

JESUS CHRIST

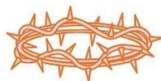
MATTHEW 17-22



TEACHER



SAVIOUR



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DATE	BIBLE	DATE	BIBLE
13-19 Feb	Matt 18:15-35	13-19 Mar	Grow: No Small Group
20-26 Feb	Matt 19:1-12	20-26 Mar	Choose your own
27 Feb-5 Mar	Matt 19:13-30	27 Mar-2 Apr	Matt 22:1-14
6-12 Mar	Matt 20:1-16	3-9 Apr	Matt 27:11-26, 28:1-15

USING THESE NOTES

LCOMA: These notes use a bible reading approach called LCOMA.

Launch: This introduces the topic you'll unpack & gets everyone talking.

Context: This is about seeing how this passage fits in the book. What must we know from context to understand this piece properly?

Observe: This is about getting an overview of what the passage says.

Meaning: This is about deciding what big idea/s the author is explaining, what does it mean and why does it matter.

Apply: This is about reflecting on how the passage impacts your life – your head (beliefs), heart (emotions) and hands (actions).

A New Code: We're introducing a new symbol-based code to help you easily work out which questions might best suit your Small Group.

→ **Simpler:** questions with this arrow symbol → trace 1 idea through a passage. So they're great if you have time pressures, less mature Christians in your group, or just want to unpack and apply 1 big idea.

++ **Bonus:** questions with this plus symbol ++ fill-in the picture more. So they're great if you want to dig deeper or explore a few extra ideas. You don't need to ask every bonus question; just pick the best ones.

The Goal: Remember, the purpose of a bible discussion is... to discuss the bible. It's not to ask every question in the notes and tick them all off. These notes will help you dig into the bible but don't let them get in the way of the actual goal – wrestling with the bible together, loving it and living it out.

MATTHEW OVERVIEW

Who wrote this book?

Although there's no statement in Matthew's gospel itself about who wrote it (unlike Luke's gospel for e.g.) early Christian tradition unanimously agrees that it was Matthew – not just any Matthew, but the former tax collector who left everything to follow Jesus (Matt 9:9-13)...

As Jesus went on from there, he saw a man named Matthew sitting at the tax collector's booth. "Follow me," he told him, and Matthew got up and followed him. While Jesus was having dinner at Matthew's house, many tax collectors and sinners came and ate with him and his disciples. When the Pharisees saw this, they asked his disciples, "Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?" On hearing this, Jesus said, "It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. But go and learn what this means: 'I desire mercy, not sacrifice.' For I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners."

His name was Levi but Jesus changed it to Matthew which means 'gift of God'. Matthew probably wrote his book somewhere between 50-70 AD.

What's the purpose of this book?

This might feel like an odd question – surely the purpose of a gospel is to teach us about Jesus! Luke and John though tell us the reason they wrote their gospels – for Luke: so believing Gentiles like Theophilus '*may know the certainty of the things you have been taught*' (Luke 1:4); for John: '*these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name*' (John 20:31).

Matthew doesn't give us a clear statement like that about why he wrote his account of Jesus' teaching, life, death and resurrection. His purpose shines through as we see the biggest themes in the book though.

1. **Who is Jesus:** there's so many titles and descriptions of Jesus in this book. He's the Messiah / Christ, Immanuel (God incarnate with his people), the Son of God, King of Israel, Son of Man, Suffering Servant, Head of the Church, Lord of the universe.
2. **Fulfilment:** Jesus is the fulfilment of OT prophecy, expectations and even the Law itself. Matthew regularly writes things like this:

'All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet' (1:22). Jesus agrees: *'Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them'* (5:17). God had spoken and made promises to His people in the past. Centuries later, Jesus arrives to fulfil all those promises.

