

ST. MATTHEW MATTERS



ST. MATTHEW LUTHERAN CHURCH

11213 Highway 49, Gulfport, MS 39503

228-864-6264

E-Mail Address: m1919@bellsouth.net

Web Page: stmatthewgulfport.tripod.com

Sunday School 9:30 a.m.

Worship 10:45 a.m.

PASTOR

Rev. Dr. Jeffrey Dukeman, Ph.D.

Phone: 228-967-2820

E-Mail Address:

jeffreydukeman@gmail.com

CHURCH OFFICE HOURS*

Monday – Thursday

9:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.

Closed on Friday

*or by appointment

Message from the Pastor

For my sermon on Mark 1:1–8 during Advent I entitled the sermon “A New Exodus.” Part of the inspiration for this was an article I read recently by Daniel Smith entitled “The Uses of ‘New Exodus’ in New Testament Scholarship: Preparing a Way through the Wilderness.” For this month’s newsletter I’ll further discuss a new exodus theme in the Bible.

There seems to be two main ways that the Bible can deal with a new exodus theme, although these two ways seem clearly interrelated. The first way deals with the basic three-part structure of the original exodus: 1) Deliverance from slavery in Egypt through the Red Sea; 2) Wandering in the Sinai wilderness or on the way (Exodus 13:21; 23:20); 3) Arrival in the Promised Land. Especially Passover deals with the first part. And especially Tabernacles deals with the second part, although the Pentecost feast, occurring 50 days after Passover, could also be associated with instruction in at Mt. Sinai in the Sinai wilderness. In the New Testament especially the Gospel of John picks up on these things as it has a three-part structure where Jesus’ life is shown to be the fulfillment of Passover, Tabernacles, and Hanukkah. Here John’s Gospel picks up on the Hanukkah feast that originated in the intertestamental period. So in John Jesus is effecting a new exodus, fulfilling the original exodus out of Egypt. It is not a physical exodus, but a spiritual one, delivering people from sin and the devil and bringing them to promised land of heaven. In reading Smith’s article, it also occurred to me that Luke’s Gospel may also have some relation to this form of new exodus theme. Key here is what Luke mentions in Luke 9:30–31 at Jesus’ transfiguration: “And behold, two men were talking with him, Moses and Elijah, who appeared in glory and spoke of his exodus, which he was about to accomplish at Jerusalem.” Some scholars just see this pointing forward to the cross, but others also the long travel narrative in Luke 9:51–19:27 as also involved. I tend to agree with the latter. The first part of Luke focuses on God’s showering blessings in Galilee intended for all people, a release from bondage (e.g. Luke 2:38). The travel narrative in the middle part of Luke then has Jesus leading his people along the way (Luke 10:38; 12:58; 13:22–23; 17:11; 19:4) like he did in the wilderness. And then holy week completes the exodus in Jerusalem in the promised land. Other places in Scripture also seem to witness to this exodus scheme. For example, Psalm 118 seems to qualify as it speaks of having been freed in the past and anticipating future deliverance. Similarly, Psalm 23 seems to qualify as it immediately addresses the reader as one who is walking life’s path and is being shepherded and ends by speaking of dwelling in the house of the Lord forever. 1 Corinthians 10:1–22 is an explicit example, and 2 Corinthians 6:14–7:1 also qualifies. Romans 8:14–30 and perhaps numerous chapters in this part of Romans are also often brought up. Matthew also seems to allude to this exodus scheme in various ways (e.g. see Matthew 2:14–15).

The second main way that the Bible can deal with a new exodus theme is through speaking about preparing the way in the wilderness. The thought here is that people are experiencing some sort of bondage, but God calls for the wilderness to get ready because God is about free people from bondage, lead them through the wilderness, and bring them to the place of freedom or the promised land. We get a sense for this near the beginning of each Gospel in connection with John the Baptist. John is associated with preparing the way of the Lord in the wilderness. Here the Gospel writers cite from Isaiah 40:3 from the beginning of the second half of Isaiah. Although scholars detect new exodus themes in the first half of Isaiah (e.g. Isa. 10.21-26; 11.15-16), they see them especially prominent in the second half of Isaiah (besides Isaiah 40:3 see also 43:2; 51:9-11; and 52:4–12) and even see it as an exodus offered to the whole world. A foundation for this is the Babylonian exile. When Judah is taken from the promised land to Babylon they experience bondage, but then God calls on the wilderness to get ready, for God will bring Judah out of bondage in Babylon through the wilderness to the promised land. This new exodus is like the original exodus, only now the journey begins in Babylon rather than Egypt. So when each Gospel begins by calling on the wilderness to be prepared, it is assessing God's people as being in a comparable position bondage as in the Babylonian exile or the Assyrian diaspora/exile.

Pastor Dukeman

Stewardship

The Chief Stewards of Humanity: Mom and Dad

St. Paul tells the Ephesians that the first commandment with a specific promise attached to it is, “Honor your father and mother so that it may go well with you, and you may live long in the land” (Eph. 6:2). This promise is one indication of the importance of this commandment. The other thing that highlights the special nature of this commandment is its placement within the Ten Commandments.

The Ten Commandments are clearly organized in two big categories. The first three commandments deal with our relationship with God. This category is called the First Table of the Law. The last seven commandments, the Second Table of the Law, tell us how we should relate to other people. These two tables correspond to what Jesus calls the two greatest commandments: “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind,” and “You shall love your neighbor as yourself” (Matt. 22:37–39).

The order of the Second Table of the Law is also important. Murder is a greater sin than adultery, which is a greater sin than stealing, or lying, or coveting. But why is the Fourth Commandment first in the Second Table, ahead of “you shall not murder”? Is disobeying your parents really worse than murder? Or maybe we should give up on thinking these commandments are ordered?

