep this program consistently moving forward. I will say though, for those who would like to space this into a full week instead of five days, Sunday and Thursday are longer than I typically strive for and could easily be broken in half to make it a seven-day program this week.

Current and archive of this reading program is available at:

<https://www.ucg.org/congregations/san-francisco-bay-area-ca/announcements/audio-links-re-three-year-chronological-deep>

The audio archive information is also available on our UCG Bay Area YouTube page here:

https://youtube.com/@ucgbayarea5792?si=EA_tacLBfv1XR3jH

You may actually prefer accessing it directly from this Playlist tab:

<https://www.youtube.com/@ucgbayarea5792/playlists>

3-YEAR CHRONOLOGICAL STUDY: Week 115

Read the following passages & the Daily Deep Dive on the daily reading.

Day 778 – SUNDAY: May 24th

Matthew 12:1-8; Luke 6:1-5; Mark 2:23-28

Daily Deep Dive:

Since Matthew's account contains the most details of this section of scripture, I will be using Matthew's account for the majority of the details, and add additional details from the other accounts as we go. But I do want to first cover one verse from Luke 6 before switching to Matthew.

Luke 6:1 – Luke's account contains an extremely unusual expression, which is unique even among surviving Greek literature. It's the phrase found in the NKJV: "on the second Sabbath after the first". Now, some of your Bibles (depending on the translation) might not translate it this way at all, and that's because this is another example where some of the oldest manuscripts omit this phrase and others include it. The Byzantine Majority texts include it --- so let's talk about what it means. Commentators on the Bible are greatly divided on the meaning of this Greek phrase, but I believe the reason they are divided is partly due to the fact they do not understand God's Holy Day plan; and that Luke in both his Gospel account and in the Book of Acts repeatedly shows the keeping of the Holy Days by both Jesus Christ and the apostles.

One of the oldest and strongest explanations of this Greek is that Luke included it as showing where they were in the count toward Pentecost and the spring harvest season. Many interpreters see this Greek language as a technical calendrical term. It involves the numbering of Sabbaths; and the only explicit system of numbering Sabbaths in the Bible is the count to Pentecost (Leviticus 23:15).

I could keep diving really deep into a number of the different dates this might refer to in that count, but it's my understanding and belief that it is referring to the second Sabbath in the counting to Pentecost from the first Sabbath that falls during the days of Unleavened Bread. This would mean that the wave sheaf offering had already occurred six days before; and therefore, the disciples were allowed by God's law to consume the grain of the new harvest (compare Leviticus 23:11, 14-

15). I believe this explanation fits the context of the Gospel accounts that the grain is ripe and edible. You might wonder why Luke records this timing, but Matthew and Mark do not. I'll remind you that Luke appears to be putting together a chronological ordering of events (Luke 1:3) --- and in doing so often includes chronological details, official terminology and unusual technical expressions more than any of the other Gospel writers.

The harvest that fell during this time was the barley harvest --- as wheat would not yet be ripe until we get closer to Pentecost. This also allows us to understand that from a timing standpoint, this puts us about a year-and-a-half into the ministry of Jesus Christ; which means He has about two years remaining before He would be killed on Passover. With this information, we will now go through Matthew's account.

Matthew 12:1 – Some translations will say “corn” (for example the KJV) and others “wheat” (for example the NET), but the Greek doesn't say “corn” or “wheat”. The text uses a Greek word that the NKJV translates “grainfield” which means “sown” or a “planted” field. It's a generic term that doesn't specify WHAT the field was planted with.

The second Greek term meant a “head of grain (wheat, barley, corn, etc.). So the NKJV does a good job translating this verse. At this time barley would have been ripe, so the logical assumption is that they were plucking barley. First-century grainfields of Judea and Galilee would have looked much different than our modern industrial fields. They were smaller and deeply woven into daily life. Most grainfields were simply small family plots that were irregular in shape and divided by footpaths. Now the Gospel accounts frequently mention people walking “through” the fields. This wasn't meant to depict people trampling someone's field as they marched through it. Fields at this time had public foot paths with access lanes between these family plots. Walking on these paths were not trespassing or unusual. You might ask if the disciples were “stealing” by plucking these heads of

grain? No. In a section of scripture dealing with miscellaneous laws, Deuteronomy 23:24-25 states: "When you come into your neighbor's vineyard, you may eat your fill of grapes at your pleasure, but you shall not put *any* in your container. When you come into your neighbor's standing grain, you may pluck the heads with your hand, but you shall not use a sickle on your neighbor's standing grain." They were traveling, and hungry, and so they picked some of the ripe heads of barley and ate. Luke 6:1 tells us that they rubbed these heads of grain in their hands. Rubbing the heads of grain in their hands would cause the chaff to loosen, allowing them to eat the kernels of grain.