3. ***Jews and Gentiles:*** Jesus is the end-point of all Ancient Israel's salvation hopes, but in Jesus salvation is now available to Gentiles too - notice the difference between this statement: *'these twelve Jesus sent out with the following instructions: "Do not go among the Gentiles or enter any town of the Samaritans. Go rather to the lost sheep of Israel. As you go, proclaim this message: The kingdom of heaven has come near"'* (10:5-7) – and this statement: *"All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations"* (28:18-19). Though Jesus comes to Israel first he's come to gather people for himself from all people-groups and sends his disciples and us to continue that mission.
4. ***The Church:*** The new people Christ forms is "the Church". Matthew is in fact the only gospel that explicitly uses the word "church". This is a new community of faith, made up of Jews and Gentiles as the 1 united and new people of God. The Church is built by Jesus: *'I will build my church'* (16:18); and is ongoingly sustained by him: *'where two or three gather in my name, there am I with them'*, and *'surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age'* (18:20, 28:20).
5. ***The Kingdom of Heaven:*** much of Jesus' teaching is about "the kingdom of heaven". This is the realm where God's rule is acknowledged (so people 'enter the Kingdom' or 'receive the Kingdom' in Matthew), it is present now (since God is sovereign over His world and all creatures ought to serve God their King) and yet it is coming (so Jesus teaches us to pray God's Kingdom will come).

It's a radical Kingdom, where *'the last will be first, and the first will be last'* (20:16), where those who are blessed aren't the wealthy and powerful but *'the poor in spirit for theirs is the kingdom of heaven... those who mourn... the meek... those who hunger and thirst for righteousness... the merciful... the pure in heart... the peacemakers... those who are persecuted because of righteousness... theirs is the kingdom of heaven'* (5:3-10).

It's a Kingdom that makes 2 demands. The 1st demand is to enter it through Jesus: *'Not everyone who says to me, "Lord, Lord," will enter the*

kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven' (7:21), with "God's will" here being ultimately Jesus' invitation and command: 'Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest' (11:28). The 2nd demand is to follow the Kingdom's ethics. New birth leads to new behaviour, new life to a new lifestyle.

6. ***Being a Disciple:*** In terms of these kingdom ethics, the new people of God live as members of God's Kingdom on earth. God's love brought us into His Kingdom and that love transforms how we live. Being a disciple means following and obey Jesus: *'Go and make disciples... teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you' (28:19-20).*

So summing up, Matthew's purpose in writing his gospel is...

A) To convince Jews that Jesus is their promised Messiah who brings salvation and to convince Gentiles that they can share in this salvation.

B) For this new people of God, the Church, to learn from Jesus what it looks like to be Jesus' disciple, and to take comfort in Jesus' promise that He is with us in the opposition we'll inevitably face for Him.

What's the structure of the book?

Matthew structures his gospel around the chronology of Jesus' life. So he traces Jesus' life from his birth to baptism, the start of his public ministry, his teaching, opposition, entry into Jerusalem, death and resurrection.

But Matthew also includes 5 unique sections of Jesus' teaching that aren't found in the other gospels (or at least not in the same length and depth). These bits of teaching are like a manual on discipleship, showing what life obeying and following Jesus looks like. Those 5 sections are.

- Chap 5-7 - The Sermon on the Mount
- Chap 10 - Sending his disciples on Mission to Israel
- Chap 13 - A collection of 5 Parables about the Kingdom of Heaven
- Chap 18-20 - Teaching to Jesus' disciples and opponents
- Chap 24-25 - The signs of Jesus' coming and commands to be watchful

Pray with me that as we dive into Matthew's gospel we would hear our Teacher, trust our Saviour and follow our King – Jesus.

MATT 18:15-35 • 13-19 FEB

DIRECTION: The topic for today: rebuking and forgiving Christians – can you get any more uncomfortable or painful than that! But if we're disciples of Jesus we need to hear and obey our Lord; and we trust his way to live *is always* the best for us and brings healthy Churches. These commands all hang on the gospel too: we rebuke and call-out sin since we've already been forgiven through Christ and are being transformed by the Holy Spirit; we're able to forgive those who've hurt us since we've been forgiven more than we'll ever forgive. As you lead this week, help people find simple practical ways to apply this so it's not too overwhelming a command. And be thoughtful as you talk this week – it's highly likely everyone in your group has been hurt by someone, and perhaps hurt very deeply. Rebuke, repentance and forgiveness often take much time and much reliance on God.

PRAY TO START: Help us to hate sin and love forgiveness like you do.

LAUNCH:

++ Have you ever rebuked a Christian or forgiven a Christian? What did that feel like?

Read Matthew 18:15-20

CONTEXT:

++ Who is Jesus talking to? (See 18:1 and 18:14 for a clue)

OR → Worth seeing Matt 18 is Jesus talking to his disciples, not the crowd.

