



Faith Formation Open Bible Study Lenten Series

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PREFACE

“Following the Leader” is the theme for a series of six weekly Bible Studies that will take place during Open Bible Study during the Lenten Season, meeting each Sunday, February 26 through April 2, 2023, between 9:30 – 10:30 a.m. The sessions take place in Room MLK 330 at the church and via ZOOM. To participate via ZOOM, online, be sure to register to receive the ZOOM join link at:

https://theriversidechurch.formstack.com/forms/open_bible_study_small_group_registration

Rev. Adriene Thorne’s call to “follow the leader” comes at a time when there are signs that our country seems to be experiencing a crisis in leadership. One of these signs is the sharp differences along ideological lines among government officials, in the wake of the recent midterm election. For example, in the House of Representatives, the balance of power has shifted to favor the Republican majority vs. the Democrats, which will likely mean changes in leadership of key committees where decisions involving social justice will be brought to the floor of the House of Representatives, for debate. The leadership of such committees is shifting from Democratic to Republican control and the likely shifts in political and social justice views are likely to become even more apparent than before.

Most interesting is the recent Pew Center research that shows that voting that placed these leaders in power, are similar but not always parallel to those of Americans at large. – on issues from Roe vs. Wade to Gun Control legislation. Moreover, Pew Center research also shows collections of churches labeling themselves as Christian are also

divided in their beliefs about how interpretations of the Bible should impact governmental decisions, particularly those that have a social justice outcome.

Within this context, most alarming for Progressive Christians is the daily news coverage that seems to give a disproportionate amount of space to former President Donald Trump and his contingent as they seem to define and represent the face of Christianity in America today. More alarming yet is the Pew Center research reports that shows the next generations of Americans withdrawing from churches altogether, possibly reacting to the above representation of American Christianity. Pew research shows that, to the extent that current trends continue, by 2070, “non-affiliated” Americans will comprise the majority of Americans. It is within this context that Rev. Adriene Thorne, Senior Minister of the Riverside Church, New York, calls us into a Lenten Season of reflection on what it means to follow Jesus Christ, as leader.

THE RIVERSIDE CHURCH

The Riverside Church is the context in which the current Lenten study takes place. Riverside passed through its birth canal on the heels of the Progressive Era of 1896–1916. It experienced its infancy over the course of World War I, and its young adulthood progressed as the country marched toward World War II. However, added to the world wars were other battles, traceable to pre-existing controversies dating back as far as the Industrial Revolution of the mid-1800's. In the environment were “great divides” taking place over whether and/or how to protect those who were marginalized as the agrarian economies urbanized. On the one hand, Progressives fought for the applications of new developments in science and technology, and they also pressured the government to protect those who were negatively impacted by transformations of society. By the time that Riverside was born, these tensions had reached the doorsteps of Christianity and

battle lines between Fundamentalists and Progressives had formed. Eventually they involved conflicting interpretations of the Bible and the extent to which the Church should involve itself with Social Justice Movements. The story of Riverside illustrates how Riverside has attempted to answer such questions, over the course of the 20th and 21st centuries. Some of those same themes will resurface in the discussions of the passages from the Gospel of Matthew that are covered in this six week study.

FACILITATORS

Lakeisha Aquino is the software and platform marketing lead at Accenture. Her background includes having served as global inclusion and marketing lead, senior marketing and manager, assistant, brand manager and owner and founder of the Blackout Group. She serves as a board member of WE ACT for Environmental Justice, and serves on the Church Council and is an Open Bible Study Facilitator at The Riverside Church in New York.

Rev. Dr. Colleen Birchett serves as Minister of Curriculum Development at The Riverside Church in New York. She teaches English Composition and Literature at New York City College of Technology. She is the author of *Family Ties*, *Restoring Unity in the African American Family*, *Africans Who Shaped Our Faith*, with Rev. Dr. Jeremiah Wright, pastor emeritus of Trinity United Church of Christ, along with a number of other books that have been used in church-based Bible study classes.