Matthew 12:2 – If you would read through Ezekiel 20, you will see that in addition to idolatry and not obeying God, God specifically calls out over and over that the nation of Judah did not keep His Sabbath holy, and therefore God had the Babylonians take them into captivity. After returning from captivity, to protect against again breaking the Sabbath, the religious leaders added additional man-made regulations around what could and could not be done on the Sabbath. The disciples were not breaking God's law here, but they were breaking these man-made regulations that had been added to God's law.

Matthew 12:3 – Jesus then goes through an event in the Old Testament found in 1 Samuel 21. In 1 Samuel 21, David and his men are on the run from king Saul and his men. David and his men are hungry, likely on the verge of starvation. David comes to the Tabernacle to Ahimelech the priest and asks for five loaves of bread or whatever could be found (verse 3). However, in verse 4 Ahimelech tells David "*There is no common bread on hand; but there is holy bread.*" As a brief reminder about showbread (holy bread), Leviticus 24:5-9 it states, "And you shall take fine flour and bake twelve cakes with it. Two-tenths *of an ephah* shall be in each cake. You shall set them in two rows, six in a row, on the pure *gold* table before the LORD. And you shall put pure

frankincense on *each* row, that it may be on the bread for a memorial, an offering made by fire to the LORD. Every Sabbath he shall set it in order before the LORD continually, *being taken* from the children of Israel by an everlasting covenant. And it shall be for Aaron and his sons, and they shall eat it in a holy place; for it *is* most holy to him from the offerings of the LORD made by fire, by a perpetual statute."

In 1 Samuel 21:6 it states "So the priest gave him holy *bread*; for there was no bread there but the showbread which had been taken from before the LORD, in order to put hot bread *in its place* on the day when it was taken away." So, let's make sure we understand what appears to happen here. On the Sabbath day, the showbread was to be replaced. The showbread was still holy and therefore only to be eaten by the priests. So here, on what still appears to be the Sabbath, because the bread has been replaced with hot bread and the former showbread has not yet been consumed by the priests, David and his men are given by Ahimelech the old showbread that is holy and belongs to the priests to eat. I'll point out that David did not steal the bread. He asked for bread, and Ahimelech gave David and his hungry men the older showbread because it's all that he had to give them. Should Ahimelech have given David the bread and should he and his men have eaten it? That's really the question that we have to answer. And we answer that by understanding what Jesus Christ explains here in Matthew 12:3. In Matthew 12:3, Jesus connects the hunger of His disciples to that of the hunger of David and his men. There is a clear need for food, .

Matthew 12:4-5 – Notice, Jesus goes out of His way to make sure to call out that it would normally appear to be against God's law for David and his men to eat the holy bread that was specifically designated for the priests. In verse 5, Jesus shifts to another thought and talks about how throughout the instructions of God, that the priests, on each Sabbath, performed extensive temple duties which included slaughtering the sacrificial animals, lifting and carrying items, tending fires, replacing the

showbread, preparing offerings, and conducting the offerings. Jesus says that the priests in that sense “profane” the Sabbath and yet are “blameless”. In the Greek this idea of “profane” was to treat something that is Holy as common/ordinary. Therefore, its holiness was violated/desecrated. Jesus is showing that all that the priests do on the Sabbath in any other context other than in service to God would be a violation of God’s law of working on the Sabbath, however, they were seen by God as innocent. Why were they innocent, because they were serving in the Holy Temple, and therefore there were certain Sabbath prohibitions that were suspended in this special case. And that’s the point. There are special cases that cause what would normally be a violation against God’s Holy Sabbath or something Holy, not to be a violation at all.

Matthew 12:6 – Here Jesus is showing that if the temple was Holy and the showbread that was placed in it was Holy, and that the work for that Holy temple on the Sabbath was acceptable, He was greater than that physical Holy temple. He was God (John 1:1)!

Matthew 12:7 – Here Jesus comes to the climax of the WHY! Why was it okay for David and His men to eat the showbread --- and therefore why should these religious leaders understand that it is okay for the disciples of Jesus Christ to pluck heads of grain on the Sabbath? In Hosea 6:6 it states: “For I desire mercy and not sacrifice, And the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings.” We understand that God Himself commanded sacrifices, so clearly Jesus is not saying that sacrifices are bad, and that God never wanted them. Mercy in Hebrew is the word “חֶסֶד (hesed).” It’s a rich Hebrew word that goes far beyond simple kindness. It contains the idea of “covenant loyalty”, “steadfast love”, “faithful mercy” and “relational faithfulness”. God never wanted heartless rituals. To perform a ritual/sacrifice, while at the same time not doing so with faithfulness and love toward God,

would render that ritual/sacrifice meaningless. Sacrifices were always meant to outwardly demonstrate their worship and love for God. Jesus Himself will later state in Matthew 22:37-40: 'YOU SHALL LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART, WITH ALL YOUR SOUL, AND WITH ALL YOUR MIND.' This is *the* first and great commandment. And *the* second is like it: 'YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF.' On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets."

