

Come Unto Me - Mathew 11

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[0 : 00] The handout, Matthew 11, that's Matthew 11 in the RSV. That's the version we use in the church.

Just by way of introduction, I like to think across the gospel sometimes. You know, Mark's gospel is, I don't know if it's too helpful to call it quick.

It is the shortest gospel. It's reading pace, more to the point. But it's reading pace. If you read it all at once, it moves right along. Mark means it to be swift.

A biblical scholar like Tom Wright, I hope you read Professor Wright, Bishop of Durham, a scholarly bishop, successively scholarly bishop. He actually thinks, I don't know if this is true or not, but it's very intriguing.

He thinks Mark's gospel is, in fact, an apocalypse. That is to say that a first century reader, maybe a second century reader, a third century reader, someone who grew up speaking Greek, who was literate, would read Mark's gospel and put it in the same genre as the last book of the Bible.

[1 : 05] There's an apocalypse of St. John. It's that kind of thing. I don't know if that's true, but that's how he reads it. John's gospel is quite distinct, isn't it?

Jesus in John is magisterial. Luke is a more leisurely gospel, you can say for sure. He has much teaching in it, and there's a kind of a progress, a slow progress as he shapes the story.

He takes Jesus from Galilee to Jerusalem, a travel through Israel, teaching and preaching. And Matthew, the chapter of which we're going to look at today, is also, I think we can call it leisurely, properly understood.

This gospel builds up a picture of Jesus, as we'll see, as a wisdom present in Israel. In the middle of Matthew, we find at chapter 13, verse 52, very famous words, Therefore, every scribe who has been trained for the kingdom of heaven is like a householder who brings out of his treasure what is new and what is old.

It almost certainly states what Matthew is doing in his gospel. He's a scribe who has been trained for the kingdom of heaven. And in the words of Jesus, you bring out of his treasure chest a kingdom teaching what is new, what is old.

[2 : 30] So when we read with Matthew, we can say quite safely with this man that we are looking for wisdom, wisdom in Jesus. And in a sense, we're looking for it at a slow pace.

Matthew's gospel is, just before we move on here with these preliminary things, this introduction, Matthew's gospel is anonymous, but more precisely, it should be called formally anonymous, as scholars call it, always it has been associated with the name Matthew.

Like it was written by Matthew. I like to think, it may be true, that Matthew, one of his themes, Matthew hid himself in this gospel. He knows that, and we'll see this in chapter 11, there's this great paradox about wisdom, that it's kind of shy.

Wisdom hides. It's a theme, again, in our passage today that we're going to look at. So this is a time of exploring in Matthew's gospel, chapter 11.

And I hope it proves to be, indeed, a good time for us as we search, if you will, search for wisdom with Matthew, this wisdom feature.

[3 : 51] Say a word of prayer. Lord, we ask for wisdom. We confess that we have none of our own. We confess that you are our righteousness and our wisdom.

And as we study words of holy writ, may your wisdom become more and more present to our lives and effective in our lives. In Christ's name we pray.

Amen. Just a preliminary kind of thing about reading. When we look at anything, when we read anything, we are, thank goodness we don't go through this kind of thing formally whenever we read, but we are, indeed, somewhere positioned for the task, let's put it in that kind of language.

In the words of an American philosopher in another context, which I've always enjoyed, there is no view from nowhere. If there is, it is mightily difficult to display what this nowhere would look like.

One suspects that where someone does think, they're thinking from nowhere, they're, in fact, guilty of some kind of idolatry.

[4 : 59] There's some sort of hidden, absolute driving the meaning which is received by the reader. In common sense terms, then, we don't just read.

We readers bring things to the reading. This, again, is common sense. I want to run through with you this morning, as you know, Matthew's Gospel, chapter 11. A few preliminary places where I am, as I read, and I think most people in the room will be, I read these words.

I think we'll find them to be quite astonishing words. I read them as a, I'll call it, as a Nicene Christian. Jesus in the Nicene Creed, if you go to one of the services at St. John's this morning, you'll be repeating this creed if you're a believer, written about 325 A.D., early 4th century.

Jesus in that creed, you will recall, is confessed as very man and very God. Which means to say that whatever finally and truly defines a human, which isn't always obvious how you do that, but whatever it is, Jesus is that.

And that whatever finally and truly defines God, Jesus is that. in his own person, he reconciles man and God.

[6 : 14] This is the Christian concession, which is standard, orthodox, mere Christianity, as Lewis did. Further, I would read Matthew this morning as, and this is, I think, a neglected kind of truth about reading.

I will read it with you as, and with most of you, I'm sure, not for the first time. It, this passage, has been read before. It changes the nature of reading when you're reading again, not for the first time.

That means, quite simply, amongst other things, that we know the ending, don't we? Matthew's Gospel ends with Jesus raised from the dead. All of the books in the New Testament assume Jesus raised from the dead.

