

## 458 | New'Brew | Matthew

Project Zion Podcast

### Josh Mangelson 00:17

Welcome to the Project Zion Podcast. This podcast explores the unique spiritual and theological gifts Community of Christ offers for today's world.

### Karin Peter 00:33

Welcome to "New'Brew", the *Project Zion* series that takes us through the New Testament by explaining, exploring and experiencing the text. Our guides through the New Testament are Tony and Charmaine Chvala-Smith, and I'm your host, Karin Peter. So, before we begin, I want to remind listeners that you can view all of the "New'Brew" episodes and see Tony and Charmaine on the Latter-day Seeker Ministries YouTube channel. So, with that, today's episode, we are going to be talking about the Gospel of Matthew. And if you're not familiar with the New Testament, I will tell you that Matthew is placed first in the New Testament so when you open up the New Testament, that's who you will find. So, let's find out why that is and learn a little bit more about the Book of Matthew.

### Tony Chvala-Smith 01:25

Sure, we're happy to talk about the Gospel of Matthew. And in answer to that question, when the Gospels were being collected into a foursome, somewhere back in the second century, Matthew seemed to be the one used most frequently by the end of the second century, and readers thought, well, this is a nice connection to the Hebrew Bible, because there's so much Jewish stuff in Matthew's Gospel.

### Karin Peter 01:54

Jewish stuff, is that the technical theological term, Tony?

### Tony Chvala-Smith 01:57

That's the term I learned.

### Charmaine Chvala-Smith 02:01

And it's also one of the two Gospels that has a very smooth narrative. So, you can follow along in the story in a more or less chronological order within the story. And the author has been, gives you a beginning, and it gives you an end and some high points in between. So, that's a little different from Mark that we were just talking about previously and, where it's a little choppy and it's hard to necessarily always get a sense of, whoa, wait a minute, where are they now? Which part of Galilee are they in? And that kind of thing. So, Matthew's got more of a storyline that you can follow along and get some sense of movement between the characters and things like that.

### Karin Peter 02:47

Okay.

**Tony Chvala-Smith** 02:47

So, we'll have various things to say about the features of Matthew but I think where we'll start is context and setting.

**Charmaine Chvala-Smith** 02:54

Right. So, a way to begin is to think about the writer of Matthew, and thinking about his time, most likely, inevitably, he was male. There weren't a lot of women who were this educated in writing in Greek. So, the writer of Matthew is living in a time, somewhere, he's doing his writing somewhere between the year 80 and 90. And so that's 50 or 60 years after the time of Christ and his ministry and death and resurrection. So that's really important to realize that 50 or 60 years, even that number of years, is a, evidence that this was not somebody who was traveling with Jesus. I mean, maybe he'd have to have been a toddler.

**Karin Peter** 03:54

I don't recall that in the New Testament, but maybe.

**Charmaine Chvala-Smith** 03:57

This is obviously a mature person who has, you know, experience with the writing and so these, just a little backstory is, for the first Christians, so, think back to the year 30, Jesus' time on Earth, so, it's very first Christians were all Jews, and they were from Galilee, and Judea. And I'm going to see if I've got a map here. Here we go. So, when we're looking at Matthew, we're seeing, here's Galilee, this area and then Judea, and all the action, most of the action, happens in these places. Matthew also has a little action happening over in Egypt, which would be, you'd have to go down and further to the left a fair bit. But the Christians, the first Christians were around Jerusalem and in Galilee, and then eventually on up into Damascus and then through some other areas in Samaria, and wider areas in Judea and Galilee. So, we're looking at a very small area. And all of those first Christians, the very first ones, Jesus followers, and many of those who came immediately after, were Jewish Christians. They still were going to the temple. They were still going to synagogues. They were observing Jewish customs and festivals. And that's something we don't often think about. I mean, sometimes there's this thought that people were Jews, and then they followed Jesus, and then they were something else. But they weren't. They continued being Jews, and being part of Jewish world, even as Jesus did in his lifetime. And even, as we know with Paul, Paul continued to live a Jewish life but with this other part of himself that saw who Jesus was as completely consistent with who God was in his Jewish background. And he also believed that Gentiles, this is Paul, that Gentiles could be as, equally as connected with God as he was without having to do all the Jewish stuff. But where we are with Matthew is that, so, we're starting with the idea that these Christ followers are still within Judaism. It's like a sect or a little group there within Judaism, who just believe that the Messiah has come, the promised messiah of the Jewish people has come. And they're pretty much tolerated, initially, within Judaism, and they take seriously this message that you will find at the end of Matthew to, "Go and make disciples of all nations." And so, there's some Jews who are interested and become part of their community and believe in Jesus and take these strange and new steps, some would say, but they're, kind of, surprised when there's a lot of Gentiles who are really attracted to this, and start increasing their numbers. And so, Jewish leaders were, kind of, excited about this, but probably by about the year 60, so about 30 years after Jesus' death and resurrection, and the church, kind of, being formed, about 30 years after that, the balance is, like, half

and half, and leaning towards more Gentile Christians than Jewish Christians in some parts of the church. Some parts of the church are only Gentile, some parts of the church are just Jewish, but all in all, it's leaning towards the weight being more Gentile. And of course, that's going to cause some problems, because you have some folks who are like, well, this, you know, we're continuing to do Jewish practices. Shouldn't these Gentiles who are coming in, don't they, kind of, have to be more like us in order to be following Jesus? And some of the leaders are saying, well, maybe and some are saying, no. And Gentiles are saying, well, our experience with the Spirit, and our belief in Jesus is the same as yours, so why would we be less than? And so, you can begin to see, plus Gentile Christians are still, perhaps in some places, are still, kind of, involved in their cultural elements, their cultural festivals, their cultural norms, and ethics. And you get to really see this, like, in books, like, I Corinthians where Gentile Christians are really having to, are coming up against some of the things in the culture that don't really match with what they're saying they believe, but you've got a congregation, you've got congregations where you've got good Jewish Christians and good Gentile Christians, but oh, my goodness, everything is clashing. And they're not quite sure how to deal with each other. So, that's our situation as we're looking at about 80, the years 80 to 90, when this author, who obviously is connected to communities just like we've been talking about, is writing this Gospel.

**Tony Chvala-Smith** 09:52

So, how do you tell the story of Jesus in that setting? So, it's a setting in which, we'll call it, there's "ethnic conflict", right, Christians of one type, Christians of another type, and how do you tell the story of Jesus of Nazareth in that setting? So, Matthew's Gospel is written to tell the life of Jesus for people in that setting. And one of the things you notice about Matthew's Gospel as you read through it, is that it feels really Old Testament-ish.