How could someone claim to love and worship God, even in honoring the Sabbath day, but neglect the true needs of their neighbor. Seeing a brother hungry, but not care or tend to that need, because you are striving to keep the Sabbath holy is missing the point of all of it. Jesus has shown them that they understood that David was blameless/guiltless in eating the Holy showbread because he and his men were hungry. He has shown them that they understand that the priests are blameless for working on the Sabbath because they are serving God in the Temple. But now He brings these religious leaders face-to-face with the fact that standing here before them are men who are hungry, have human needs, and yet they were failing to understand God's true intent by ignoring those needs in order to keep their man-made laws (that they had added as a fence around the Sabbath). In no way was Jesus abolishing or even diminishing the Sabbath, but was instead showing that they incorrectly condemned those who were not doing anything wrong before God. Jesus was attempting to show these leaders that they themselves were violating the very heart of God's Law by demonstrating a lack of love and mercy.

Matthew 12:8 – We now come to a gigantic statement from Jesus Christ! After demonstrating how David on the Sabbath received holy bread to meet his human need, and then showing how there was some Temple work done on the Sabbath that was entirely appropriate, Jesus then demonstrated how mercy was central to proper covenant

obedience. And finally, He demonstrated that if the Temple is so special that it justifies work on the Sabbath, what happens when something greater than the Temple is present, the very Messiah Himself (the Son of Man – Daniel 7:13). Jesus calls Himself the “Lord even of the Sabbath”. The Sabbath to the Jews was a covenant sign, rooted in creation and commanded by God Himself. The Greek for “Lord” contains the idea of “master” and “supreme in authority”. We understand because of John 1 that Jesus was the Word. That He created all things visible and invisible (John 1:3; Colossians 1:16). He even created the Sabbath Day. He had authority over the Sabbath, over its meaning, over its proper observance and over its application. He’s really showing how ridiculous it is for Him, the Lord of the Sabbath, to be questioned by these religious leaders about the Sabbath at all.

The Pharisee’s claimed the authority to interpret and enforce their traditions around Sabbath faithfulness. They condemned Jesus’ disciples for breaking the Sabbath. Jesus overturns their entire framework. He shows them their lack of understanding, their inappropriate judgement and that they failed to recognize the One who not only understood the Sabbath’s true purpose, but the One who held actual authority over the Sabbath itself.

Mark 2:27 – Mark’s account includes a verse that is not contained in Luke or Matthew. He adds: **"The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath."**

The Sabbath was designed by God to be a blessing for mankind. God did not create humans because He needed something to worship the seventh day. Man was made first, and then immediately --- the next day --- God made the Sabbath. Adam and Eve would spend their first evening and first full day together on the Sabbath. While created to be a blessing and an enjoyable delight, mankind can diminish that in a number of ways. One is by adding rigid additional rules and regulations

to this day that God never intended --- that make it a burden instead of a joy. For anyone who would like to dive into this topic more fully, I gave a sermon on this topic and verse entitled: "Sabbath – The Blessing of Ceasing" at:

<https://www.ucg.org/sermons/sabbath-blessing-ceasing>

Day 779 – MONDAY: May 25th

Matthew 12:9-14; Luke 6:6–11; Mark 3:1–6

Daily Deep Dive:

Matthew 12:9 – This, at first reading, would lead us to think that Jesus and His disciples left the field where they had plucked grain and then walked into this synagogue, but this is on another Sabbath (perhaps a week later).

Matthew 12:10 – We are introduced to a man who has a withered hand. In the Greek, the word translated "withered" fundamentally meant "dry, dried up, without moisture". In everyday Greek usage, it was used for dry wood, soil or grain, or for a dried-up tree or shriveled limb. It was used Biblically to refer to land (as opposed to sea – Matthew 23:15; Hebrews 11:29), a dried plant or branch (see Luke 23:31), or a part of the body that had shriveled, lost strength or became unusable. Here it's used not to just show an injured hand, but something that was shriveled (possibly atrophied) and was now weak and non-functional.

Luke 6:6 tells us it was his right hand that was withered. Remember, details in the Bible are not arbitrary. In the first-century Jewish world, the right hand carried enormous symbolic, social and practical significance. Most people were right-handed, and so that would have been his hand of strength and skill. For most professions, you need both hands. Even when you need only one, your dominant hand is way better at hammering, etc. than your non-dominant hand. Losing this hand often meant a lower capacity to do work, the likely loss of

livelihood, and therefore social shame and dependence on others. In the Bible, the right hand symbolized power and authority (for example, Exodus 15:6). In addition, the left hand in that culture was often associated with lesser status, awkwardness, weakness, unusualness and impurity. While the right hand in this and surrounding cultures was used for eating, greeting, etc., the left hand was often reserved for personal hygiene and cleaning the body after using the bathroom/toilet. The Latin word for “left” is “sinister” --- and overtime developed the meaning of “ominous” or “evil” in English. So, this man would have had to use his left hand for everything, both eating and unclean wiping, and so that was thought to be disgusting.