Dr. Abosede George is a historian of modern Africa. She is a professor on the faculty of Barnard College and Columbia University. She teaches courses on African urban history, the history of childhood and youth in Africa, women, gender and sexuality in African history and African migrations since the mid 20th century. Her book, *Making Modern Girl: A History of Girlhood, Labor and Social Development* received the Aidoo-Snyder Book Prize in 2015 from the Women's Caucus of the American Studies Association.

Rev. Jonathan Favors-Grimes is the founder and pastor of Olive Tree Community in Atlanta, Georgia. The major focus of the church is doing micro-intentional church community. The community is multicultural, multi-ethnic and multi-generational, and has several ministries, including: “That’ll Preach Podcast” and “Holy Leave and Life Recipes”. The community meets bi-weekly for prayer, study and worship.

Rev. Dr. Robert Paul Hartley is an applied microeconomist working in the fields of labor and public economics. His research addresses the role of social policy on the persistence of poverty and program participation. Rob is an assistant professor at the Columbia School of Social Work and is affiliated with the Center on Poverty and Social Policy and the Columbia Population Research Center. He holds a Ph.D. in economics from the University of Kentucky as well as an M.Div. from Emmanuel School of Religion.

THE LENTEN BIBLE STUDY SERIES

In this six-week study, Open Bible Study at The Riverside Church focuses on the theme of following Jesus, as presented in six passages of the Gospel of Matthew. Each week, we study Jesus within a historical context of divided leadership, that surrounded emerging Christianity at Antioch – within the Jewish Community, and within the emerging Christian community itself. They confronted the concept of leadership outside and within. The central questions that guide the study are: How do we follow Jesus, within such a context – within our community, within our church and within our personal lives? How does Jesus become our model?

The Bible Study takes place within this year’s six-week season of Lent, as it is practiced within the context of the combined American Baptist Convention and the United Church of Christ. The

National Executive Council has encouraged all American Baptists “to embrace the upcoming Lenten Season in order to draw close to our Lord, and to pray for our neighbors near and far.” In the United Church of Christ, “For six and one half weeks, Christians around the world will prepare themselves spiritually for the celebration of their highest Holy Day: Easter. Many of them will make personal sacrifices, focusing through these long days on the sacrifices Jesus made as he set his face toward Jerusalem. For more on Lent itself, see the Introduction.”

The Bible Study will take place in hybrid format. That is, it is possible to participate in person or on-line. It will meet for six weeks, as a unit of Open Bible Study, a small group study that meets every week at The Riverside Church throughout the year, between 9:30 – 10:30 am. To participate online, see the registration link above, below the first paragraph.

THE STUDENT AND FACILITATOR GUIDE

This guide can be used by both students and facilitators. A list of suggested resources for facilitators can be found in the appendix. The Introduction contains an overview of the context and content of the Gospel of Matthew, and the Matthean community. The remainder of the guide contains six weekly discussion guides, each containing background information, summaries, reflections and resources for further study.

INTRODUCTION

THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW

The Gospel of Matthew is similar to the Gospels of Mark and Luke, but it is very different in many respects, both in content and organization. If the content in these three Gospels is displayed in chart form, they can almost be “seen together”, and therefore are called the “synoptic” Gospels. In Matthew alone, the organizational principle is unique. That is, most of the content is organized so that it alternates between five blocks of stories with related discussions (discourses) in between. The “action” of Matthew moves from Galilee to Jerusalem and back, with Jesus’ appearances after the resurrection occurring in Galilee. The content is divided as follows:

- Prologue: Genealogy, Nativity and Infancy [Matthew 1-2]
- Narrative ONE and Sermon on the Mount [Matthew 3:1-8:1]
- Narrative TWO and Discourse [Matthew 8:2-11:1]
- Narrative THREE and Discourse [Matthew 11:2–13:53]
- Narrative FOUR and Discourse [Matthew 13:54-19:1]
- Narrative FIVE and Discourse [Matthew 19:2-26:1]
- Conclusion: Passion, Resurrection, and Great Commission [Matthew 26:2-28:20]

Of the passages to be studied in this year’s Open Bible Study Lenten Series, the first week’s is from the Fourth Narrative and related Discourse while the remaining five all come from the Fifth Narrative and related Discourse.