**Karin Peter** 10:28

It does, indeed.

**Tony Chvala-Smith** 10:31

Yeah, there's, there are over 60 direct quotations from the Jewish scriptures, from the Septuagint, the Greek version of the Jewish scriptures, and then by one scholars count, there's over 140 allusions to other parts of the Jewish Bible. So, you feel very much like you are in the middle of I Kings or something like that, when you're reading Matthew. So, why would this author choose to write a biography of Jesus for a community that's primarily Jewish Christian, though becoming more Gentile Christian? Why would he write a biography? And what, and also, we have to ask, why would he think he needed to improve on Mark? We'll say more about that in a minute. But one of the reasons that this author might have wanted to write a biography of Jesus is because for his Jewish Christian community, everybody knew the life of Moses, right? So how do you talk about Jesus to people of Jewish background? You talk about his life, and draw comparisons to the life of Moses. And so, there's all these Moses typologies in the Gospel of Matthew, you know, the flight to Egypt, and coming out of Egypt and passing through the water, and all these things that, and Jesus is...

**Charmaine Chvala-Smith** 11:53

The Exodus story.

**Tony Chvala-Smith 11:55**

Exodus stories, and Jesus is on mountains four strategic times in this Gospel. So, his Jewish Christian readers, hearers, who knew that the Moses biography really well, they would have drawn all these connections, and would have got the message that Jesus is the new Moses, and that he's even more than Moses. So, that's one reason this author would have chosen to take Mark's Gospel as a source, and edits it, and add to it with other sources, and draw up a life of Jesus that had a very distinctively Jewish feeling to it. So, that, then, brings us to the question of sources, right, and the standard, and I think accurate scholarly understanding here is that the author Matthew had two sources, and possibly a third in front of him, when he created this Gospel. He had a copy of Mark, and it depends on how scholars count the Greek words, but he used 80 to 90% of the Greek text of Mark in his addition. Then he had a collection of Jesus sayings and teachings, and scholars referred to as Q. And they use the word Q because it was German scholars who first thought this up back in the 1800s, and they simply designated the source with the German word "quella", which means source. So, when you say Q source, you're really saying source source. But we don't know whether it was written or oral. It may have been either. I think a lot of scholars still hold out that it was written. I would tend to think it was a written source.

**Charmaine Chvala-Smith 13:35**

And one of the major reasons for thinking that it was written is that it appears that Luke also, when he's writing his Gospel, or whoever wrote Luke's Gospel that's called Luke, also had this. So again, it's more likely that it was written if two different authors are drawing on it and getting similar, in this case, sayings of Jesus.

**Karin Peter 14:02**

Well, we talked last time, when we were talking about the Book of Mark, and you shared that there were lots of writings going around at the time, so this could have been one of those.

**Tony Chvala-Smith 14:12**

Right, and it appears that after both Matthew and Luke were written independently, it appears that Q disappeared. I don't think that was for any malign reasons. I think it was just, it was, kind of, you know, subsumed into these Gospels and had no reason to exist further after that. The third source is what scholars called M and what they mean by M, it's a placeholder for the stuff that's only found in Matthew, that's unique to Matthew. So, for example, the Magi story would be one of those things that's unique to Matthew. So, whether that was written or oral, we don't know. That likely could have been oral material that Matthew had.

**Charmaine Chvala-Smith 14:49**

Right, so, stories that he'd heard, testimonies that he had heard, but we probably would want to expand that a little bit, and to say that it may be some material that Matthew said, huh, here's some other pieces that would really fill out the story. And he might have been the originator of it. So, things like adding in a genealogy, and how he adds in this genealogy and how he breaks it up, this is unique to Matthew and may have been part of his own way of trying to give a bigger context for this story. So, we find that with all of the Gospel writers, you're going to find a little of them in this and what's important to them, they're going to include or maybe even create some of those transitions from one scene to

another, or try to give some continuity between ideas. So, we think of this, as I call it, the glue, the author's glue that holds the pieces together. And some of that is their own creative work but some of it is that they're drawing from what would be out there in the culture, to make sense, and to make it interesting for the reader.

**Tony Chvala-Smith** 16:09

And Matthew not only had glue, Matthew had sandpaper, and so he's got Mark in front of him, and one thing we can tell about the author of Matthew is he's a, he's much more adept at written Greek than Mark was. And so, if you lay the Greek text of Mark beside the Greek text of Matthew, in these parallel passages, you can see that Matthew is saying, that's way too many words. You can say that way better in Greek. Ch, ch, ch, ch, ch. He sands off Mark's rough sentences. Where Mark might use several words, he can, the author Matthew, can use a participle. And sometimes he adds more words to a Mark story but usually he tends to truncate Mark's stories, and he makes the Greek a lot smoother and crisper and cleaner, and overall, tastier if you're a stylist, right. As we said, in our previous podcast, Mark is a marvelous, marvelous storyteller. I'd say, Matthew, when it comes to storytelling, is a little more ponderous. Matthew's Gospel moves way slower and you feel like, alright, I need to just stop here for a while and maybe do something else, because it's just a slower pace, and you can lose your concentration in it. So that's, all this tells us something about the author, though. It tells us the author was not an eyewitness. Matthew, the tax collector, is the name that early Christian copyists decided to put on this text...

**Charmaine Chvala-Smith** 17:41

Somewhere in the second century.

**Tony Chvala-Smith** 17:42

They knew it came from the first century and definitely this author is Jewish, of Jewish background. He may obliquely refer to himself in Matthew 13 as a, I think the phrase, there's a scribe who is made fit for the kingdom of heaven. In other words, he's literate. But we can tell he's not an eyewitness and here's why. Why would an eyewitness rely on almost 90% of a narrative about Jesus that was not written by an eyewitness? Why not just write it yourself? We do also know this author was really familiar with Palestinian geography because he corrects Mark's geography too, in some places, so...

**Karin Peter** 18:29

He's a fine copy editor, the author of Matthew.

**Tony Chvala-Smith** 18:33

I've been there. That road doesn't go that way.

**Karin Peter** 18:39

Get a new map.

**Tony Chvala-Smith** 18:40

So, we know he's literate. He's a, he's of Jewish background. He has all these traditions in front of him. He's a very competent writer and he's trying to figure out, how will I tell the story of Jesus in my

conflicted setting, where my Jewish Christian communities are having to struggle with lots and lots of Gentiles who want in? And also, one other feature that's behind this gospel is that, by that decade Charmaine mentioned, the 80s, there was increasing conflict in some other places between Jewish communities and Christian communities. So, the scribes and Pharisees in Matthew's Gospel, who are, who represent official Judaism, the scribes and Pharisees get a lashing in Matthew's Gospel. Of course, Jesus, as the main character, is the one who gives them the verbal lashing. But one has to be careful about assuming that too is a photograph. Matthew's own situation is that, we'll say the synagogue down the street, is, like, saying, hey, we're true Judaism. These guys are imposters and Matthew is like, well, no, we're not imposters. We're connected. So, how do you deal with stuff in that conflict situation?