In Mark 3:2-3 and Luke 6:7-8 both show that the religious leaders are watching and waiting to accuse. They may see this man (or in general people who needed to be healed), and instead of being concerned for the person they are looking to accuse Jesus. And it shows that Jesus was aware of what they were thinking and doing. Matthew 12:10 shows that they eventually bring the question to Jesus of whether it is “lawful to heal on the Sabbath?”, but they aren’t truly concerned about His answer --- but in their corrupted hearts they are trying to accuse Him. In Mark 3:3, Jesus has the man “step forward”, and in Luke 6:7-8 had this man “Arise and stand” in a certain location (likely in the center of everyone to bring everyone’s attention to the lesson He’s about to teach).

Matthew 12:11 – Instead of giving an answer, Jesus has questions they need to answer first. Mark & Luke include the question: "Is it lawful on the Sabbath to do good or to do evil, to save life or to kill?"

Mark 3:4 tells us that they didn’t respond but “kept silent”.

Matthew’s account is the only one that shows that Christ asks them how they simply care for one of their animals that is in a bad situation

on the Sabbath. And the answer is obvious. Of course, no one would leave one of their animals suffering or in trouble --- and not help it when it was in their capacity and power to help.

Matthew 12:12 – Christ makes a clear point that people are MUCH MORE valuable than animals. Christ then finally answer's their question more directly: **Therefore it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath."**

In Mark 3:5 tells us that Jesus looked around at all of them with anger. This is the only place in the Bible that says that Jesus was explicitly "angry". Notice it wasn't about how people were treating Him, but how even in this situation where they can clearly see a man who has lost function in what was very likely his dominate hand, and likely suffering now through life without its function --- they can't see the suffering of this man, but instead they just want to catch Jesus breaking the Sabbath. It says Jesus was "grieved" because of the "hardness of their hearts".

Matthew 12:13 – Likely without much of a pause Jesus has the man stretch out (or in the Greek "to extend" or "stretch forth"). He has the man put his withered hand in clear sight of everyone involved --- and as the man obeys and "stretches out" his hand, it is restored to function and appearance as his left hand. Jesus never says anything or touches the man. He simply follows Christ's instructions and He's healed.

This is an interesting moment, because on the one hand, Jesus did nothing. How could they accuse Him of working when He simply told the man to "stretch out his hand"? And yet, this man was divinely healed in a way that they couldn't deny Jesus was responsible for. The man can now use both hands and be a full participant in work and society.

How will they respond? Combining Matthew 12:14, Mark 3:6 & Luke 6:11, we see that having witnessed the healing of this man's hand, instead of being in awe and amazement, they were "filled with rage" (Luke 6:11) and they left and "immediately plotted with the Herodians" (Mark 3:6) how "they might destroy Him" (Matthew 12:14; Mark 3:6). How sad that their reaction to this beautiful moment is to want to kill Jesus. How twisted their thinking had become.

I'll remind you that the Herodians are supporters, family, and relatives of the descendants of King Herod. The Jews do not have the authority to put anyone to death. But the Herodians were allied with Rome, so they seem to work through this connection to try to get the Romans to kill Jesus. Normally the religious elite and the Herodians would not be allies, but the religious elites seem to be getting desperate to stop Him.

Day 780 – TUESDAY: May 26th

Mark 3:7–12; Matthew 12:15–21

Daily Deep Dive:

We will read Mark first and then Matthew today --- as that seems like the better chronological flow.

Mark 3:7 – Matthew's account adds that Jesus knew that the religious leaders were plotting to kill Him. He therefore leaves the synagogue and returns to the sea of Galilee.

Mark 3:8 – We've previously seen this great multitude of people that are following Jesus and His disciples include people from Galilee, Judea, Jerusalem and beyond the Jordan (the country of Peraea), we now also see people from Idumea, Tyre and Sidon in the great multitude. I briefly mentioned in week 112 that Idumea (also known as Edom) lay south of Judea and was a land conquered and converted to Judaism by the Hasmonean dynasty after the Maccabean revolt. The Edomites had descended from Esau and throughout the Old Testament they had

stood as a rival and hostile nation to Israel. Herod the Great was an Idumean. To many Jews this area stood for political compromise, and their Jewish identity was seen as questionable. So when Mark tells us that people from this region have joined the great multitude, it shows that Jesus' reputation has spread into regions tied to the Herodian world and former enemies of Israel. Tyre and Sidon were major port cities north of Galilee along the Mediterranean coast (now modern Lebanon). To Jews, these areas were strongly associated with Gentile culture, paganism, wealth and commerce, While they were geographically close, they were seen as spiritually and culturally outside of Judaism. Mark is essentially showing that the fame and pull to Jesus is coming from every direction --- and from areas that had mixed backgrounds with Israel. The influence of Jesus is crossing political, ethnic, religious and historical boundaries. Mark appears to already be showing what will later become very obvious --- that the gospel of the Kingdom of God was not confined to one narrow geographical or ethnic group, but instead is for all people. And here already it's beginning to ripple outward far beyond traditional Jewish expectations.