OBSERVE:

→ What situation is Jesus discussing?

→ What steps does he tell Christians to take in this situation?

MEANING:

→ Why do you think Jesus commands these things?

→ What does this show us about the way Jesus sees His people?

++ What do you think 'binding' and 'loosing' means here?

++ To unpack bind / loose more, read these extra verses in pairs:

Matt 16:18-19 | 1 Cor 5:1-5 | 2 Tim 2:25-26 | James 5:19-20

++ What similarities can you see with Matthew 18:15-20?

++ How does this help us understand 'binding' and 'loosing'?

APPLY:

→ If we obeyed Jesus's teaching here, how would it change the way we speak about people?

→ Is there someone you ought to have a conversation with this week? How might you do that? When might you do that?

++ If you find rebuking hard, what truths here do you need to remember?

++ If you find rebuking easy, what truths here do you need to remember?

Read Matthew 18:21-35

OBSERVE:

→ What's your reaction to the first servant?

++ Try to draw the first servant, capturing his character. After we've all drawn him, take turns to explain our drawings.

MEANING:

→ How would you put the point of the parable in a sentence?

++ What does this parable help us see about ourselves?

++ What does this parable help us see about God?

++ What might it look for forgiveness *not* to come from the heart?

++ How might forgiveness have various shapes yet still be genuine?

APPLY:

→ Is there someone you ought to forgive this week? How might you do that? When might you do that?

++ What kind of life might you have lived without Jesus' example, teaching and forgiveness? How does this help you praise him?

PRAY TO END: Help us to love and value what you love and value Lord, and give us the strength and trust to obey your good instructions to us today.

MATT 19:1-12 • 20-26 FEB

DIRECTION: Another hard-hitting passage, this time about marriage, divorce and singleness. Be thoughtful as you talk about all this. Some in your Small Group may be divorced, re-married, in a shaky or hard marriage, struggling with singleness, feeling deep shame or judged, and you're unlikely to know what's going on for people. This is a great moment to encourage and build trust in your Small Group by being honest and real yourself and by encouraging others to do the same.

2 big ideas in this passage: 1) God has a good design for marriage and singleness. 2) we can't ignore this design simply because humans' sin or since we live in a fallen world. The design: marriage is a state of 1 husband and 1 wife who "join-together" (physically, economically, sexually, in most ways) for life. Singleness is a state of rich deep relationships loving and serving people, but not "joined-together" in the same way as a marriage. Why it's good: in marriage and singleness we enjoy God's good gift of relationships, honour God by being faithful like him, and serve the Kingdom.

PRAY TO START: Help us to be faithful like you are God.

LAUNCH:

++ Growing up what was your parent's marriage / relationship like?

CONTEXT:

++ Who has Jesus clashed most with in Matthew? What over?

OR → The Jewish leaders opposed Jesus from the start. More of that here!

Read Matthew 19:1-12

OBSERVE:

→ Put the Pharisees' question in your own words.

MEANING:

→ According to Jesus, what is God's design for marriage?

→ According to the Pharisees, what is God's design for marriage?

++ The Pharisees are talking about Deuteronomy 24:1-4. Have a read of it.

++ How have the Pharisees understood this passage?

++ How does Jesus interpret it differently?

→ What do you think v9 means / doesn't mean?

++ How does 1 Cor 7:10-17 help us understand and apply v9?

→ What are the 3 types of eunuchs in v11-12, and what do they have to do with marriage?

→ How might Christians 'choose to live like eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom of heaven' (v12)? What could that look like in practise?

APPLY:

→ How could you honour and protect marriages at Salt this week?

→ How could you honour and protect singles at Salt this week?

→ If a Christian came to you and shared that they'd sinned sexually, what would you want to say to them?

PRAY TO END: Praise God that he's made us and knows what's best for us. Ask for his help to be faithful and honour him, whatever situations we're in.

MATT 19:13-30 • 27 FEB-5 MAR

DIRECTION: Many things are impossible for humans: breathing underwater, flying ...and saving ourselves. Only God can do that. That's what we learn when a ruler who loves money more than God walks away from Jesus and salvation; and when little children enter God's Kingdom simply by receiving salvation. God does in His Son what's impossible for us to do and saves. So the smart choice is to trust and follow Jesus, even if that looks like leaving everything to follow him. Take some time this week to pray for those we know who don't yet trust Jesus, that God would save.