The author of the Gospel of Matthew, whose identity is unknown, crafts storylines which show Jesus, His family and His disciples living their lives against a backdrop of the ever-present Roman Empire. There is conflict on many levels – political, theological, economic and physical. On the surface, a struggle appears to be taking place between a Jewish establishment and what will eventuate in the birth of

Christianity. However, that reading is misleading, with the real contest being between Jesus, His disciples and the forces of Empire – in the shadow of Herod, Pilate, the Roman military, making their presence known through Roman Power, off stage, masquerading in the form of Herod (Matt 2), Antipas (Matt 14), Vespasian (Matt 17) Caesar (Matt 22), Pilate (Matt 27), taxes and terror.

Rome's terror was rooted in a theology that said that Rome ruled because of the will of the gods. In other words, Rome was an agent of the gods, destined to rule the world in the name of Jupiter. The Gospel of Matthew challenges those assumptions, however. It presents images of an alternative reality. The storyline projects a counter narrative, an alternative reality where God's kingdom, with God's authority will rule. A Reality is present that goes beyond what natural eyes can see, and invites the reader to follow the real leader, Jesus of Nazareth, Son of God. The Gospel of Matthew introduces the reader to an alternative world view, an alternative reality. The crucifixion is not the end; it is only the beginning. It is that story and so many others that provide the energy that the Matthean Community needs in its quest for leadership and direction, there, at Antioch, near the end of the first 1st century, as they attempt to begin again.

THE MATTHEAN COMMUNITY

The actual identity of the “this worldly” author of the Gospel of Matthew remains unknown. However, there is a general consensus among most biblical scholars that the author's most likely residence was in Antioch, Syria, during the closing decades of the first century. He or she likely lived in a “hub” now known as “The Matthean Community”. It was a community that had been formed by migrants from throughout the known world at that time. They were part of the recurring cycles of mass migration

that could be traced back through thousands of years.. If asked, most people could trace their ancestry to any one of what Norman Gottwald has called the original twelve “Tribes of Yahweh”, remnants of whom had been settling in various parts of the world since what would have been time immemorial. The cycle would have been familiar, following each of their previous encounters with the Empires. Likely most painful of all would have been the destruction of one Temple after another, forcing them, eventually, to meet in synagogues -- all over their known world of the time.

As it had been at so many previous junctures, the Jewish community was growing in its diversity and, once again, it was fragmenting, along theological, class and ethnic lines. However, they were also divided over the question of who, or which faction, should lead. It was in the midst of this struggle, that the Christian faction began to collect stories such as those in the Gospel of Matthew and to move toward establishing a new community, based on their collective memories of the teachings of Jesus. Of course, if there was to be any hope of starting again, it would involve being willing to follow God’s chosen leader. Eventually, those stories and their related discourses, collected and compiled by “Matthew”, eventually became the Gospel of Matthew and was translated into the many languages in which we know it today.

THE LENTEN BIBLE STUDY

This year, Open Bible Study at The Riverside Church focuses on sections of the Gospel of Matthew known as the Fourth and Fifth Narratives and their related Discourses (mentioned above). Rev. Adriene Thorne, Senior Minister, sets out the theme, as follows:

“The childhood game of “Follow the Leader” invites players to mimic the actions of a designated leader, to watch closely and do what they do in order to win. As disciples of

Christ, we, too, are invited to Follow the Leader—to watch and mirror the spiritual practices and commitments of Jesus. While this is not a game we “win,” it is a daily challenge to enter deeper into the heart of worship, community, and prayer. During this Lenten season, we will focus on Following the Leader, as we journey with Jesus on the road of love and justice, on the way from death to new life. In a culture where authority is too often abused and power is misused, let us deepen our commitment to following the Crucified Christ, the One True Authority.” [Rev. Adriene Thorne]

As portrayed on the pages of Matthew’s Gospel, Jesus and the first and early generations of His followers assumed and attempted to follow leadership within a turbulent world, not unlike the world surrounding the Christian Church in America today. This study will draw parallels and make applications from yesterday to today, as we, like they, take steps to chart the path for the current and future Progressive Church in America and the world.