Mark 3:9-10 – This great multitude that contains many who are sick and in need of healing, and are trying to get to Jesus --- even to just touch Him. In verse 10 it says they “pressed about Him” meaning “embrace” or “to seize” (Strong's). And Thayer's first definition says “to fall upon, to rush or press upon”. In verse 9, Jesus has His disciples keep a boat near Him so that if this got too intense (“lest they should crush Him”) or He needed a reprieve, they could cast out into the water. It sounds as if this multitude can become intense and perhaps desperate at times. All of this sounds exhausting. And I think we should consider how great Jesus served these people day-in-and-day-out as He laid down His life not just in death --- but in daily service.

Matthew 12:17- 21 – This is a quote from the beginning of Isaiah 42.

For this section, I'm going to include a section from the UCG Bible Commentary on Isaiah 42 because it highlights the great compassion of our Savior. "Returning to Christ's gentleness in verse 3 (of Isaiah 42), His not breaking a bruised reed appears to mean that upon those who are lowly and hurt, having already suffered punishment, Jesus will not add to their punishment. Indeed, just the opposite, He will take special care of them and restore them to health and happiness—and even grant them spiritual vitality. "Smoking flax" in the same verse is rendered "dimly burning wick" in the RSV and NRSV (see also *JFB Commentary*). This appears to represent those who at one time had a fiery zeal but are now as a mere smoldering candle wick about to go out—their faith and hope in God's deliverance is almost gone. Jesus will not quench what is left in them. Again, just the opposite, He will rescue them, not only restoring their faith and zeal, but through the granting of His Spirit giving them such a fiery zeal for God as is otherwise humanly impossible." [END QUOTE]

We might wonder why God inspired Matthew to record these words of Isaiah here. While we saw in Mark's account how the popularity of Jesus is growing --- and the great needs that this multitude that came to Him had --- we also have the growing opposition against Jesus from the religious leaders. This prophetic passage of scripture shows that Jesus was not going to openly fight and quarrel with the religious leaders, but instead would maintain His quiet and gentle approach, and provide the care that these people (coming from all over) so desperately needed.

Day 781 – WEDNESDAY: May 27th

Luke 6:12-16; Mark 3:13–19

Daily Deep Dive:

Luke 6:12 – Here again we see Jesus withdraw to a private place to speak to His Father and maintain Their relationship. If we would look at the various prayers recorded in the Bible, we would find that most are fairly short and even some of the longest recorded prayers, such as

John 17, only take us several minutes to say out loud. I share this to say that not all prayers need to be long. However, in this particular case, we see that Jesus continued all night in prayer. The Greek here does mean “to spend the night, to pass the whole night” (Thayer), “to sit up the whole night” (Strong’s). Why did Jesus spend all night in prayer? This is a pivotal moment! Jesus is about to select 12 men who will become apostles. This was no small decision. This was not a decision Jesus wanted to make Himself. He wanted God’s involvement and direction.

Luke 6:13 – Jesus Christ had many disciples. Later in Luke 10 we will see that Jesus sends out 70 individuals. Even then, that’s just the ones that are sent out. Later in John 6:66-67, many being offended walk away from following Him. It seems there are about 120 followers by Acts 1:15). But here, after praying all night long, and now a new day has begun, Jesus called a group to Himself (Mark 3:13) and from a greater group of disciples, Jesus selects 12 that He “named apostles”. Within the Greek idea of “naming” contains the meaning of “designation”, “giving a title”, “appointing with significance”. We see also within the Bible that God gave new names to various individuals that would highlight their authority, identity, role, commission and purpose.

Mark 3:14-15 – The word “apostle” literally means “one sent out”. In Greek usage it could refer to “someone officially commissioned to represent another”. This individual carried authority. A common rabbinic principle of the time was that “the one sent is as the one who sent him.” So here Jesus is granting these 12 men authority --- and is establishing them as representatives of Himself. In Mark 3:14-15 it says that these 12 individuals would “be with Him” and that “He might send them out to preach, and to have power to heal sicknesses and to cast out demons”. While they were not yet ready to lead, they were being prepared specifically by Jesus to take the gospel message to all the world and care for the individuals God would draw. They were being

given a mission and authority. The number “12” was significant, and not arbitrary. Similar to the twelve tribes of Israel, here God was forming a nucleus of leaders that would begin the Church of God, the spiritual Israel.

Mark 3:16-18 – The apostles were:

- Peter (also known as both Simon and Cephas)
- Andrew (Peter’s brother)
- James (one of the Sons of Thunder/Boanerges)
- John (one of the Sons of Thunder/Boanerges)
- Phillip
- Bartholomew (likely also known as Nathanael)
- Matthew (also known as Levi)
- Thomas
- James the son of Alphaeus
- Simon the Canaanite (who was formerly a Zealot)
- Judas the son of James (also known as Thaddeus (Greek name) and Lebbaeus – Matthew 10:3)
- Judas Iscariot

Luke 6:16 - The word “traitor” (NKJV) in Greek carries the idea of “giving forward into another’s [enemy’s] hands” (Strong’s). It can also be translated “betraye”.