PRAY TO START: Help us to follow Jesus, no matter the cost.

LAUNCH:

++ What's something you've given up before? E.g. cigarettes, chocolate for a year, washing your clothes (hopefully not!)

CONTEXT:

++ What have you learned about following Jesus in this Matthew series?

OR → following Jesus is great but costly. We'll see more of this today.

Read Matthew 19:13-30

OBSERVE:

→ Split this section into scenes, like the storyboard for a movie or a comic.

++ Draw each scene on a piece of paper.

→ Now give each scene a name to capture what it's about.

MEANING:

→ What do you think the young man's biggest problem is?

++ Why does the Kingdom "belong" to little children? (See also Matt 18:1-5)

++ The disciples are astonished by Jesus' teaching on the rich. In pairs look up Deuteronomy 28:1-14 and Proverbs 3:9-10.

++ How does this help us understand the disciple's reaction?

++ How is Jesus redefining their understanding of God's blessing?

++ How could you tell if you were valuing earthly blessings more than eternal blessings?

→ Why do you think Peter talks about what he's given up for Jesus in v27?

→ What does Jesus' answer show us about the Christian life?

APPLY:

→ What have you left to follow Jesus? What might you still need to leave?

++ The young man's wealth stopped him following Jesus. What things may be getting in the way of you following Jesus wholeheartedly?

++ What might be some wrong expectations Christians have for life?

++ How does this passage tear up these expectations?

++ How does this passage rebuild far greater expectations?

++ What do you think of this statement from Missionary Jim Elliot: "He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose."

++ Jesus values the children brought to him far more than his disciples do. Does that encourage / challenge the way you view children?

++ What would you say if a child asked you how to enter God's Kingdom?

→ Think about your family, friends and colleagues who aren't Christians: what's getting in the way of them following Jesus?

→ Pray for these people we know who aren't following Jesus – that God would do what's humanly impossible and would save them.

PRAY TO END: Praise God for doing what is impossible for us and saving! Pray for God's help to follow Jesus in every part of our lives.

MATT 20:1-16 • 6-12 MAR

DIRECTION: God's grace is shockingly beautiful. God freely chose to be absurdly generous to His enemies who deserve nothing but condemnation and judgement. In the face of such generosity, the entitlement and thanklessness we so often express are shown-up for how ugly they really are. We're not entitled to anything from God, we don't earn or deserve grace, and the fact we have any blessings – yet alone every spiritual blessing (Eph 1:3) – is due only to His outrageous generosity. This is a great week for us to better learn to praise and adore our generous God.

PRAY TO START: Help us to be thankful for your mercy God.

LAUNCH:

→ Rightly or wrongly, what things do you often expect or feel entitled to?

CONTEXT:

→ What do you think Matthew 19:30 means?

Read Matthew 20:1-16

OBSERVE:

→ Draw a before and after face for each of the characters in this story, at the start and end of the day. Show us all your drawings and explain them.

MEANING:

→ Can you relate with the 1st hired workers? Have they been treated fairly?

→ This story is a picture of what the Kingdom of Heaven is like (v1).

→ What does this teach us about God – His character? His values?

→ What does this teach us about humans?

++ Read Romans 9:10-21. What does this passage add in for us about God's right to do what he wants?

++ Going bigger than just this story, who do you think the “first” and “last” might be in the big picture of the whole bible?

++ Split into pairs and read one set of these verses each.

- Genesis 12:1-3 and Deuteronomy 7:7-11
- Matthew 15:21-24 and John 10:14-16
- Ephesians 2:11-22
- Romans 11:7 and 11:17-24

++ How do your verses help us see who the “first” and “last” might be in the big picture of the whole bible?

++ How does this grow your thankfulness to God even more?

APPLY: This story is simple to understand but requires serious heart work!

→ What things drain your gratefulness to God?

→ How does this passage fuel your gratefulness to God?

→ If God never saved you or anyone, would this be fair?

++ Have you met or seen Christians who live grateful lives to God? What inspires you about them? What could you copy from them?