**Charmaine Chvala-Smith** 20:00

And one of the things that we know happens, right around, between 85 and 90, is it, in some places, Jewish Christians and Gentile Christians who may have been worshipping in synagogues, are basically pushed out. And Judaism is correct. It is a different religion and this is the point at which they say, nope, nope, you are your own thing and you're no longer welcome here. And it was inevitable to happen, but it happens, just probably in this time period. Probably Matthew's written a little bit before this actually happens, 'cause there isn't the angst and the bitterness that you'll find in the Gospel of John, for instance. But here, there's, you can sense there's this tension between the Jewish community and these, both Jewish and Gentile Christians, who have, kind of, been under their wing, and it's now time to be pushed out of the nest. And they're not sure they want to go.

**Karin Peter** 21:04

Well, with all the Jewishness in Matthew, it's almost like a treatise on why Jewish Christians should remain part of the Christian community, even though it's being overrun by the Gentiles. It's almost that kind of an experience.

**Charmaine Chvala-Smith** 21:20

Claim it. Yeah, to claim it.

**Tony Chvala-Smith** 21:21

I think it's a very, very good analysis of it. So, there's, like, to say that, at some point, during the 80s of the first century, Judaism said to Christians, you need to move out of your mother's basement, right? You're 50 years old. You need to need to be on your own. I don't see this as a negative thing at all, though the Gospel of John does, which we'll get to when we get to the Gospel of John. So, but, there is a time to move out.

**Karin Peter** 21:51

I think a lot of us experienced that in the '80s. But that's a different, that's a different period of time. Okay.

**Tony Chvala-Smith** 21:58

So, we'll talk briefly about some other features of Matthew, and we've already talked about its extensive use of the Jewish Bible. So that's a key thing.

**Charmaine Chvala-Smith 22:09**

And one of the things we need to keep reiterating and reminding everyone is that the Old Testament, the Hebrew scriptures, were the only scriptures that these early Christians have. And so, it would be very natural, of course, for Matthew to be quoting from them. And, but he's quoting specifically those things that point back to the Jewish heritage and God's covenants with the Jewish people. But that, first of all, it's that this is their scripture, and so that would be why he's quoting it for all Christians. This is the only scripture they have at this point.

**Tony Chvala-Smith 22:49**

So, you find this refrain all the way through Matthew's Gospel. "This happened to fulfill what was spoken through the prophet." Again, and again, and again, it's, it said. And, but actually, Matthew, we're going to keep calling him Matthew, though we don't know his name, because it's just easier to say that that unknown dude who wrote this gospel. So, Matthew is trying theologically to make the point that what's happening in this new movement, and what Jesus of Nazareth brought is fully consonant with the best insights, the deepest faith of the Hebrew Bible. It's connected. So that's, that explains the regular use of the Hebrew Bible and these quotation, these citation formula, they're called, this happened to fulfill what was spoken.

**Charmaine Chvala-Smith 23:41**

And if it's as we think, he's writing to congregations that have the majority of Jewish Christians, but that's not going to last for long and everybody can see it. He's saying to them, hang in there. It's not being taken over or away from you. This is consistent, this is a continuity with what you've always believed, and who you are. So, it's very, very insightful way to help encourage people to see that this is all part of God's plan. It's okay. It's changing, and it's shifting, but the main things, the important things are still there.

**Tony Chvala-Smith 24:26**

Another feature of Matthew is that it's, it, it's very carefully structured, right. It reads like a lesson plan, right? So, in other words, like, the Gospel starts in chapter one. There's a genealogy, and then there's the nativity story. And so, at the end of chapter one, you come across the phrase, "You shall call his name, he shall be called Emmanuel, which means 'God is with us.'" So, chapter one, Jesus is, "God is with us." At the very end of the Gospel, chapter 28, Jesus, the risen Jesus says to the 11 disciples, you "Go make disciples of all nations," and "I will be with you," right? God is with us. I will be with you so...

**Charmaine Chvala-Smith 25:12**

Book ends.

**Tony Chvala-Smith 25:13**

Book ends, right? This is like a "God with us" sandwich is what this gospel is. So, that's very carefully thought out.

**Charmaine Chvala-Smith** 25:22

And then another piece that is showing this very structured is the part about Jesus' own message, in Matthew is all contained pretty much together and is broken into five segments, reminiscent of the Torah, the five books of the Torah, of the law. And so, it's very intentional to show that Jesus is, you know, can be seen as a carry, carrying on the tradition of the Torah, in, by having his teachings broken into five parts.

**Tony Chvala-Smith** 25:59

It also gives us a sense that for this community for Matthew, Jesus is not just a prophet, and he's not just a decent teacher, but he's also a divine teacher. So, in the first of those blocks of teaching, which is the sermon, called the Sermon on the Mount, you have a series of statements where Jesus says, "You've heard that it was said to those of old, but I say to you..." and so, when he quotes the Torah, "You've heard that it was said to those of old," you know, "You shall not commit adultery." Well, who said that in the Torah? Well, ostensibly, God said that. Now Jesus is saying, "But I say to you..." And so, for Matthew and his community, or communities, Jesus has divine authority. He is "God is with us". And that's why the Gospel ends with not Jesus saying, you know, "God will be with you". Now, "I will be with you." So that's, so, in some respects, Matthew has what we would call a higher Christology, a higher view of Jesus's identity as the Son of God. I think that's important to know.

**Charmaine Chvala-Smith** 27:06

As divine.

**Tony Chvala-Smith** 27:07

Yeah.

**Charmaine Chvala-Smith** 27:08

Good.

**Tony Chvala-Smith** 27:09

So, I mentioned before, it reads like a lesson plan. So, Charmaine put this earlier, she was talking about this is, it's Gospel, the Gospel is, kind of, teachie, right. It's kind of teachie.

**Karin Peter** 27:21

Kind of teachie?

**Charmaine Chvala-Smith** 27:25

Yeah. Do this. Don't do that, in this way, you know.

**Tony Chvala-Smith** 27:30

So, but one of the things we want to look at specifically is the genealogy, because this is, you're going to see in the genealogy, which is not everybody's favorite literary genre in the Bible, I will guarantee you that, but in Matthew's genealogy, if you read closely, you see a whole bunch of really fascinating theology going on.