Mark 3:19 – After Jesus selected His 12 apostles they left and went to “a house”. This likely was the home of Peter that we have already seen operate in this region as their home base.

Day 782 – THURSDAY: May 28th

Luke 6:17-20, Matthew 5:1-4

Daily Deep Dive:

Luke 6:17 – Having come down from the mountain where after praying through the night He named His 12 apostles, and now standing in a level place, we see “a crowd” consisting of two groups specifically mentioned. A group of disciples (Those who are following and striving to learn from and imitate Jesus) and “a great multitude of people” (emphasized again that they are made up of people from all directions). Many of these people in the multitude are not there to become like Jesus as much as they are there to be healed of their diseases and to have demons removed from their lives.

Luke 6:18-19 – We saw a couple of days ago that people would be pressed all about Jesus, and that He had His disciples keep a boat on the shore to keep Him at times from being crushed. Here we see even more why this was occurring. “The whole multitude sought to touch Him, for power went out from Him and healed them all.” Could you imagine that if you or a loved one had been ill, the great effort you would make to move through the crowd to get to Jesus to “just touch Him.” But everyone else has the same idea, so it’s quite a mob that is trying to get up close to Him.

Matthew 5:1 – Seeing the great crowd, Jesus moved up to some elevated position. The word “mountain” here in the NKJV comes from a root meaning “to rise”. It can certainly mean “mountain”, but can also mean a hill, which seems more likely here. After sitting from this elevated position, His disciples came around Him. Luke 6:20 tells us that “He lifted His eyes up toward His disciples”. His disciples appear to be His primary audience here for what He’s about to say.

Luke 6:20/Matthew 5:2 - So here we are coming up to the beginning of what will be many days’ worth of lessons as we go through what is known as the “Sermon on the Mount”. The teachings contained here represented a sort of fundamentals of Christianity. This was a way of life that Jesus Himself modeled, and therefore expected those who

were His disciples to imitate and practice. It should be noted that Luke records this here immediately after Jesus named His 12 apostles. Now He gives instructions on what it means to truly follow His way!

Matthew 5:2 – This verse specifically states that Jesus “opened His mouth and taught them”. This seems redundant or unnecessary to say, since opening your mouth is a part of speaking. Therefore, that should be a clue for us to stop and ask: “why was this recorded this way?” In the first century this was a meaningful literary expression. This signaled that what was about to follow was important and weighty. This formal expression was used when introducing solemn, authoritative or carefully prepared teaching. This was a way for Matthew to signal: “Pay attention!” Many scholars see parallels between Moses receiving the Law on Mount Sinai and Jesus now bringing that Law to a fuller meaning.

Matthew 5:3 – From verse 3 to 11 we have a section of scripture known as the “Beattitudes”. Each of these verses begin with the Greek word Makarioi (Μακάριοι). This is a very full word, that is not simple to translate into a single word. We should think of it describing someone who is in an “exceptionally favored position”, “privileged”, “honored by God”, and living in a state others would see as desirable. It is not a word about temporary happiness or emotions. In classical Greek, the word was often connected to having a “divine level of blessing” over one’s life. Remember that by this time in the first century, the average Jew was not well versed in Hebrew --- but their understanding of scripture was coming from the Septuagint (Greek Old Testament). This is how they knew scriptures. When the Old Testament was recorded into Greek, they took the Hebrew concept of אֲשְׁרֵי (*ashrei*) meaning “blessed, enviably favored, flourishing” and choose this Greek word as it’s equivalent. For example, in English (NKJV) Psalm 1:1 reads “Blessed is the man” but in Greek it’s ΜΑΚΑΡΙΟΣ ἀνὴρ. My point is they already knew and associated this Greek concept that Jesus is using here with

many Psalms and Proverbs and the Old Testament concept of “covenant blessing”, “divine favor”, “right living (righteousness)” and “living under God’s approval”. Later, when the Bible was translated into Latin, this Greek word “Makaríoi” was translated into the Latin “Beati” (Latin adjective meaning “blessed ones, happy ones, fortunate ones”), which came from the Latin noun “beatitudo”. Eventually this whole section became known by the plural form of that noun “Beatitudines” (English variation “Beatitudes”). This is similar to how we get a number of English theological terms through the Latin, not the Greek (For example, Testament (*Testamentum*), Scripture (*Scriptura*) & Incarnation (*Incarnatio*)).

We should remember that it was the Greek word that was recorded, and they would have heard repeated declarations of “Makaríoi” — a word that carried the idea of someone being in an enviable, favored, deeply blessed condition before God.