++ A popular Christian model for how to pray is A.C.T.S – where you start your prayers with *Adoration* (i.e. praise God for who he is), then *Confession*, *Thanksgiving* and *Supplication* (i.e. requests). From what we’ve seen in Matthew 20, what is really helpful about this model for prayer?

→ Spent time praying, but just simply giving thanks to God for who He is and what He’s done, and not requesting anything from Him.

PRAY TO END: Praise God for his abundant generosity to us. Ask for his help to be grateful and to worship him always.

GROW: NO SMALL GROUP • 13-19 MAR

Grow is on this Wednesday 15th March, 7-9pm including dinner.

We really want every member of Salt Church to come to *Grow* – for everyone who calls Salt their home to be there or to watch the livestream.

Why Come to Grow?

We know that many of us have busy lives with lots of responsibilities. So getting to Church and Small Group regularly is enough of a challenge, yet alone coming out for a moment like *Grow*.

Also, many of us at Salt feel like we already know our Church's vision and we're on-board with it, so it doesn't really feel worth coming to *Grow* – there's nothing new to hear and I could definitely use a night off.

There's also a bunch of us at Salt who have never been to a *Grow*, so don't really know what it is that we're being encouraged to get along to.

Whatever camp you're in, here's where *Grow* fits and why *Grow* matters.

Bus Versus Boat

You may have heard Salt's pastors describe Salt as a rowing team not a bus. On a bus 1 person drives and everyone else comes along for the ride. If you're not driving, you don't have to contribute to the trip, you hop on and off when you want, you get somewhere because of the driver.

But on a rowing team 1 person might steer the boat, but you only move forward if everyone rows; if the team works together to make it happen.

God's Vision for Salt Church

Christ Jesus has given all of his people a massive vision and task:

Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age." (Matt 28:18-20)

We pray this would happen in Wollongong and we'd play our part in it. We want to see a flood of lifelong disciples of Jesus across Wollongong and beyond because it's what Jesus wants to see and it's what Jesus deserves.

Why Grow Exists

We don't want to do this solo though – each of us trying to make disciples or growing as Christians on our own. We also don't want to be a bus – a handful of us doing this and the rest just kicking back, along for the ride. We want to be a rowing team, for the glory of God.

But without moments like *Grow* it's very difficult for us to row together as a whole Church. At *Grow* we plan and pray about how we're going to do this *together*. What kind of Church do we want to be? Where are we heading as a Church? Where is God guiding and leading us? It's like a family meeting, or the team huddle just before we put the boat out on the water.

Each *Grow* is different too. The big vision doesn't change; it shouldn't as it's God's vision that he gives to every Church and all His people. But how we achieve that vision, the strategy, the next steps, the different roles we can each play – that's what changes. So each *Grow* we dive into the next steps to take as a Church family. Not what's coming up this week, but what we're doing in the next 3 months, this year, where we want to be in 5 years.

As well as all that, *Grow* is just like Sunday Church in that we get to meet together as God's people for fellowship, to enjoy being a community, to listen to and learn from our good Father.

How You Can Help

To make it easier for more of us to come to *Grow*, we're no longer going to run Small Groups in the week that *Grow* is on. Instead, we'll go to *Grow* that week for bible teaching and fellowship. We've also moved *Grow* so it's mid-week (Wednesdays for this year) and not on Fridays as it was before, when many of us are worn out from a week of work or have competing plans.

So can I encourage you to come to this *Grow*, 7-9pm this Wednesday. And not only that, but to help bring others from your Small Group along too? Each *Grow* really is a hugely encouraging and crucially important moment for our Church family. We want to grow – that's what Jesus deserves.

CHOOSE YOUR OWN • 20-26 MAR

WHY 'CHOOSE YOUR OWN' WEEKS:

One downside of the way we unpack books at Salt is we move quick! You might have started a great chat in your group 1 week, but by the next we've moved on. So we sprinkle these 'choose your own' weeks throughout the year to give you a chance to choose your own adventure – to have social fun times together, to continue 1 of those great chats, or to look at another topic / question / part of the bible your group wants to explore. Choose your own weeks can be great for you and your Small Group to dig into something that's puzzling, troubling or exciting them.

DIRECTION: Take this week to choose your own adventure. You could...