The overall effect of this order is to get us to see our parents as a connection point between our neighbors and our God. Throughout our upbringing our father and mother stand between us and God and deliver His gifts to us: God clothes us, feeds us, protects us and teaches His Word to us through our parents.

So, parents have a very high calling from God. They are called to be stewards of the greatest gift: the gift of life.

Parenting thus gives us a keen insight into all our stewardship. Parents know that they have been given a great treasure in their children, a treasure that does not belong to them, yet for which they feel a great deal of responsibility. Truth be told, every gift we have been given is like this, because everything we have — whether our own personal skills and powers or our wealth and time — is all from God. He entrusts it all to us so that we can use it all and take care of it all for His great purposes.

Stewardship Chair
Donald Shotzberger



Quilting news

We are delighted to have Lennox Myers in our quilting group. This is the first quilt that she made. She did a super job and is a quick learner. She is a very talented and active young lady. Lennox plays the piano, sings in the church choir, plays in the bell choir, serves as an acolyte, plays on a softball team and is adding quilting to her activities.

On delivering our last group of blessed quilts, the folks at the hospital asked if we might consider delivering the quilts a little more often. We decided that when we have fifty completed, we will deliver. That way perhaps they won't run out in between. However, that might be wishful thinking on our part. It is hard for our small group to keep up with the number of cancer patients. Our group is growing so that will help us a bit. At one time, they had seven oncologists and it was not unheard of for them each to have two new patients a week. That is fourteen quilts a week so the fifty quilts we deliver will not last long.

New members are always welcome to our group. We meet on Thursdays at 10:00 am in the fellowship hall at church. Stop by any time and see us in progress! We will take two weeks off during the holidays, but will return on January 4.



LET US PRAY. . .

for those on the
St. Matthew prayer list,

for our members who are confined to their homes
and, if possible, go by to visit them:

Donna Johnston
Rosa O'Bannon
Don Burnett

and for those
in the
Armed Forces,
Fire and Police Departments

O Father, whose care reaches all parts of the earth,
we humbly ask you graciously to behold
and bless those in the military; those who
fight fires; and those who serve in law
enforcement. Defend them from all
dangers of soul and body and grant that
both they and we, drawing nearer to
you, may be bound to your love.
In Jesus' name. Amen



*To those celebrating
we wish you a
Blessed and Happy Birthday*

January	
4	Earl Reuter
5	Lindsey East
8	Luther Guyton Rose Shotzberger
13	Anna Hilton
24	Bill Neely
29	Robert Rominger
30	Don Shotzberger

Blessed and Happy Anniversary

28	Jacob & Natalie Myers Don & Rose Shotzberger
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*(If your birthday or anniversary date does not appear
above or is incorrect, please e-mail the church or call
the church office, 864-6264, and give us the information
so our files can be updated.)*

**CHECK OUT
ST. MATTHEW'S WEB PAGE**

STMATTHEWGULFPORT.TRIPOD.COM

For Your Information

FOR THOSE NEWER TO THE CHURCH: Thank you for being with us today! Please consider filling out the Connection Card in your bulletin, which can be placed in the offering plate during the offering or simply given to an usher or to the pastor. There is also information about the church on the table in the narthex; please feel free to take as much of this as you would like. The class "Exploring the Christian Faith" with pastor is also available upon request if you have any interest (online video and book versions of the course are also on our website). Please also let pastor know if you have interest in becoming a member of St. Matthew. Typically, when people become a member we either have a short rite during the service or, as some people are not comfortable with this, simply have an acknowledgement in the bulletin. There is also a "Prospective and New Member" folder on the table in the narthex that contains information that can help introduce new and prospective members to the church and help them connect with the church. Finally, if you would like to receive a statement of your offering for the year, please pick up a box of envelopes on the table and sign the accompanying sheet to be registered in our secretary's database (once registered in the database, offering envelopes will also be sent to you).

SUNDAY SCHOOL TEACHERS We are asking if anyone would like to volunteer to teach Sunday School on a rotating monthly basis this year. If interested, please see Raymond Holmquist.

GIRL SCOUTS will meet at the church each other Friday from 5:30 to 7:15 pm. Please contact Cheryl Boatner if you know of someone that is interested.

SPREADING THE WORD: Please consider taking church trifolds or business cards to a local business if you have a contact or if you just want to do a cold call. Please also consider taking some of these resources or some church devotionals with you to give to a friend.

The **CONTAINERS** for medicine bottles, eyeglasses, egg cartons and Mardi Gras beads are on the table in the first hall pass the foyer. These items will be donated to charity.

REFRESHMENTS. Each Sunday we need one person to provide refreshments. There is a sign-up table in the narthex. The person providing refreshments should also help make sure that the fellowship hall is cleaned up afterwards and the trash is taken to the curb.

January 2024

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
	1	2	3	4 St Matthews Quilters 10:00 a.m.	5	6
7 <i>The Baptism of our Lord</i> <i>(White)</i>	8	9	10	11 St Matthews Quilters 10:00 a.m.	12	13
14 <i>Second Sunday after Epiphany</i> <i>(Green)</i> <i>Installation of Officers</i> <i>Council Planning Meeting</i> <i>Noon</i>	15	16	17	18 St Matthews Quilters 10:00 a.m.	19	20
21 <i>Third Sunday after Epiphany</i> <i>(Green)</i>	22	23	24	25 St Matthews Quilters 10:00 a.m.	26	27
28 <i>Fourth Sunday after Epiphany</i> <i>(Green)</i>	29	30	31			

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