

The
New
Testament
in a Year

Week 29
Matthew 11-15

This week's reflectors are **Barb Smith-Young** (Designated Lay Minister for Children and Youth at Elora-Bethany Pastoral Charge) with **Hilary Abraham** and **Tracey Lapham** (senior youth involved at Elora United)

General Questions for Reflection

You might pick one part of each chapter and think about these questions.

- What does this tell me about God (including Jesus and the Holy Spirit)?
- What does this tell me about our world?
- What does it tell me about me?
- What does it say about following Jesus?
- Is there something here I'd like to learn more about?

Why not use these thoughts to shape your prayer today.

Monday

Matthew 11

Matthew 11 opens with an important question, "Are you the one . . . ?" John has been preparing everyone for the Messiah – preparation time is over. He is here. But Jesus is not always acting the way they expected the Messiah to act.

How is Jesus surprising you, doing the unexpected?

Verses 20-24 speak of people not changing, not repenting even though they have experienced miracles. Jesus does not want to entertain people. He wants to engage them. He wants commitment from us, not applause.

How committed are you to Jesus?

The yoke passage (vs. 28-30) is very familiar to many. In one youth gathering years ago, we had great confusion over these words until I realized they thought Jesus was talking about egg yolks! No, these are oxen yokes. The imagery of being yoked with Jesus (like two oxen), learning beside him, carrying the load together has brought comfort to many of us over the years.

What burdens do you need Jesus to carry with you?

Tuesday

Matthew 12

Although much of Matthew leaves us 3 writers puzzled, we do grasp the beginning contention around the Sabbath. The 'spirit of the law' (the reasons for it) is being squashed by 'the letter of the law' (the rules created to keep oneself from breaking the Sabbath). But now as a society we have swung the other way – we have lost an understanding of our need for a Sabbath, both spiritually and physically.

When do you take a Sabbath (e.g., an hour, a half day, a day), a break from your 'work' to be recharged by the Holy Spirit?

At the end of chapter 12, Jesus seems to deny knowing his mother and brothers. This is troublesome to those of us who value our family relationships. But perhaps Jesus is trying to tell us whoever follows God is part of the family, and all are equal.

What does it mean to you to think of yourself as a sister or brother with Jesus?

Wednesday

Matthew 13

Jesus switches gears here from miracles to parables. Parables make us think and seek after knowing Jesus more. Although we may yearn for a neatly tied-up package that tells us exactly what we want to know about God, Jesus gives us (and the people in Matthew) something deeper to ponder and explore.

The seed parable makes us all think about our faith.

What part of the parable do you identify with? Is God's word firmly planted in you, or is it unstable, easily taken away or choked by life?

The "kingdom of God" is described in parables several times in chapter 13. The kingdom of God is wherever God reigns. We live in the kingdom of God when we follow Jesus. God is active in our world, often in small ways (like the mustard seed, or the yeast) using us to grow the kingdom, to spread God's love.

How can God use you today to spread the good news of the "kingdom?"

Thursday

Matthew 14

Chapter 14 begins with a gruesome story which makes for a good Halloween costume! (If you like to dress up as biblical characters.)

We read in verse 13 of Jesus reaction to the news of his cousin's beheading. He desires to be alone, to grieve. And yet, in his grief he can still find compassion for the massive crowd that has sought him out. Not only does he stay with the people, who may also be grieving and scared, but he provides generously for their physical need of food.

In what way, do you need Jesus to care for you today?

Again, we see Jesus' compassion and concern for his friends in verses 22–36. Once again he attempts to have some time alone but ends it to bring courage and safety to his friends who are fighting a storm on the lake. Now they truly believe he is "the Son of God."

When has Jesus given you courage during 'a storm' in your life?

Friday

Matthew 15

The pharisees were always trying to trip Jesus up, pointing their fingers at how he and his friends were breaking God's laws. Jesus usually responds with some wit, showing how they do not follow the law either.

How often do we point our fingers and make judgements of others?

Jesus is not concerned with what people eat (Jewish law stated what was 'unclean' and not to be eaten), but rather what comes out of the mouth in words. For what we say comes from the heart. Sometimes kind words come easy, sometimes not.

Think of someone for whom you need help to say kind words. Pray for that person.

Jesus' initial response to the Canaanite woman may surprise us who believe that Jesus came for the whole world, not just Israel. But what is more surprising is her courage to even think Jesus would pay attention to her, a non-Jew and a woman. And Jesus commends her for her great faith.

What will Jesus commend you for today?