LITERARY CONTEXT

As mentioned above, this year’s study begins with stories and related discourses from the section of the Gospel of Matthew known as the Fourth and Fifth Discourses with their related narratives. Prior to this section, within the Prologue and first three narratives.

The identity and concept of Jesus as leader is introduced with His earthly genealogy, and virgin birth. The prologue and infancy narrative provide images of the divided world, in need of leadership, into which He was born. (Matthew 1-2). They include the massacre of the innocents, His genealogy, and miraculous events that surrounded his entrance.

Also underscoring Jesus as Divine Leader, are stories of His baptism by John the Baptist, the Holy Spirit descending upon Him, His victory over Satan in the Wilderness,

His teachings and His performances of miracles throughout Galilee, He commissions and trains His disciples, and the reactions of the crowds.

The world surrounding Jesus and His disciples was a fractured and contentious world, from which came accusations that Jesus' deeds were powered by Satan. Within that context, Jesus used parables to illustrate God's sovereignty. He instructs the Disciples to respond to His teachings like scribes in the Kingdom of Heaven.

WEEK ONE

FORGIVENESS

Matthew 18:15

¹⁵“If your brother or sister sins against you,^[a] go and point out the fault when the two of you are alone. If you are listened to, you have regained that one.” [NRSVUE]

[Read full chapter](#)

OVERVIEW

In this section, Peter acknowledges Jesus as “the Christ, the son of the Living God”. Jesus then states that it is upon that rock that Jesus’ Church is to be built. (Matthew 13:54-19:1). It is also within this section of the fourth narrative and discourse, that Jesus continues teaching about the Kingdom of God and His role as leader.

CONTEXT

Jesus’ teachings on forgiveness are given within a context in which it became clear that growing opposition to Jesus could likely result in His crucifixion. However, it is also a context in which He teaches followers basic principles of living together, building the “Kingdom” on earth, seeing that they would need a loving and supportive community, to undergird their mission.

Near the end of the 1st Century CE, the Matthean Community that produced this Gospel was also within a hostile political context within their religious community – a context in which they were deciding whether to separate from the local Jewish Synagogues. Once again, their Temple had been destroyed (70 A.D.). In today’s passage, they recall the teachings of Jesus on the necessity of living together in harmony order to build a cohesive community, equipped for the battle ahead.

Click Below

[COMMENTARY](#)

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- What seems to be the central message that is conveyed through this text? How is it conveyed?
- Read the entire chapter in which today's passage is set. Reflect on the setting in which the action takes place. If you could enter the setting as one of the characters in it, which character would you select and why? As that character, how might you respond to what is said?
- How might the message of this text be applied within the 21st century?
- How might it apply to your personal life?
- What do you find most interesting about Warren Carter's Commentary, and why?

Q & A For your convenience, feel free to briefly note your responses to the above questions as reflection journal in the "Notes" section of the appendix. Feel free to share them during the Q & A sharing section this week.

WEEK TWO

LABORERS IN THE VINEYARD

Matthew 20: 4-16

⁴...and he said to them, 'You also go into the vineyard, and I will pay you whatever is right.' So they went.

⁵When he went out again about noon and about three o'clock, he did the same.

⁶And about five o'clock he went out and found others standing around, and he said to them, 'Why are you standing here idle all day?'

⁷They said to him, 'Because no one has hired us.' He said to them, 'You also go into the vineyard.'

⁸When evening came, the owner of the vineyard said to his manager, 'Call the laborers and give them their pay, beginning with the last and then going to the first.'

⁹When those hired about five o'clock came, each of them received a denarius.

¹⁰Now when the first came, they thought they would receive more; but each of them also received a denarius.

¹¹And when they received it, they grumbled against the landowner,

¹²saying, 'These last worked only one hour, and you have made them equal to us who have borne the burden of the day and the scorching heat.'

¹³But he replied to one of them, 'Friend, I am doing you no wrong; did you not agree with me for a denarius?'

¹⁴Take what belongs to you and go; I choose to give to this last the same as I give to you.