What would have stunned the listening audience and those who read these recorded words was not the word itself, but WHO Jesus applied these words to. In the first century ancient world they would have assumed the “blessed” would be the “wealthy, healthy, powerful, honored, influential, etc.” We will see that this is not the group that Jesus shows to be “favored” by God. This is a radical reversal of values. It’s also important to note that the Greek is in the “nominative” form. It describes a current condition. Jesus is not saying “someday they will be blessed”. He is declaring, that “even now, despite whatever the outward appearance or assumption might be, the people who meet these descriptions already exist in a truly favored condition before God.” That’s why many of the Beatitudes include a present tense such as “theirs IS the kingdom”. There are some of these verses that combine this current condition with a future tense verb (for example, “they shall be comforted”). Here still, Jesus is showing a present status that has a future fulfillment. It’s also important to note that the Greek language had other words for emotional happiness or pleasure that could have been used if that was the point --- which of course it was

not. The Greek here captures the ones who “truly have God’s favor” and “approval”.

Much of Jesus’ teachings here have to do with our attitudes, behaviors and character --- not what we look like (what the Pharisees focused on), or what we gain in this life (what the Sadducees focused on). This is still radical today --- as it forces us to truly look deep at who we are and what we are striving for, and to compare that with what God truly wants us to be. I mentioned before that they would have already been well familiar with this concept of “Blessed” from the Old Testament. Below is a list of scriptures compiled by Pastor Scott Ashley where it’s translated “Blessed is/are”. I encourage you to read through these, even if quickly to see the consistency of God’s Word, and what He is truly looking for.

- Psalm 1:1 *Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stands in the path of sinners, Nor sits in the seat of the scornful;*
- Psalm 2:12 *Blessed are all they that put their trust in him.*
- Psalm 32:1 *Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered.*
- Psalm 32:2 *Blessed is the man unto whom the LORD [Eternal] imputes not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile.*
- Psalm 33:12 *Blessed is the nation whose God is the LORD.*
- Psalm 34:8 *Blessed is the man that trusts in Him!*
- Psalm 40:4 *Blessed is that man that makes the LORD his trust,*
- Psalm 41:1 *Blessed is he that considers the poor; ...*
- Psalm 65:4 *Blessed is the man whom You choose ...*
- Psalm 84:4 *Blessed are they that dwell in Your house ...*
- Psalm 84:5 *Blessed is the man whose strength is in You ...*
- Psalm 84:12 *Blessed is the man that trusts in You.*
- Psalm 89:15 *Blessed are the people that know the joyful sound.*

- Psalm 94:12 *Blessed is the man whom You chasten, ... and teachest him out of your law;*
- Psalm 106:3 *Blessed are they that keep judgment, and he that does righteousness at all times.*
- Psalm 112:1 *Blessed is the man that fears the LORD, that delights greatly in His commandments.*
- Psalm 119:1 *Blessed are the undefiled in the way, you walk in the law of the LORD.*
- Psalm 119:2 *Blessed are they that keep His testimonies, and that seek Him with the whole heart.*
- Psalm 127:5 *Happy [or blessed --- again same Hebrew word] is the man that has his quiver full of [children].*
- Psalm 128:1 *Blessed is every one that fears the LORD, that walks in His ways.*
- Psalm 128:2 *Happy [or blessed, again same Hebrew word] shall you be, and it shall be well with you.*
- Psalm 144:15 *Happy [or blessed] is that people whose God is the LORD.*
- Psalm 146:5 *Happy [or blessed] is he that has the God of Jacob for his help, whose hope is in the LORD his God.*
- Proverbs 3:13 *Happy [or blessed] is the man that finds wisdom, and the man that gets understanding.*
- Proverbs 8:32 *Blessed are they that keep my ways.*
- Proverbs 8:34 *Blessed is the man that hears me ...*
- Proverbs 14:21 *He that has mercy on the poor, happy [or blessed] is he.*
- Proverb 16:20 *Whoso trusts in the LORD, happy [or blessed] is he.*
- Proverbs 28:14 *Happy [or blessed] is the man that fears always ...*
- Proverbs 29:18 *He that keeps the law, happy [or blessed] is he.*

Much like the beatitudes Psalms and Proverbs give us instructions on how to live (behavior, attitude and character) in a way that pleases God.

Matthew 5:3 – “Poor in spirit” – In the first century, the Greek for poor (ptōchoi - πτωχοὶ) meant someone destitute, reduced to begging, powerless, utterly lacking resources and therefore dependent on others for even survival. The Greeks had a different word for the working poor (someone who had little, but still worked). In classical usage the image is of a beggar on the ground, not even looking up, but simply with an outstretched hand. Jesus doesn’t merely say “poor financially”, but of their “spirit”. This means something closer to “those who recognize their spiritual poverty/bankruptcy before God”. This is the opposite of “self-righteousness” or “spiritual self-sufficiency” in many ways. This is the group of people God can work with. Though sinners, they have hearts that God can mold, conform and transform. Let’s again consider the contrast Jesus is making to the commonly held views. It was not the wealthy, those with status, the religious elite, those who thought they were doing just fine on their own that God favored. God favored, blessed, was pleased with, those who knew they were spiritually bankrupt and dependent completely on Him! Utterly dependent! What is their reward? The kingdom of God (often in Matthew referred to as “kingdom of heaven”). This is the kind of people God has called to become a part of His Family. In a world that pushes status, wealth, image, etc. as what’s both desirable and the definition of “success”, we must learn to retrain our minds, through God’s Spirit, to see as God sees, and to seek and align with what He truly wants us to become.

