

## Week 18

Matthew series: Ministry of Jesus:

### Matthew 17 Lessons in Faith part 4

Stumbling blocks? I still feel that Matthew is a training book for new Christians. I know I sound like a broken record throughout this study. It's true though, we are being warned and trained. It's by no mistake that Jesus is pressed by crowds, religious leaders, and his own disciples. If, Jesus was the template for Christian faith lessons, then I get it. Matthew 17 is the last in a section I call faith lessons. This chapter continues this theme with a deeper lesson of who we should follow. Who we should honor.

Let's touch on faith. Jesus goes to the top of a mountain with three disciples. Jesus is what they call transfigured. There is no right answer, but it appears this is a glimpse of our future state in heaven. I think the faith part is Jesus. He comes back. He is on mission. To know you will die is having tremendous faith in the process.

Secondly, are the lessons to the disciples (us). They have been brought up to worship the Law of Moses. They worship the prophets like Elijah. I feel this book is trying to pry its readers away from religious worship. God intentionally shows Jesus connecting to Moses and Elijah. Yet, God says to them listen to Jesus his son. It does not say listen to all three. The time of Moses and the prophets has passed because it's fulfilled in Jesus. The time of the Christ Jesus is here.

Lastly, let's talk about Isaiah. Why not have Abraham there? Why not have Micah or Jerimiah? How about Adam or Noah? I do think this scene by God was intentional. Moses was treated like a God in Jewish circles. His Law was talked about far more often than God's law. Also, we have Isaiah 42 and Matthew 3. Isaiah mentions a set of verses that have God commending his chosen one. We see that played out at the baptism of Jesus in Matthew 3. We also see it here at the Spiritual Baptism (sort of) of Jesus. This is a declaration and affirmation of Jesus and his ministry beyond the law. What are your thoughts on following Jesus and following religion?

Matthew 17:5 **"He was still speaking when, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them, and a voice from the cloud said, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased; listen to him."**

Isaiah 42:1 **"Here is my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen, in whom my soul delights; I have put my spirit upon him; he will bring forth justice to the nations."**

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Sometimes we think we got it. it's by no mistake this chapter is where it is. It might not be the middle but it looks pivotal. Can I be honest here? I was pretty sure about 15 years ago that God was on

my side. I was blessed. He had my back. I was in now. Then came my accident on the way to a Christian festival. I thought I was better than my Ex. She had to come rescue us. I thought I was godly and rejected a prayer request at the hospital. Also, I was humbled with a gift of a terrible car because mine got destroyed. It was my Christian wake up call. This chapter is a disciple wake up call. I bet after the transfiguration and Peters ascension to being called the rock of the church, these disciples were on top. Then came a series of blows. Some say God was chastising these three in the transfiguration. Listen to Jesus only! Secondly, they failed to extort a demon. Then they needed money to pay a tax. Jesus bailed them out all three times. What lessons are you afraid to learn?

**Matthew 17:25 “And when he came into the house, Jesus spoke to him first, saying, “What do you think, Simon? From whom do kings of the earth take toll or tax? From their sons or from others?”**

**Numbers 20:12 “But the Lord said to Moses and Aaron, “Because you did not trust in me enough to honor me as holy in the sight of the Israelites, you will not bring this community into the land I give them.”**

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In a way this chapter is set up wrong. I respect how these chapters are positioned, but at times I think they broke this scroll into chapters in the wrong place. I feel that Matthew 16:13 to Matthew 17:27 fits better together. Why? This is the transfiguration of Peter in my mind. You mom might have called you by your full name at times. That usually meant trouble. Jesus calls Peter “Simon” as he declares him the rock of the church. Jesus calls Peter “Simon” yet again when he asks him who should pay the temple tax. Peter is being worked on.

I am a stubborn man. I get Peter’s way about himself. Jesus is massaging Peter’s character. God says in Proverbs 22:6 *train a child in the way they are bent*. Peter is bent a certain way. Jesus needs Peter to be Peter. Be questioning, bold, a rock, and stubborn. Yet, Jesus needs Peter to see God and the plan clearly. This whole scenario is being played out for his benefit and ours. Remember it’s a training book.