**Charmaine Chvala-Smith 27:50**

Right. And so, you have what you would expect in a genealogy, you know, so and so was the father of so and so, was the father of so and so, was the father of so and so. And this genealogy starts with Abraham, with the idea of the Abrahamic covenant with God. So, that's, kind of, its beginning place. So, it's saying, this was a formal time when God covenanted, and made us a people. And so, that's where they start is with Abraham. So, yeah, then, they have the, you know, Abraham was the father of blah, blah, blah, blah, blah. But there's a feature in this genealogy that's quite surprising. And that is that there are four women mentioned, three by name, one by inference. And they're, actually all three of the Old Testament women that are mentioned are ones that we've talked about. So.

**Karin Peter 28:42**

So go back to "He'Brew" after you listen to this one and find those "She'Brew" episodes.

**Charmaine Chvala-Smith 28:48**

Exactly. So, the first woman who is mentioned is Tamar, who is the mother of Perez and Zara, twins, who, whose father was Judah, her father-in-law. And we talked about that as the, kind of, the issue here, which was that, what was, that what should have been done for her to make sure that she was secure in the family even after her husband died, and then her second husband died, and, but she should have been married to the next brother in order to take care of her, that she would be taken care of in the family and produce offspring for her original husband or husbands. And that wasn't done. And so, she was isolated. She was left without any possibility of being married further or having children and being, kind of, iffy on the edges of the family, whether or not she would be actually taken care of. And so, she tricks her father-in-law into having sex with her and has twins by him, and it's quite a fun story, but.

**Karin Peter 30:05**

I just want to stop there and say to all our listeners, if you're not viewing this on the video, you have to see Charmaine's face. You need to go and watch it because it's, she's delighting in telling us that it's quite a fun story.

**Charmaine Chvala-Smith 30:17**

It is because here's a woman who says, whoa, this is an injustice to me. This could cost me. I could starve to death, and no one cares. And there are some rules in place that are supposed to be for my welfare and I'm going to find a way for those to work for me, and she does. And then she gets mentioned, in different places, which is, which means, on the one hand, that people weren't, they might have been surprised and a little aghast, but they weren't ashamed of her. They did not try to hide her in the storyline, this idea of perseverance, and creatively finding ways that is delightful to some of the Old Testament authors. So that, that's one thing. And then it turns out that her offspring have all of these other scandalous stories further on down the line. And that all sets things up. And so, I'll just mention the others that are mentioned is Ruth, who we were talking about in our last episode of "He'Brew". And Ruth, Tamar was Canaanite, Ruth is a Moabite. They are not Hebrews. They are not Israelites. So, there's another thing that the author is saying to this mixed group of people that he's writing this Gospel for. Please note, Tamar, this, the mother of our ancestors, was not, wasn't Jewish. Ruth may have been Jewish. Oh, no, Ruth was a Moabite for sure, she was an outsider. And then the next person

mentioned, not by name, but by reference, is the wife of Uriah, which we know as Bathsheba, who, David, we've talked about this in those episodes, basically, is raped, but has offspring with Bathsheba. And then she, her offspring become the next king. So, there's, she's probably Jewish, but she was married to a Hittite, who was a foreigner. And so, we're getting this theme coming through, both about the importance of women, and the acceptability of the outsider within this community. So, and then the last one is, last woman mentioned is Mary. And it's funny, I think, because, "...and Jacob, the father of Joseph, the husband of Mary..." So, it's not that Mary is the wife of Joseph, but that Joseph is the husband of Mary. And with all of these, there's this, kind of, scandalous birth story with, you know, these sexual innuendos, or not innuendos, just overt issues. And so, this is giving an easier resting place for the story of Mary, who is having a child that isn't, she wasn't, that isn't coming from Joseph. But so, it's, you can see a lot of things happening.

**Karin Peter** 33:52

It's a good way to make that normative.

**Charmaine Chvala-Smith** 33:54

Yes, exactly. It's like, you know, all these ancestors that we have, who have these funky stories about offspring, why not? Why wouldn't this continue in the story of Jesus?

**Tony Chvala-Smith** 34:08

In a way, I think, a very clear way, Matthew is trying to say, right at the start his Gospel, right up front, two things simultaneously. Number one, Jesus really is the Messiah for everybody, right. Every, he's got everybody's family tree covered here. The other thing Matthew is trying to say is, but he's also the Jewish Messiah, because Matthew takes these generations and artificially divides them into fourteens. If you trace Matthew's genealogy back as far as you can in the Hebrew Bible, you'll discover he skips a few places in order to keep his 14. And scholars have wondered for ages, you know, why did he do that? Well, most scholars would say now that he's actually playing a little synagogue number game. That is that 14, that, the Hebrew letters, D V D, David, represent, in numeric values, 14 when you add them up. And so, not only is Jesus scandalously related to us all, Jesus is also son of David, son of David, son of David.

**Charmaine Chvala-Smith** 35:15

'Cause a 14 is mentioned three times.

**Karin Peter** 35:18

So, this might be our first mention of, kind of, numerology or the way that throughout scripture, numbers don't always say what we think they say in our, from our modern lens. So, hopefully we'll have other opportunities through the New Testament to talk about some of that.

**Tony Chvala-Smith** 35:36

There's actually a term for this. The rabbis called it gematria, which they, which is a Greek loanword, geometry, right. So, the rabbis called it gematria, because it was a way that they used the letters of the Hebrew alphabet and gave them numeric values and then could do stuff.

**Charmaine Chvala-Smith** 35:52

Play with them.

**Karin Peter** 35:53

Right.

**Tony Chvala-Smith** 35:53

When we get to the end of the series and the Book of Revelation, we'll see a lovely, lovely example of gematria that...

**Karin Peter** 35:59

Excellent.

**Tony Chvala-Smith** 36:00

...that I think people will find interesting. So, those are some things going on here, some features, and I think, anything else, Charmaine? Should we go on to explore?

**Charmaine Chvala-Smith** 36:10

I think so.

**Tony Chvala-Smith** 36:11

Karin, as we go into the explore part, where, this is a good place to check in with you and see what questions you might have of Matthew and then we have some things to hold up too.

**Karin Peter** 36:20

Well, I think as we talk about this, with Matthew, one of the things I'd like for us to, kind of, clarify for people is, the reality of writing at this time isn't so much to proclaim truth, as we understand truth as factual, because you've already said he changed some of Mark. We're going to discover he rearranges some of Mark. So, what's true? Or if these sayings came from a document we no longer have, how do we know Jesus said them? What's true? And what I'm hearing through your introduction about this, through his purpose of writing this to the Jewish community, that the truth he's writing is more of one that, rather factual, it's more of intent, the truth of the intent of the gospel. And that's hard for us to understand 'cause we're looking for what's true, what's factual.

