

ST. MATTHEW

The Gospel according to

8

INTRODUCTION

Why do I need Jesus, anyway?

There are a lot of reasons people come to church. It may be they're looking for friends, warmth, friendliness, food, a career network, to feel good, or a host of other reasons. The church can offer all of these things. But these are not the central reason for the church.

As Jesus' popularity peaked with the feeding of the 5,000, he had to confront this question with the crowds that were following him. Were they coming for the food, or for the forgiveness? As Jesus became more and more pointed in instructing people why he had really come, those disinterested in the things of God started to fall by the wayside.

STARTING DOWN THE LONG ROAD TO JERUSALEM

Read Matthew 16:13-28

What question did Jesus ask his disciples? Why did he ask them this?

What was Peter's confession?

Jesus' words to Peter have been variously interpreted throughout the ages. What is the rock on which Jesus' church is built? (For Peter's own understanding, see **1 Peter 2:4-8**.)

What new information did Jesus begin to share with his disciples? What kind of reaction did this news generate?

Write your definition of "the Good News" (the gospel):

Why did Peter respond as he did to Jesus' words? Why did Jesus reply so strongly to Peter?

How does Jesus' description of discipleship in Matthew 16:24-28 compare with your own experience?

Read Matthew 17:1-13

What was the purpose of the transfiguration?

Why did Peter want to stay and build shelters on the mountain?

What lessons can we learn from the transfiguration?

Read Matthew 17:14-27

Why could Jesus' disciples not heal the demon-possessed boy?

Discuss: Jesus speaks about the importance of having a strong faith. What is faith? What is the object of faith? Why is faith without an object just an opinion?

Read Matthew 18:1-14

Why does Jesus hold up the example of a little child as the “greatest in the kingdom of heaven”?

Jesus uses some very powerful language in verses 5-9. Should we take his instructions literally? Or is there a powerful point that he is pressing home? How can we tell how we are to take these words?

How do you evaluate other people? How is your way of evaluating other people different from the way Jesus evaluates them?

VERSE TO REMEMBER

Matthew 16:26 *What good will it be for a man if he gains the whole world, yet forfeits his soul? Or what can a man give in exchange for his soul?*

For next time read Matthew chapters 18-20.