¹⁵Am I not allowed to do what I choose with what belongs to me? Or are you envious because I am generous?'^[a]

¹⁶So the last will be first, and the first will be last." [NRSVUE] [Read full chapter](#)

OVERVIEW

Day laborers, obviously without union contracts as we know them today, go to work for an owner of a vineyard. They work for different amounts of time, but all get the same wage. When the fairness of this is questioned, the owner of the vineyard essentially responds that he can do whatever he wishes, based on whatever logic he wishes to use.

CONTEXT

This short story, or “parable” is part of a collection of stories Jesus uses to illustrate moral principles for living together in Christian community. However, it also reflects working conditions that so many of Jesus’ followers endured as fallouts from the ever-present oppression from the Roman Empire. – without labor unions to fight for their rights. The parable also illustrates the opposition of older, more settled leader “workers” who resented newer leaders, such as Jesus, who had not yet “paid their dues”.

The parable also mirrors everyday realities of some members of the Matthean community who were farmers, day laborers and often slaves. Conflicts arising from their interaction outside the workplace had the potential of becoming a basis for division within.

[COMMENTARY](#)

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WEEK THREE

THE WEDDING BANQUET

Matthew 22:1-14

22 Once more Jesus spoke to them in parables, saying:

²“The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who gave a wedding banquet for his son.

³He sent his slaves to call those who had been invited to the wedding banquet, but they would not come.

⁴Again he sent other slaves, saying, ‘Tell those who have been invited: Look, I have prepared my dinner, my oxen and my fat calves have been slaughtered, and everything is ready; come to the wedding banquet.’

⁵But they made light of it and went away, one to his farm, another to his business,

⁶while the rest seized his slaves, mistreated them, and killed them.

⁷The king was enraged. He sent his troops, destroyed those murderers, and burned their city.

⁸Then he said to his slaves, ‘The wedding is ready, but those invited were not worthy.

⁹Go therefore into the main streets, and invite everyone you find to the wedding banquet.’

¹⁰Those slaves went out into the streets and gathered all whom they found, both good and bad, so the wedding hall was filled with guests.

¹¹“But when the king came in to see the guests, he noticed a man there who was not wearing a wedding robe,

¹²and he said to him, ‘Friend, how did you get in here without a wedding robe?’ And he was speechless.

¹³Then the king said to the attendants, ‘Bind him hand and foot, and throw him into the outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.’

¹⁴For many are called, but few are chosen.” [NRSVUE] [Read full chapter](#)

OVERVIEW

People responded to a king's invitation to a banquet differently. Some ignored it, not regard it with the respect that it should have been given. At least one came dressed inappropriately, also demonstrating disrespect. The King then responded with outrage, and eventually opened the banquet to anyone who answered the call.

CONTEXT

In this section of the Fifth Narrative and related Discourse, Jesus is teaching while continuing His movement toward Jerusalem, where He will be disrespected by the leaders of the Temple, by their trader, and by other religious leaders. He teaches in the Temple, and debates with the chief priests and religious leaders, emphasizing the failures of the chief priests and the Pharisees. Jesus teaches through parables such as this one, how people were responding inappropriately to Jesus' leadership. The Jewish establishment that would later surround the Matthean community would also not respond to God's message of Jesus as Leader. Therefore, God had extended the invitation to include the Gentiles.

Click Below:

[COMMENTARY](#)

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- What seems to be the central message that is conveyed through this text? How is it conveyed?
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Q & A For your convenience, feel free to briefly note your responses to the above questions, in the "Notes" section of the appendix. Feel free to share them during the Q & A sharing section this week.

WEEK FOUR

THE BRIDESMAIDS

Matthew 25:1-13

25 “Then the kingdom of heaven will be like this. Ten young women^[a] took their lamps and went to meet the bridegroom.^[b]

² Five of them were foolish, and five were wise.

³ When the foolish took their lamps, they took no oil with them,

⁴ but the wise took flasks of oil with their lamps.

⁵ As the bridegroom was delayed, all of them became drowsy and slept.

⁶ But at midnight there was a shout, ‘Look! Here is the bridegroom! Come out to meet him.’

⁷ Then all those young women^[c] got up and trimmed their lamps.

⁸ The foolish said to the wise, ‘Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out.’