**Tony Chvala-Smith** 37:21

We, yeah, we have, sorry to use an old analogy here, but we have some different tapes playing in our head. Maybe they're, I don't know, different DVDs playing on the head. Now that's, kind of, old too. We have...

**Karin Peter** 37:33

Streaming, streaming.

**Tony Chvala-Smith** 37:34

We're streaming different stuff, Karin, in our heads. And one of the things we're streaming in our head is about 200 years of western rationalism, which says that facts are truth and truth are facts, and don't mess with that. Now, that's helpful in scientific analysis, though even postmodern scientists will tell you the difference between truth and interpretations and fact interpretation, is a little bit spongy, because the interpreter herself can be looking at what are facts, but the interaction between you and a phenomena, creates changes. And so, in our own setting, we have to, we have ways of understanding fact and truths that are, that work for us. But ancients, an ancient biography said, the thing, an ancient biography writer said, here's what I'm going to tell you about this person. This is the stuff about this person that I think is most useful for imitating them, or taking them on as a teacher. So, for them, the truth had to do with being selective about what you said in order to make a certain point.

**Charmaine Chvala-Smith** 38:49

That's the same today when you're telling a story. You might tell children a family story differently than you would tell adults, 'cause there's some details you might leave out, 'cause they might not be appropriate.

**Karin Peter** 39:05

Yeah, like Tamar and her father-in-law.

**Charmaine Chvala-Smith** 39:09

Exactly.

**Tony Chvala-Smith** 39:10

Yes, children's Bibles often leave out many...

**Karin Peter** 39:15

I just wanted to get that out there because as we start looking at the Gospels, as we look at Matthew, we've already looked at Mark, some things are different. And I think that just causes some confusion with people, so.

**Tony Chvala-Smith** 39:26

Well, yeah, so...

**Charmaine Chvala-Smith** 39:27

It's a question that often gets asked. It's, like, well, if it, even, this is, kind of, from the people on the skeptical side, or that are trying to argue that Christianity doesn't make any sense, and they're using this argue, from the argument, from the outside, saying these Gospels don't even agree with each other, and so, how can you trust any of them?

**Karin Peter** 39:47

Right.

**Charmaine Chvala-Smith 39:47**

And, you know, and so that just, kind of, nullifies the truthfulness, or the factualness about who Jesus is. And so, you know, that's one of the questions. And on the other side, on the faith side, there's sometimes so much discomfort with the possibility that these different authors are not, they're not all repeating the same story, you know, about Jesus, that people want to shave off the pieces that are unique to any particular Gospel writer, and have just one storyline and, kind of, amalgamated all, oh, we do, that, typically, at Easter and Christmas, just to, kind of, not lose all this interesting stuff. But some people want to only stay with that. And it is actually disturbing to them, that the, that there are differences in the story. So, that's two ways in which that idea, fact equals truth, affects us today. And, but the reality, it really, it's one of those places where it really helps to say these were written by people, and in this case, 30 to 70 years later, after Christ, and they are wanting to create a story for their people that will make sense to their people, and that will highlight the parts of who Jesus is that will be most needed or appealing to the people that they're writing to. And that they have different pieces. They weren't there. They weren't there taking down notes. They have the stories of other people. They have written records that they're drawing from, to try and make these stories as compelling and meaningful as possible, but also making them so that people can see God at work in them, can see where the Spirit is moving, can see how Jesus is connected to God, how the Spirit helps to, helps Jesus' message to move in certain ways. So, kind of a, you get a whole lot more, if you're willing to let truth be a bigger definition.

**Karin Peter 42:08**

Excellent.

**Charmaine Chvala-Smith 42:09**

It's pointing to the truth about who Jesus is, rather than, we have these five things that we can prove scientifically about Jesus, because that's not what faith is really.

**Tony Chvala-Smith 42:23**

A couple other things I would just add is that Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John are rooted in time and space. They're not just made up. They're not mythology, right? You can find the places where things were happening. So, this is not like Greek mythology, which is gods and goddesses frolicking on top of Mount Olympus. It's not that kind of stuff. So, it, over-skepticism is not warranted when it comes, you know, people say this is all just a bunch of made up stuff. No, it's not actually. But authors have control over their material. And they have control, they have an audience, but in a sense, they're also faithful to the material. Matthew didn't just get rid of all of Mark and start fresh. Mark had some value to him that he could trust, so there's that. And so, these texts put us back in the presence of the first century and a first century person. Another thing is, whereas the, in western history, the Enlightenment and in Modern Critical Period, says, truth, you know, fact is truth. That's what we want. What if we approach these texts as the author's trying to say, no, encounter is truth. And so, these authors, all of them, aren't writing dispassionate stories about some dude who was dead. All four Gospel writers are writing a biography of a person who, decades later, they are experiencing as powerfully present, I'm using Luke Johnson language here, alive and powerfully present in their midst, as the Risen One. And so, yeah, their faith is going to come out as they tell the story. They're not going to say, was Jesus the Messiah?

No, I don't think so. I'm not sure. No, he is for them. And so sometimes the deepest truths in life aren't about facts. They're about encounter with some other reality.

**Karin Peter** 44:23

So, Matthew is going to use all of the tools at his disposal to help make his point, to help people understand what's important about Jesus and how to encounter the risen Christ.

**Charmaine Chvala-Smith** 44:35

And they have different tools.

**Tony Chvala-Smith** 44:37

Yeah.

**Karin Peter** 44:38

Yeah, that's helpful. Thank you.

**Tony Chvala-Smith** 44:40

And we will keep insisting, we're going to bring together in what we do is critical scholarship, and spiritual formation and countering of what the text is trying to point to.

**Karin Peter** 44:52

Okay.

**Charmaine Chvala-Smith** 44:55

Good deal. So, there's just a few things that are a little bit different in Matthew that we want to raise up and maybe, now that we have a context as to who was he writing to and what's their situation, it'll make more sense of some of these details. One is, this is the only Gospel with the Magi, the wise men coming, the astrologers.

**Karin Peter** 45:22

The wise men, the three kings, the who were these people?

**Charmaine Chvala-Smith** 45:27

Well, there's no indication that there were three. It's just that there were three gifts. And so, people have, kind of, you know, said, well, there must be three wise men, but scripturally, there's nothing there to indicate that. But the Magi are not Jews, and they are the first to recognize him as someone to whom to pay homage. And so, it's, again, think about the congregation he's writing to. He's saying, the Gentiles were the ones who recognized first who this baby was. And so that's really important in the storyline. And in Mark, it was the centurion, a Gentile, who was the first who named Christ as the Son of God. But here, it's right at the beginning of the story. And, but it is, again, Gentiles.