**Matthew 17:25 “When Peter came into the house, Jesus was the first to speak. “What do you think, Simon?” he asked. “From whom do the kings of the earth collect duty and taxes—from their own children or from others?”**

**John 21:15 “When they had finished eating, Jesus said to Simon Peter, “Simon son of John, do you love me more than these?” “Yes, Lord,” he said, “you know that I love you.” Jesus said, “Feed my lambs.”**

Read Matthew 16:13 to 17:27. Also read Isaiah 42. There is more going on here than meets the eye. Dwell on the word faith through all the chapters 14-17. Check out the calling of the disciples for extra reading if you want. Matthew 5, Mark 1, Luke 5, and John 1.

1. Sometimes you read and read but don't see it. This is cool for a Bible junkie. If you read the calling of the disciples in Matthew 4, you will see that Jesus called Peter and Andrew first. It appears they saw Jesus, heard the call, and dropped their nets and quit the fishing business. That is extreme faulty reading of the Bible. We are given 4 gospels to give 4 views of the same story. Luke has Peter calling Jesus master before he drops his nets and follows. In John we read that Peter and Andrew his brother were followers of John the Baptist first. You must know your Bible before you make assumptions.

Check out that Peter and his brother Andrew were first. We all assume Peter was first because he is the most prominent. Yet, Andrew told Peter about Jesus. That assumes that Andrew is a big icon in the Bible. No, he has no letter in the epistles. Andrew has no big one liner that we have on church walls. In way he is the first evangelist, yet even at the transfiguration, Andrew is not there. The sons of Zebedee James and John are. Where did Andrew go? We see the same thing with James and John. They are big daddies in the Bible. They each have letters in the epistles. Yet, they are not mentioned by name in the book of John. Fascinating. Maybe it means something?

**Matthew 17:1" And after six days Jesus took with him Peter and James, and John his brother, and led them up a high mountain by themselves."**

**Joshua 1:2 ""Moses my servant is dead. Now then, you and all these people, get ready to cross the Jordan River into the land I am about to give to them--to the Israelites."**

2. The story of the demon possessed man in Matthew 17:13-23 is interesting. Several times in the New Testament people try and tackle demons on their own. In Mark 9 we read of the disciples wanting to corner the market on casting out demons. In Acts 19 demons beat up several men. Right here in Matthew 17 we find the disciples unable to cast out a demon. Jesus said they had little faith. That seems harsh. Can we really move mountains?

I do feel this is a faith chapter. We have the disciple's faith being tested and stretched in the transfiguration. Christianity is not just Moses and the Prophets. In this story of the demon possessed man, faith is tested again. Jesus says we could move mountains. Really? It's like me saying I'm so happy I could jump over the moon. That is happy! Moving mountains is faith! I have heard people say that is why we are not healed: little faith. Maybe? Yet, Jesus goes on to say this type of demon casting sometimes needs prayer and fasting. So, only do those things?

If you think that then you have missed the essence of Christianity. It's right there in black and white: prayer and fasting. Why do those things? They are how we communicate with God. Jesus died to send the Spirit. That Spirit within us searches God for answers and direction. Prayer removes our answers. Fasting clears our head for God's answer. It's not about fasting or praying. It's about clearing a path for God to be heard. Some Bibles omit this verse 21 because it's missing in many manuscripts. I think it fits because it's how Jesus consistently talked with his Father.

**Matthew 17:21 "But this kind never comes out except by prayer and fasting"**

Exodus 3:5 **“Do not come any closer,” God said. “Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy ground.”**

3. This is interesting. I did some research on ancient coin. Exodus 30 has each person paying a tax to the tent of meeting or temple of God. It was to pay the priests and run the temple. I tithe to my church for the same reason. It's not pastors extorting money. It's not just to give pastors money. It's their livelihood and wage. Without it you have no church to attend.