⁹ But the wise replied, ‘No! there will not be enough for you and for us; you had better go to the dealers and buy some for yourselves.’

¹⁰ And while they went to buy it, the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went with him into the wedding banquet, and the door was shut.

¹¹ Later the other young women^[d] came also, saying, ‘Lord, lord, open to us.’

¹² But he replied, ‘Truly I tell you, I do not know you.’

¹³ Keep awake, therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour.^[e]

OVERVIEW

Jesus again uses a parable to illustrate differences in how people responded to the coming of God’s kingdom on earth. Some treat it with respect, by adequately preparing for it. Others allow themselves to be underprepared and therefore are not allowed to enter it. The bridesmaids exemplify these different types of reactions.

CONTEXT

Like the under-prepared bridesmaids, neither the Jewish nor the Roman establishment of the time was prepared for Jesus. They did not show Him the respect appropriate for the Son of God. They were not prepared for

Him. There is a question as to whether the Matthean Jewish Christians, near the end of the 1st Century, and the leaders of their Synagogues were prepared for a future coming of God's "Kindom" on earth.

Click Below:

[COMMENTARY](#)

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

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Q & A For your convenience, feel free to briefly note your responses to the above questions, using the reflection journal in the "Notes" section of the appendix, to share them during the Q & A sharing section each week.

WEEK FIVE

THE JUDGMENT

Matthew 25: 31 – 46

³¹ “When the Son of Man comes in his glory and all the angels with him, then he will sit on the throne of his glory.

³² All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats,

³³ and he will put the sheep at his right hand and the goats at the left.

³⁴ Then the king will say to those at his right hand, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world,

³⁵ for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me,

³⁶ I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me.’

³⁷ Then the righteous will answer him, ‘Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry and gave you food or thirsty and gave you something to drink?

³⁸ And when was it that we saw you a stranger and welcomed you or naked and gave you clothing?

³⁹ And when was it that we saw you sick or in prison and visited you?’

⁴⁰ And the king will answer them, ‘Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did it to me.’

⁴¹ Then he will say to those at his left hand, ‘You who are accursed, depart from me into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels,

⁴² for I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink,

⁴³ I was a stranger and you did not welcome me, naked and you did not give me clothing, sick and in prison and you did not visit me.’

⁴⁴ Then they also will answer, ‘Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison and did not take care of you?’

⁴⁵ Then he will answer them, ‘Truly I tell you, just as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me.’

⁴⁶ And these will go away into eternal punishment but the righteous into eternal life.”

[Read full chapter](#)

OVERVIEW

In this parable, Jesus is with the poor, in Galilee. He focuses on leadership. In doing so, He separate the “goats” from the “sheep” on the basis of their attitudes and responses to the needs of the poor. Jesus the King sends the selfish into eternal punishment and the righteous into eternal life.

CONTEXT

Both the community that surrounded Jesus, and the one that surrounded the Matthean community near the end of the 1st Century were from economically diverse circumstances. However, the numbers who were poor vastly outnumbered those who were rich. Those who were not concerned about the poor vastly outnumbered those who did. The Gospel of Matthew conveys images of Jesus among the poor and feeding them and commenting about their circumstances, underscoring the future of those who did not care about the poor.

Click Below.

[COMMENTARY](#)

REFLECTION QUESTIONS AND Q &A

- What seems to be the central message that is conveyed through this text? How is it conveyed?
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WEEK SIX

THE TRIUMPHANT ENTRY INTO JERUSALEM

Matthew 21: 1-17

21 When they had come near Jerusalem and had reached Bethphage, at the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two disciples,

² saying to them, “Go into the village ahead of you, and immediately you will find a donkey tied and a colt with her; untie them and bring them to me.

³ If anyone says anything to you, just say this, ‘The Lord needs them.’ And he will send them immediately.”^[a]

⁴ This took place to fulfill what had been spoken through the prophet:

⁵ “Tell the daughter of Zion,
Look, your king is coming to you,
humble and mounted on a donkey,
and on a colt, the foal of a donkey.”

⁶ The disciples went and did as Jesus had directed them;

⁷ they brought the donkey and the colt and put their cloaks on them, and he sat on them.