**Tony Chvala-Smith** 46:19

And the, what they do, Charmaine said they paid homage and that's a translation of the Greek verb proskuneo. You can translate that verb, worship. It means to bow down, get down on your knee in front

of, and the kind of action you would have done before a monarch who was believed to be divine or quasi divine. And so, Matthew uses that verb several times in the Gospel of worshiping Jesus, and here, these Persian astrologers, they're worshiping him. I think that's really cool. At the very end of the Gospel, again, we'll go back to the bracketing at the end, when Jesus appeared to the 11, and chapter 28 says, "...they worshipped him...", same verb, "...but some doubted," which is really cool in Matthew because the worship of God does not eliminate doubt, or does not require you to have no doubt. I think that's cool. But, in other words, what the Magi did and what the disciples did before the Risen One was the same thing. I think that's very cool.

**Charmaine Chvala-Smith 47:22**

And another piece that's unique to Matthew is the term he uses for what Mark called the kingdom of God or the reign of God. And this shows a Jewishness again. Know, this would be a nod to the Jewish Christians where, within Judaism, the name of God was not used. And so, other words were used instead of God. And so, one of them is heaven. And so, that, they would have known automatically that the kingdom of heaven is not talking about the afterlife, but is talking about the same thing as Mark was, this, kind of, way of being here on Earth, this living in God's reign now. And we do that by following what Jesus did, by interacting, like Jesus did, like, treating each other like Jesus did. And so, we'll see that almost all the time, in Matthew, you will see the kingdom of heaven, rather than the kingdom of God or the reign of God. And that's, that will be important to help, again, bring about that realization, Jesus is not talking about heaven and hell all the time. There's some instances in Matthew where there's some references, just a very, very tiny part of his message, what he's talking about. Mostly, he's talking about this way of being on Earth, with the Spirit of God moving among us, and living in a Christ like way.

**Tony Chvala-Smith 49:06**

Probably one of the most famous parts of Matthew is chapters five through seven, which are often called the Sermon on the Mount. A similar sermon is in Luke, only it's one chapter long, and in Luke, it's on a level place, it's at, you know on a plain.

**Charmaine Chvala-Smith 49:21**

On the plain.

**Tony Chvala-Smith 49:21**

Somewhere on the plain.

**Karin Peter 49:23**

Luke had a different agenda.

**Tony Chvala-Smith 49:24**

Yes, so...

**Charmaine Chvala-Smith 49:26**

Different geography that they lived in too. I mean that's the other part of it.

**Tony Chvala-Smith** 49:20

For Matthew's, as I mentioned earlier, for Matthew's Jewish Christian readers, the mount is the place of revelation. And so, in a sense, what Matthew has done is he's collected a lot of the sayings of Jesus and created a, kind of, compendium of them, and situated them on this mountain to say, hey, this is Jesus giving us the new interpretation of the Torah. This is the definitive interpretation of it. And you know, it's a, it's very powerful. It's very radical to read it. It calls its readers to a very deep, deep form of obedience. I think it's a mistake, though, to somehow separate it from the Gospel and treat it as if it's some sort of independent...

**Charmaine Chvala-Smith** 50:17

Message.

**Tony Chvala-Smith** 50:17

...be all and end all of what the New Testament is about. It's three chapters in a 28 chapter gospel. And it really deserves to be read as part of the narrative and not pulled out and treated as some, kind of, nonviolent device to clobber people into nonviolence with. It's sometimes used that way, that this is what Jesus taught. Well, Jesus taught a lot of things. And also, Matthew's Gospel itself invites the reader to reinterpret it. Here's how we know that. Matthew reinterpreted Mark as he was creating the Gospel. Mark has a saying in, somewhere between eight and 10. Mark has a saying which prohibits divorce on any grounds. Matthew takes that saying, and softens it, right, adding, except for adultery, right. And in Matthew's Jewish context, the rabbis were constantly trying to argue, what's the good basis for divorce? Is there a basis? Matthew softens Mark on that. So, one has to be careful not to treat the Sermon on the Mount as, kind of, an, a new absolutist answer to everything. It invites us to reinterpret it for our own time and space too. And then, go ahead, Charmaine.

**Charmaine Chvala-Smith** 51:36

Actually, well, one other piece that is unique, well, there's quite a few that are, that's unique to Mark, is the story about, oh, the sheep's and the goat.

**Tony Chvala-Smith** 51:48

Matthew.

**Charmaine Chvala-Smith** 51:49

Matthew. What did I say?

**Tony Chvala-Smith** 51:50

Mark.

**Charmaine Chvala-Smith** 51:50

Oh, I said Mark, we were just talking about Mark.

**Tony Chvala-Smith** 51:00

'Cause I just said Mark.



**Charmaine Chvala-Smith** 51:52

So, in Matthew, the whole story of those who, who's, who are the sheep and the goats. You want to go ahead, and...

**Tony Chvala-Smith** 52:03

Yes, it's the separation of the sheep and the goats, right. And it's an eschatological story. It's about the end of time, the last judgement and so on, where the Son of Man, Jesus's own, kind of, self-reference as the Human One, comes and he separates, and one go on his right hand and one go on his left, and it's, and who are the sheep? Well, the sheep are the ones who have done justice. They have given, they've shared with the little ones.

**Charmaine Chvala-Smith** 52:31

They have shown love, they have shown mercy, and they have served the least. And so, the whole story about, you know, those who are the sheep on the right hand are those who gave me drink, gave me something to eat, clothed me when I was naked, visited me when I was in prison, all of those things. And they said, "Well, when did that happen?" And he said, "Well, whenever you did that to anyone, you did that to me." And the others, it's like, you know, if you didn't feed me, you didn't clothe me, you didn't visit me in prison. And they're saying, "Well, we never knew that you needed any of that." And he's saying, "Well, whenever you have seen that anyone needs that, and not done it, you've not done it to me." So, you've heard that used in all kinds of different places. But that's another piece. And I think it's important to remember when we're talking about the Sermon on the Mount, both are talking about ways of serving each other, of letting love be the guide in how we interact with each other, rather than self-righteousness, rather than status, rather than, what do I get out of it, kind of, thing, so.

**Karin Peter** 53:50

Well, it's interesting, too, that you brought up the division between Jew and Gentile and the way that congregations were divided. Here Matthew, with sheep and goats, is talking about division in a very different way.

**Tony Chvala-Smith** 54:01

Right. It's not, it's no longer ethnic division.

**Karin Peter** 54:03

Right, right.