This tax is said to be a half a shekel per person. So, what is a Stater? It's a roman currency. It could be up to 20 or 40 drachmas depending on what it's made of like bronze or gold. My Bible says 4 drachmas. Maybe? Again, fighting over value is so religious. So, missing the intent of the Bible. Jesus faith is displayed. He has a need and needs God to provide. It's ironic that Jesus said the only sign he would give them is the sign of Jonah. Here a fish yet again, provides the money Jesus needs.

Jesus asks Simon Peter if this money is asked of sons or strangers. Peter reply's strangers. Jesus then says the sons are exempt. This means that yes, Jews do not owe to men. Yet, Jesus says we shall pay because it's proper to do. This is tough stuff. Is Jesus calling the temple tax corrupt? Is Jesus saying he and the disciples are not associated with the current religious? Any of these things are possible. Yet, the intent could be missed in the argument. Jesus pays. Jesus recognizes the need, authority, and duty to pay those in leadership. We pay tax because it's honorable, not because those in leadership are honorable. Romans 13:1 is tough to swallow. Maybe our leadership is a reflection of our hearts? God is giving us what we deserve.

Matthew 22:21 **“Caesar's,” they replied. Then he said to them, “So give back to Caesar what is Caesar's, and to God what is God's.”**

Romans 13:1 **“Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God.”**

4. This is the end of a section in the Bible. Yet, more training is necessary. I feel the next part of Matthew is like a final word before they go. It's like the final JFK speech or Martin Luther King Jr. We tend to peg it as the last super. Yet, Jesus goes far, wide, and deep between chapters 18-25. It will be tough to read. Much of it is Old Testament heavy. A Jew will get it far more than us. However, there is much to learn. Many of the themes within chapter 17 are sprinkled throughout this book.

Matthew loves to repeat things in different ways. I feel the theme of the temptation of Jesus is riddled through this whole book. Questions about what's needed as food. Questions ranging from kingdom to honor. Questions about who is in control. It's all here in Matthew 17 too. The coin, demon prayer, and transfiguration point to those questions.

Matthew 17:11-12 **“Jesus replied, “To be sure, Elijah comes and will restore all things. 12 But I tell you, Elijah has already come, and they did not recognize him, but have done to him everything they wished. In the same way the Son of Man is going to suffer at their hands.”**

Isaiah 42:2-3 **“He will not cry or lift up his voice, or make it heard in the street; 3 a bruised reed he will not break, and a dimly burning wick he will not quench; he will faithfully bring forth justice.**

**What it all means?**

I don't want to look for too much. If all I see is faith in this chapter then am I looking for it. Am I missing other important messages? I think that this is the message of this chapter.

Hebrews 11:1 **"Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen."**

Why is Andrew not the most important disciple? Jesus came to him first. In acts they replace Judas by vote with a man named Matthias. So many pastors have preached that this man is not a disciple because God did not pick him. So many people have written that Matthias is never mentioned again in the Bible so he was unimportant. What if we are Matthias? The church leaders today are not hand picked by Jesus as he did in the Bible story. Some believe that the Pope is a line of disciple succession. We miss Matthias.

He was most likely a good man. Someone voted for him? Political? Maybe, but they were a small band of brothers. I would bet Matthias was there all along. John and Jesus had more than just 12 disciples. When we go to church, is the pastor the most important person? It's a really great question. Is the janitor, children's teacher, or usher? Matthias is us. We are picked by men but used by God. We are the unseen at times doing the little things to make a pastor look good. We're not unimportant.

This chapter talks about who is in control. Who is in? Real faith is not grown by importance or knowledge. Read Hebrews 11:1 again. Faith displays itself when things go wrong. When we need God the most. Trouble is usually unseen. Miracle happen from the unseen to the seen. Some of the acts of God are taking place even before hand. God is making a way for a miracle. What it means is that we look for greatness in the things of this world. Instead, we should consider the things made by God to be great to begin with. I believe with all my heart that God chose Matthias and he did great unrecorded things. He can do it with those of us that are not pastors or disciples too.

Matthew 17:2-21 **"He replied, "Because you have so little faith. Truly I tell you, if you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it will move. Nothing will be impossible for you."**