- Take it in turns to share your testimony of God saving you.
- Grab a feed and have social fun times (more on that below).
- Pick-up where you left off on a previous week's discussion by reading the passage again and exploring it more together.
- Write your own bible discussion on a topic the group wants to explore (more on that below).

SOCIAL FUN TIMES:

Since we've only recently started meeting for the year in Small Groups, I'd highly recommend you do a social week for this week. Remember though, not all socials are equal. The key is not simply to have some fun together – though make sure you do that too! Be intentional and use this moment to build trust and deeper relationships. That'll flow into the normal weeks where you share, pray and read the bible together.

Deeper relationships will allow your Small Group to be more open about what's really going on in our lives and to be more honest about what we think the bible means and how we're really going at living it out.

If you decide to do a social I'd also highly recommend you refresh yourself on chapters 5 and 6 of [Getting Started as a Small Group Leader](http://www.saltchurch.info/resources/small-group-leaders) (available at www.saltchurch.info/resources/small-group-leaders). There are dozens of tips on how to use a social week intentionally to grow your Small Group.

DO YOUR OWN BIBLE DISCUSSION:

Alternatively, if you want to continue a previous discussion or dig into another topic / question / part of the bible here's how you could do that...

Getting Ideas: A week before, let your group know there's a 'choose your own' week coming up. Collect ideas, like a topic / question / part of the bible they want to explore. Vote on the most popular 1 and get prepping.

Getting Prepped: Brainstorm where in the bible the topic / question comes up. Or for a part of the bible, read it a bunch of times to work out what it means. Ask your coach & other leaders if they know good places to go / what the passage means. If you're more experienced at this you can read a systematic theology or commentary (there's a bunch upstairs at 275 Keira St you can borrow). Plus, if you're keen to learn more about how to create studies, check out [Writing a Small Group Study](#) by Richard Sweatman.

Packaging a Discussion: Here's 3 options...

1. Use the COMA method: ask the group what's the *Context* | what you *Observe* | what you think it *Means* | how you think it *Applies* to us.
2. Use the [Swedish Method](#) to read the passage and ask [these questions](#):
 - a. What stands out to you?
 - b. What's a question you have?
 - c. What do you think the big point is?
 - d. What do you think this will mean for your life?
 - e. What from this passage can you share with someone else?
3. Just read a passage, ask 'what do you reckon?' and see where you go.

Remember: You don't have to have all the answers or be a bible expert to be a Small Group Leader, so don't stress out for this week. Just get people into God's word and let Him teach and transform us by His Spirit. Your Small Group Coach is always available and ready to give you help too.

MATT 22:1-14 • 27 MAR-2 APR

DIRECTION: Our culture is very inclusive when it comes to religion and God. It's widely believed that there are many paths to God and you can choose your own – that's quite inclusive. The true and living God of the bible is also inclusive, in that He invites all to His heavenly banquet. But the invitation is also (rightly!) exclusive in that you can only enter the banquet through the King Jesus. Tragically many refuse to come, even when they're invited and the feast is so good. Take time this week to pray for those we know who seem to be rejecting the invite or have never heard it.

PRAY TO START: Help us to love the lost like you do Lord.

LAUNCH:

++ What's the best feast you've ever eaten / been to?

Read Matthew 22:1-14

OBSERVE:

→ Which groups are invited to the Wedding Feast? How do they respond?

MEANING:

→ What does this parable teach us about God's kingdom?

→ What does this parable teach us about those invited to God's kingdom?

++ If the first invitees to the banquet are Ancient Israel, can you think of moments in the Old Testament that match what happens in this parable?

→ How do you feel about the king's reaction in v7 and v13?

→ What do you think the "wedding clothes" in v11-12 represent?

"It seems clear that the generous king not only provided the feast free for the wedding of his son; not only invited everyone to it; but also provided beautiful festival robes for all to wear. In this way the poor need not be ashamed of their rags, and the rich no right to be proud of their dinner jackets or gowns. All came in on the same footing, just as in the parable of the workers in the vineyard. There is room neither for embarrassment nor for pride in the feast of the kingdom..."