**Tony Chvala-Smith** 54:04

A division based on obedience to Jesus' commands to take care of people, right.

**Charmaine Chvala-Smith** 54:09

Whoever they are.

**Tony Chvala-Smith** 54:10

And in Matthew's Gospel has a critique, that I think is quite potent, even to this day. In Matthew's Gospel, Jesus says, "Not everybody who says to me, 'Lord, Lord', is," you know, "going to be in the

kingdom of heaven,” right. In other words, just, in Matthew's Gospel, it's not about what you believe, it's about how you respond to Jesus' teachings in your treatment of others, right. And so, those who take care of the little ones, the weak, the vulnerable and so on, they're responding to Jesus regardless of what they believe about him. And I think that's really important news in, certainly in the American religious context, where, you know, you can have bumper stickers with “Jesus is Lord” and yet this, the person with the bumper sticker may do everything possible to harm the poor or the planet and others. That's totally running contrary to Matthew's Gospel. And finally, one other thing to say about Matthew's Gospel, Matthew uses the word righteous and righteousness a lot for a gospel. My advice, whenever you come across the word righteous and righteousness in Matthew, insert the word, just and justice. 'Cause in Matthew's Jewish context, that, the Greek word he's using connects back to Hebrew words you find in the prophets about being just, acting justly and compassionately, and mercifully towards others.

**Charmaine Chvala-Smith** 55:39

So, it's not about pointing to how good you are, how right or righteous you are, but it's about, are you just to others? Are you fair? Are you generous? Are you loving?

**Tony Chvala-Smith** 55:52

It's a really, I mean, it's really, I think a really cool gospel, and one of, it's the only Gospel, by the way, only of the four Gospels that uses the word, church, ecclesia, uses it twice. No other Gospel uses that word. So, Matthew is very, very self-consciously writing for Christian community. But by the time we get to the end of the Gospel of Matthew, you, as a reader, realize that the gospel and the church are not meant to be an ethnocentric, exclusive sect. It's not meant to be a conventical of a bunch of like-minded people. It's meant to be a place where the boundaries are coming down and all are coming in. In this case, in his situation, Jewish background, Gentile background, go make disciples of all the Gentiles. That's...

**Charmaine Chvala-Smith** 56:48

No matter how uncomfortable it is.

**Karin Peter** 56:51

And when he says, “All the nations” at the end, that's what we're talking about.

**Tony Chvala-Smith** 56:54

I think it was ethne, and it usually, elsewhere in the New Testament, you normally translate it as Gentiles. And I think that's helpful, go make disciples of all, you, my Jewish disciples, you need to branch out. You need to open up. Go make disciples of people you would not normally even eat with. So, I think that's a cool invitation at the end of Matthew's Gospel.

**Charmaine Chvala-Smith** 57:21

All right, so we're going to go on to our scripture, the experience part, and as always, we acknowledge that scripture is not, delving into scripture and trusting it with yourself isn't always easy, because sometimes it's been used against you. And just to remind you that we approach this as people's writings, and so, as we're delving into it, we say, what can it speak to us as human beings? What can it,

how can it help us to look more deeply at our own discipleship? Not as a, you know, you're doing it wrong, or you're doing it right, kind of, thing, but really more of, look at the human experience that drew this in, so, that's this whole thing about the context of this. But there may be some questions that looking at the scripture this way, will ask us, that will, some of them might be hard questions. Some might be quite enlightening, but so, that's how we're going to approach it. So, I invite you to try and experience the text, as well as hear about it. So, we're going to...

**Karin Peter** 58:34

Okay, I'm bracing myself, Charmain, because usually by the time you get to your questions, I feel I'm not, I feel, like, oh, those are making me terribly uncomfortable.

**Charmaine Chvala-Smith** 58:43

Good, oh, yes, that's...

**Karin Peter** 58:45

I'm getting ready now.

**Charmaine Chvala-Smith** 58:46

That's what we hope for because, yes, you know, that's sometimes how we know where to grow...

**Karin Peter** 58:54

Exactly.

**Charmaine Chvala-Smith** 58:55

...is when the questions, when the text says, hmm, is this you?

**Tony Chvala-Smith** 58:59

I don't know what you're complaining about, Karin. Charmaine asks me uncomfortable questions all the time.

**Charmaine Chvala-Smith** 59:06

So, I'm going to go ahead and read this through. It's probably familiar to some, and it's probably one that already makes lots of people uncomfortable. So, that's a good place to start. So, "For the kingdom of heaven...", there we've got the kingdom of heaven, and remember that this whole parable is trying to explain something about this reign of God, that Jesus is all about, that in Matthew, that's Jesus' main purpose is talking about this kingdom of God, reign of God. "For the kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who went out early in the morning to hire laborers for his vineyard. After agreeing with the laborers for the usual daily wage, he sent them into his vineyard. When he went out about nine o'clock, he saw others standing idle in the marketplace; and said to them, 'You also go into the vineyard, and I will pay you what is right.' So they went, when he went out again, about noon and about three o'clock, he did the same. And 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?' And they said to him, 'Because no one has hired us.' He said to them, 'You also go into the vineyard.' When 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.' When those hired about five o'clock came, each of them received the usual daily wage. Now, when the first came, they thought they would receive more, but each of them also received the usual wage. And when they received it, they grumbled against the landowner, saying, 'These last worked only one hour, and you've made them equal to us who have borne the burden of the day in the scorching heat.' But he replied to one of them, 'Friend, I am doing you no wrong; did you not agree with me for the usual daily wage? Take what belongs to you and go; I choose to give to the last the same as I give to you. Am I not allowed to do what I choose with what belongs to me? Or are you envious because I am generous?' So the last will be first, and the first will be last?" Oh, what a great story. So, we're gonna look at the passage from a couple of different perspectives. But first, I'm just going to take us back through some of the insights that we can get from this. So first, as I mentioned, this is about the reign of God, the kingdom of heaven, as Matthew will say. This is Jesus' main message. He, Jesus is the sign, and the first example that this kingdom, this reign of God is in our midst already. And this author, as Tony was talking about, talks about the church in a very more concrete way than anywhere else. So, he wants his hearers to know that the church community is a place where this reign of God should be becoming a common event, a common way of dealing with each other. But I do want to get out, there are problems with the parable, because that often gets in the way of people being able to go any further. So, what are our problems with this parable? And also say, what is it that Jesus is saying, is trying to tell us by using this parable? Our first problem of it is, oh, this isn't fair. You know, this isn't fair, just like the workers that came first in the story. So, just to quell all of that indignation, of, just have a couple questions to ask ourselves when we feel that way. And the first is, did anyone get cheated? And the reality is, no, no. And then another question that isn't asked often enough, when the privileged complain about fairness, is, did everyone get enough? So, if we can let ourselves ask those questions, then we can maybe hear what the text is actually trying to say. And, you know, hopefully, that will still people's capitalistic tendencies, to hear the story a little bit differently. So first, the author is speaking to the Jewish Christians. That's why this story is in this Gospel. They're the ones who have been following Jesus longest, right? Are they feeling like they deserve more than these late coming Gentiles? Is there a sense that because they have a Jewish pedigree, and they're, they have kinship with Jesus? Maybe they're more religious. They have these Jewish laws and practices that they keep, and they're more educated. They can speak Hebrew, read Hebrew. They follow strict rules. So, there's, aren't we more important in God's eyes because we have all of these things already going for us? And maybe they think they should be seen as more important in the community too. Not only are they more important to God, but they're more important in the community. And, you know, we might say, well, yeah, that was back in that time, but I think we can actually translate that into our own time, that sometimes we might feel like, well, well, you know, that the church started in the US. And, you know, those other countries where the church has been established, is it really as, you know, deeply Community of Christ as we are here? You know, it's just that kind of question. But we have these in congregations as well, where I've been here a lot, my family, how many generations, you know, those kinds of questions.