⁸ A very large crowd^[b] spread their cloaks on the road, and others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road.

⁹ The crowds that went ahead of him and that followed were shouting,

“Hosanna to the Son of David!
Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord!
Hosanna in the highest heaven!”

¹⁰ When he entered Jerusalem, the whole city was in turmoil, asking, “Who is this?”

¹¹ The crowds were saying, “This is the prophet Jesus from Nazareth in Galilee.”

Jesus Cleanses the Temple

¹² Then Jesus entered the temple^[c] and drove out all who were selling and buying in the temple, and he overturned the tables of the money changers and the seats of those who sold doves.

¹³ He said to them, “It is written,

‘My house shall be called a house of prayer,’
but you are making it a den of robbers.”

¹⁴ The blind and the lame came to him in the temple, and he cured them.

¹⁵ But when the chief priests and the scribes saw the amazing things that he did and heard^[d] the children crying out in the temple and saying, “Hosanna to the Son of David,” they became angry

¹⁶ and said to him, “Do you hear what these are saying?” Jesus said to them, “Yes; have you never read,

‘Out of the mouths of infants and nursing babies
you have prepared praise for yourself’?”

¹⁷ He left them, went out of the city to Bethany, and spent the night there. [NRSVUE]

[Read full chapter](#)

CONTEXT

The image of Jesus riding into Jerusalem on a donkey is in stark contrast to images of Roman emperors in their regalia, making similar trips. Yet Jesus is followed by huge crowds following Him in a wild frenzy. Then are even images of children, shouting “Hosanna to the Son of David”. This scene is followed by one in Jesus overturns the tables of the money changers and thieves within the Temple. The word “anger” is hardly adequate to describe the reaction he got from the Temple officials.

These are some of the stories that “Matthew” and his Matthean community, in the closing decades of the 1st century, reflected upon as they contemplated their place in the highly conflicted environment of Antioch, and still in the wake of the destruction of the Temple, back in 70 CE.

[COMMENTARY](#)

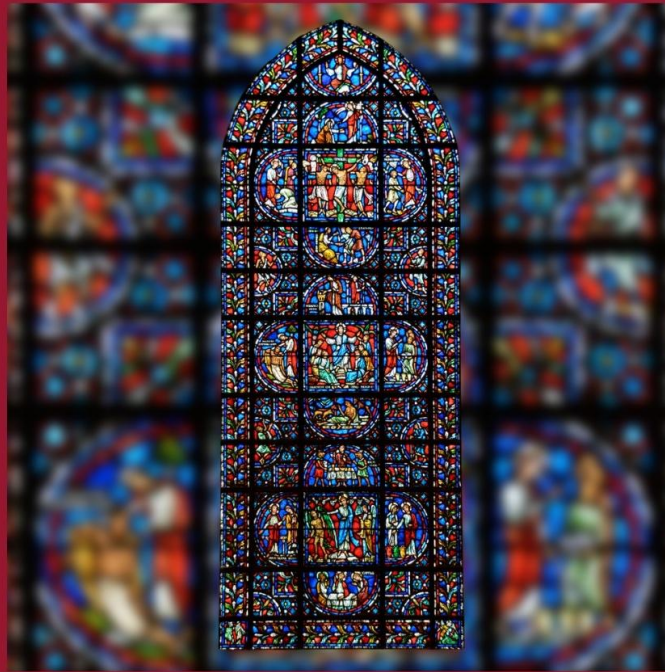
REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- What seems to be the central message that is conveyed through this text? How is it conveyed?

- Read the entire chapter in which today's passage is set. Reflect on the settings in which the actions take place. If you could enter one of these scenes, and become one of the characters in it, which character would you select and why? As that character, how might you experience and respond to what took place and to what is said?
- How might the message of this text be applied within a 21st century?
- How might it apply to your personal life?
- What do you find most interesting about Warren Carter's Commentary, and why?

Q & A For your convenience, feel free to briefly note your responses to the above questions, using the "Notes" section of the appendix. Feel free to share your thoughts during the Q & A sharing section each week.

NOTES



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