Before we move on to the next Beatitude, I want us to consider how this sermon of Jesus Christ would frame not only how we are to live, but how He WAS living and would CONTINUE to live. He modeled each of these for us. And so to fully evaluate this sermon is to fully evaluate

His life. Now, unlike us, Jesus wasn't a sinner. He was however fully reliant on His Father. He was the very opposite of being "self-righteous". While He was the Son of God, the Messiah understood scripture fully and completely, was God in identity, the ultimate authority under God the Father, He served others, cared for the overlooked, and poured Himself out as the ultimate offering/sacrifice, even while being humiliated, abused and tortured. Pride never got the best of Him. He embodied what it means to be poor in spirit.

Matthew 5:4 – "Those who mourn" – In the Greek, *penthountes* (πενθοῦντες). This form of the word is the "present active participle nominative". The present participle form describes an ongoing condition or state. They are "mourning". This word in Greek was one of the strongest words for grief and mourning. It was commonly used for grieving/mourning the death of a loved one. It was deep and often visible grief/mourning. In Jewish thought, mourning also had strong covenant and spiritual connections and aspects, such as exile, sin, oppression, national corruption and an impacted relationship with God. We consistently see God's prophets as mourning/grieving over the spiritual state of God's people.

What kind of mourning/grieving was Jesus demonstrating and teaching us to do? One way would be that of sin, in the world and in our lives. Sin goes against God's holy and perfect law and way. Sin causes pain, dysfunction, broken relationships, oppression, suffering and ultimately death. Looking around in this world we see injustice, suffering, corruption and a lack of hope. Therefore, to see sin in this world should move us to mourn over the destruction it leaves behind—not only in society, families and nations, but also within our own hearts. Jesus was not teaching a shallow sadness or negative outlook on life, but a deep spiritual grief that recognizes how far mankind has drifted from God and how much suffering rebellion against Him has produced. This kind of mourning leads a person toward repentance, humility and a longing

for righteousness. It is the sorrow of those who love God enough to grieve over what sin has done to His creation and to mankind's relationship with Him.

Jesus, of course, did not sin Himself. Yet He was very aware of all that sin had done to His world and His creation, and the personal cost that it carried for Himself and His Father. The idea of sin is becoming "taboo" -- and is increasingly treated as outdated, judgmental or even offensive. Rather than viewing behaviors through the lens of God's standards, society often redefines sin as merely personal preference, emotional struggle or social disagreement. Yet when mankind stops recognizing sin for what it is, we also lose the ability to understand why our world is filled with so much pain, confusion, brokenness and suffering --- and what the solution to these problems truly is: Jesus Christ and the Kingdom of God! The promise to individuals who have and keep this mindset is that they "shall be comforted". Comfort is not shallow reassurance. Here in the Greek it's the word *paraklēthēsontai* (παρακληθήσονται). This word comes from a word you might recognize: *parakaleō* (παρακαλέω). This word and its variations (word family) are important Greek biblical words. Jesus calls the Holy Spirit the *Paraklētos* (παράκλητος). At its root, this word means "to call alongside" (especially in a time of need). It contains developed meanings such as comfort, encouragement, help, and consolation. I dove into this word family, its legal roots, and its meaning for our daily lives of walking alongside each other, in a sermon entitled "Becoming Sons and Daughters of Encouragement".

<https://www.ucg.org/sermons/becoming-sons-and-daughters-encouragement>

The meaning in this scripture is of someone else coming alongside those mourn to provide the encouragement, comfort and consolation. God's Word gives us hope because we understand God's plan for this broken world. God's Holy Spirit is used by God to provide us encouragement and comfort. God's Spirit brings scriptures to our

remembrance, it prompts others to call us and us to be there for others. But even more than what occurs during this lifetime, this scripture points us to the future --- they “shall be comforted”. God’s promised restoration is coming. God will bring about forgiveness after repentance; restoration after suffering; and ultimately, peace. We as firstfruits of God have access to this at some level now, but it’s only a foretaste of the full comfort, encouragement, restoration and peace that will come during the Kingdom of God.

Those who grieve/mourn over sin, suffering due to the separation sin causes, are truly “blessed/favored” --- because ultimately God Himself will come alongside (come near) to console, strengthen and restore them!

Day 783 – FRIDAY: May 29th

Preparation Day

Day 784 – SATURDAY: May 30th

Sabbath