**Tony Chvala-Smith** 1:05:36

We paid for that pew. Yeah.

**Charmaine Chvala-Smith** 1:05:39

Yes, yes. My so and so ancestor helped build this building. And there's a sense of, you know, I'm even more of whatever it is, more Christian, more deserving maybe. But then think about what this scripture

would have been saying to the Gentiles that Matthew is writing to. He's saying the kingdom of heaven is a place where anyone accepting the invitation to be there, and who is willing to do the work of following Jesus, is welcome and belongs. And then we have to look a little closely at the dynamics of the marketplace in this story, and maybe today as well. Why are there people still in the market seeking employment at 5pm? Why is that? And you can hear it in the, in their voices. Why will no one hire me? Why have they not been hired? They were willing to work, and they've persevered and stayed there the whole day, hoping to find work, to be hired. So, the question, why were we not chosen? That's another question that's relevant for today. And the answers may be different in that time than today, but some of them may be the same. They didn't have the right papers. Their ethnicity or skin color wasn't right. They were differently abled. They had problems that made society uncomfortable with them, or they've been shunned. They've made mistakes or been in prison. They looked or smelled different. You can imagine the list goes on. For the earliest Christians, especially the Gentile Christians, the church is this group of people who are choosing to follow Jesus together. It was a place where even women and slaves knew they belonged, which wasn't true in very many other places, and definitely not slaves as being equal, and women being equal. But the church was a place where everyone was following Jesus, where God saw them all as valuable. So, you can begin to understand why Gentiles, especially, and we have historical evidence that shows that many of the first members, Christians, were slaves and women, because here was a place where their full humanity could be acknowledged and lived out. And so, it was a place where a little taste of the kingdom of God was available for some people who everything in society told them they had no value. They were at the bottom of the ladder. They didn't have choices. They didn't have things to offer. So, this is evidence of the kingdom of God being this radical place of caring for each other, of being acknowledged and seen and heard. So, this parable captures this reality. And you can see how it's a message both to the Jewish people and to the Gentiles in their midst, and can just take us back. So, we're going to have a little set of questions. So, those of you who want to journal, you've got options today. And I've got a set of questions that come from the perspective that the author is trying to give the Jewish Christians and then I have some questions that come from the perspective of the Gentile Christians. And so, I'll just read them to you and invite you to take some time after this is done to just see which of the questions maybe strikes you, stabs you, makes you go, ooo, ouch. And take that one and see where it can go with you because it's asking us some hard questions. But we may find ourselves answering both the questions from the, for the Jewish Christians and the Gentile Christians. So, I invite you to pick one from each category. So, when have I thought myself more religious or enlightened than others? And, you know, this is a passage that helps shine a light on some of our own sense of superiority that we may have or privilege. Or another question is, when have I resented the, all the attention new people are getting, but no one's noticing all my hard work and my dedication and my years of service? Or, when have I looked down on beginners on their faith journey and felt superior? So, pick one of those questions, and take a little time with it. And just let it, let this be an opportunity for it to ask you to think about what's at work in me that may at times make me feel like I'm better than other people? And then make some time for one of these other questions that may have been what, the questions that the Gentile Christians would have wanted to focus on. When have I worried that God couldn't bless me because I wasn't enough? How did it feel to be told that God knew, accepted and loved me, just as I was? What would it mean to me to be in a community where I knew I was as valuable as everyone else?

**Karin Peter** 1:12:07

Thank you, Charmaine and Tony, for that explanation and exploration and engaging with the text of Matthew. Before we close the episode on this Gospel, because our next “New’brew” episode will be on, is it Luke and Acts?

**Charmaine Chvala-Smith** 1:12:33

Acts together, yeah.

**Karin Peter** 1:12:35

Alright. So, before we close this one, I just wanted to ask if you have any, like, last comments about the Book of Matthew that we might hear before we go?

**Tony Chvala-Smith** 1:12:49

I have one, and that would be in the middle of Matthew, which covers a lot of territory, I recognize, but in the middle of Matthew, there's this place where Jesus says, “Come to me everybody who's tired.” And that is a perennially welcoming invitation. Matthew's Jesus wants everybody to come and be part and find rest.

**Charmaine Chvala-Smith** 1:13:20

I like that. That's a good last word.

**Karin Peter** 1:13:24

Well, and considering it's the Gospel that ends with, “Go and make disciples of all nations”, how appropriate to talk about that hospitality of respite. So, through your different discussion about Matthew, a lot of things were said about scripture and about people who might be uncomfortable with it, or have some doubts about it, or even who use it to point out why Christianity doesn't make any sense, which sometimes I wake up feeling that way, but still, I have a quote, then. It actually comes from Rachel Held Evans, who wrote, *Inspired: Slaying Giants, Walking on Water and Loving the Bible Again*. And this is the quote that I think is helpful from our conversation today about Matthew. “Dignified or not, believable or not, ours is a God perpetually on bended knee, doing everything it takes to convince stubborn and petulant children that they are seen and loved. It is no more beneath God to speak to us using poetry, proverb, letters and legend than it is for a mother to read storybooks to her daughter at bedtime. This is who God is. This is what God does.” And that's what we experienced in, not just Matthew's Gospel, but in scripture in general. So, with that, to our listeners, we hope you will join us for our next episode. Until then, I'm Karin Peter. Thank you to Tony and Charmaine Chvala-Smith, and thanks for listening

**Josh Mangelson** 1:15:15

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