

Christ Church, New Haven
Sunday Forum: The Gospel According to St. Matthew
October 29, 2023: Matthew 19-25—Arrival in Jerusalem

Questions for Reflection

In Matthew 19, Jesus says about children, “it is to such as these that the kingdom of heaven belongs.” Based on your reading of Matthew, what do you think he means? What characteristics of children might Jesus be referring to?

In Matthew 19, Jesus tells a young man to sell all his possessions and give the proceeds to the poor. What in your life could you give up if God asked you to? What would be a challenge for you to do without, and why?

Many readers find the parable of the landowner and the laborers (Matthew 20) troubling. Does the outcome of the parable seem “fair” to you? Why or why not?

What are Jesus’s central points of contention in his critique of the Pharisees (Matthew 24)? How might we avoid antisemitic interpretations of this passage today?

What, if any, aspects of the Apocalyptic Discourse (Matthew 24-25) that give you hope?

Notes for Matthew 19-25

- “Son of David”:** Matthew 20:30, 20:31, 21:9, 21:15. Remember that Matthew begins by calling Jesus the Son of David (1:1).
- 19:3-12** **teaching on marriage/divorce:** compare to Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5:27-32)
- 19:9** **“unchastity”:** Gk. *πορνεία* (*porneia*); the term seems to mean sexual immorality generally.
- 19:23-26** **teaching on wealth:** compare to Mark 10:23-27. Note that Matthew’s version omits what Jesus says in Mark 10:24!
- 19:21** **“perfect”:** Gk. *τέλειος* (*teleios*); this term implies a sense of completion or fulfilling a purpose (e.g., “teleological”). The word also suggests mature adulthood, the stage of life following young adulthood (the “young man” in v. 20).
- 20:15** **“envious”:** the Greek idiom translated in NRSV as “envious” is “if your eye is wicked.” Compare to Matthew 6:22-23 and 18:9.
- 20:17-19** **a third prediction** of Jesus’s death and resurrection. Note the involvement of “the Gentiles.”
- 21:1-10** **The triumphal entry into Jerusalem.** Compare to Zechariah 9:9-10. This event is commemorated on Palm Sunday, the beginning of Holy Week.
- 21:28-22:14** **Three parables:** (1) two sons in a vineyard; (2) landowner and wicked tenants; (3) wedding banquet and absent guests. It is important to note that these parables are presented in the context of a dispute between one Jewish leader (Jesus) and other Jewish leaders (Pharisees). That is, the parables are not presented as describing one group (Gentiles) replacing another (Jews/Israelites) as the heirs of God’s promise.
- 21:15-46** **Three trick questions:** apparently intended to entrap Jesus into advocating for something that violates traditional law on more or less technical grounds. **Sadducees** did not believe in the possibility of resurrection of the dead.
- 23** **Sustained critique of religious leadership**
- 23:35** **Zechariah son of Barachiah:** probably actually refers to Zechariah son of Jehoiada (see 2 Chronicles 24:20-22).
- 24-25** **The Apocalyptic Discourse:** the final of Jesus’s long speeches. Though it immediately follows his long critique of the Pharisees, note that Ch. 24 begins with Jesus and his disciples moving to a new location.