But one man pushed his way in without wedding clothes. No doubt he thought his own were good enough... The man who scorned his host's provision of wedding clothes insulted the host and showed personal complacency. His best was good enough for God! And God says that it is not. The king in the story has the man thrown out. God will do the same to anyone who relies on his own fancied goodness to gain entry into the kingdom. There are overtones of Isaiah here. 'All our righteous acts are like filthy rags.' That is the human predicament: we are literally not fit to be seen before God, let alone to enjoy the feast of his kingdom. But the prophet had already found the solution: 'I delight greatly in the LORD; my soul rejoices in my God. For he has clothed me with garments of salvation, and arrayed me in a robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom adorns his head like a priest.'

The Message of Matthew Commentary by Michael Green

++ Who is the wedding banquet for? What does that tell us about God?

++ How do you respond to God inviting many but only choosing some?

++ What extra info do these verses give about God choosing people?

Luke 13:22-25 | Acts 13:46-48 | Rom 10:9-15 | Eph 1:3-6

1 Pet 2:4-8 | 1 John 2:1-2 | Rev 20:11-15

++ This isn't the only place in the bible that talks about a wedding banquet / feast. Look up Isaiah 25:6-9 and Revelation 19:6-9. What does this add?

APPLY:

→ Split into pairs and share about 2-3 people you'd love to introduce to Jesus so they too can join in the heavenly wedding banquet.

→ Pray in your pairs for these 2-3 people, that God would save them and give you opportunities this Easter to talk to them about the things of God.

Here's some suggestions of things you could pray:

- For God to soften their hearts and make them eager to listen.
- For God to help us recognise the opportunities God gives us and to just take them rather than waiting for "the perfect one".
- For God to give you the right words to say at the right time.
- For a chance to invite them to the Easter Connect Events.
- For God to strengthen our relationships with these people.
- For God to use other Christians He's placed in their lives.
- For God to stop Satan's attempts to keep us silent & these people in darkness.

MATT 27:11-26, 28:1-15 • 3-9 APR

DIRECTION: It's Easter this weekend so we'll have a squiz at the 2 passages we'll unpack. On Good Friday we'll look at 27:11-26 where innocent Jesus-Christ trades places with guilty Jesus-Barabbas, a great illustration of the very thing He did for us. On Easter Sunday we'll look at 28:1-15 and the evidence Jesus has been raised. This is not primarily proof Jesus is God; the resurrection announces he's Lord of all. So, to draw these 2 ideas together: since Jesus traded places with us, we have a Saviour; since he's resurrected, we have a Lord to follow who can actually save us.

PRAY TO START: Help us have a God-centred and God-saturated Easter.

LAUNCH:

++ What's 1 of your favourite Easter traditions?

CONTEXT:

++ What did Jesus tell his disciples would happen to him when he arrived in Jerusalem / at Easter? (See Matthew 16:21, 17:22-23 and 20:17-19)

Read Matthew 27:11-26

OBSERVE:

→ What stands out to you? What questions do you have?

MEANING:

→ **Read 1 Peter 3:18 and 2 Corinthians 5:21.** How is Jesus' exchange for Barabbas a great illustration of what Jesus has done for us?

→ **Read 1 Peter 2:19-25.** How is Jesus' response in his trial a model to us?

APPLY:

→ How might your life be different if God never sent his Son to die for you?

++ What do you think of this statement: "only bad people go to heaven".

Read Matthew 28:1-15

OBSERVE:

→ Put the angel's words in v5-7 in your own words.

MEANING:

→ What bits here build your confidence Jesus really was raised?

→ If this was the first time you'd ever read the Bible what could you learn about Jesus from just these verses?

APPLY:

→ The women worship Jesus in v9. Why is that the right way to treat Jesus?

→ What could it look like for you to worship Jesus this week?

++ How does Romans 12:1-2 fill-in what worship of God looks like?

++ Do you think you can have Jesus as your Saviour but not as your Lord / ruler? Why, why not?

→ Many of our friends, families, colleagues don't know Jesus. Pray again for opportunities this Easter to share with them the things of God. Did anyone get to invite someone to the Easter Connect Events last weekend? Did anyone have someone come along?

PRAY TO END: Praise God for all that we've seen in Matthew's gospel about Jesus – our Teacher, Saviour and King. Pray God will help us to keep hearing our Teacher, trusting our Saviour and following our King.



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While Peter was still speaking, a bright cloud covered them, and a voice from the cloud said,

**“This is my Son, whom I love;
with him I am well pleased. Listen to him!”**

Matthew 17:5