The apostles preached, communities of belief were formed, and writings of remembrance and of proclamation came to be. Faith believes, faith believes, the preaching, the communities formed, and the writings, which are in front of us, are, were, precisely governed, in all that pertained to their coming to be, by the Holy Spirit, the third person of the Trinity, promised by Jesus to be in, and to guide the church forever.

This Holy Spirit is also confessed in the creed, isn't it? This is the one we call the Lord, the giver of life. We worship the Holy Spirit.

[7 : 39] The Holy Spirit is God. So the one portrayed in Matthew 11 is God and man, how I read it, and this one has been raised from the dead. We read Matthew 11.

We, in a sense, don't forget these things. This writing is, we believe as Christians, properly understood. What we're looking at, when we look at Matthew 11, is a piece of writing, which we confess to be, in a sense, divine.

It is part of the work of salvation, which is being done in the world. So, I receive Matthew 11, therefore, having said all of that, there's not much more to be said about what we bring to reading.

I receive Matthew 11, therefore, as possessing majesty. What I'm reading, when I read Matthew 11, is greater than we, as readers. It's a lot to bring to reading, but when you're a Christian, all of that is at work in you.

You don't always stop it, list it, but there it is. What are we reading about? What do I confess about this person? How did this writing come into being? Is it greater than I am, or am I greater than it?

[8 : 51] Christians will confess, it is. It is greater than I am. In the recent, what do we call it, amusing, tedious, frequently stupid, conversations, surrounding, I think, maybe a gathering of Anglican bishops, no, amusing, tedious, tedious, stupid, conversations, surrounding the Da Vinci Code, we often heard people tell us, that the Council of Nicaea, was in fact, a bunch of suspicious people, called church fathers, and they decided, what to believe, about Jesus, and what books, would be in the Bible.

This is, to put it mildly, contentious. Contentious, not a nice word, it's nonsense. Contentious means, having an underlying purpose, calculated to advance the cause.

I lifted that right out of the dictionary. At this Council, the books, which had been received, as Holy Scripture, for at least two centuries, and much longer, in fact, were ratified as such.

The doctrine, carefully stated, at this Council, is a miracle of concision, reading integrity. If what all of Scripture says, about Father, Son, and Spirit, is put in creedal form, in a very short statement, this is surely, this creed is surely, what it says.

It is a product, of repeated, and careful readings, over several generations. It covers, different periods of reading, different moods, of cultures, degrees of alertness, all that kind of thing, went into the reading, of Scripture, all of it, and then the Council of Nicaea, said, here's what it says.

[10 : 31] There you go. It's, in fact, three centuries, of Christian reading, and it gave us, this reading, the Nicene, the Nicene Creed. It is a witness, to reading, to divinely inspired, listening and reading, and it took three centuries, to come into being, but there it is.

It's a treasure, which the church, holds on to. So, on to Matthew 11. But, again, not forgetting, that the, there are these preceding, one literary scholar, calls them, forms of attention.

I don't know what context, he says that in there. I like that phrase. There are forms, of attention. The Christian form, of attention here, is at least one, of great expectation.

this, we believe, these words, these are a dress, of the most weighty, profound, and we might even, expect them, in a sense, to be, being all of that, a bit disorienting, these divine words.

So, let's just read, to begin with. Now, and when Jesus, had finished, instructing his, twelve, disciples, he went on, from there, to teach, and preach, in their, city.

[11 : 52] Well, just note here, in passing, that this is a, nothing is too important, here at all, but this is, a transition phrase, you might call it. Now, when Jesus, had finished, saying these things, and when Jesus, had finished, instructing his, twelve, disciples, this phrase, closes, phrase, almost exactly that, closes, each of five, major, teaching sections, in this gospel, the gospel, of Matthew.

The sermon, on the mount, for instance, is the first, of the five, discourses, which, ends, with this kind, of transition, sentence, when Jesus, had finished, teaching his, disciples, these things.

For those of you, who are keeners, the kind of thing, you can find, in any, good study bible, these are found, at 728, 111, 1353, 191, and 261, they're really there.

Five is interesting, probably, as a kind of, image of, an echo, of the five, scrolls, the pentacles, probably why, this wisdom writer, Matthew, does it that way.

He shapes this gospel, quite a lot. Wow, a reminder, for us, at this point, of the very, Jewishness, of Matthew's gospel, it's often pointed out, that is a reminder, of that, that, he echoes, the pentateuch, he often uses phrases, he always uses a phrase, like kingdom of heaven, rather than kingdom of God, this writer, it's a very, ancient way, of honoring God, by not using his name, too often, referring to it, as kingdom of heaven, rather than kingdom of God, Luke always says, kingdom of God, Luke is probably writing, for Gentiles, more specifically, Pharisees, have inherited, the seed of Moses, we're told, in this, in this gospel, speaks highly, of the Pharisees, in places, Jesus is, presented in this gospel, as the wisdom, of God, it is a Jewish, very rich Jewish, overtones, in Matthew, and you'll notice here, as well, on this same point, that Jesus instructs, his 12 disciples, and when Jesus, had finished instructing, his 12 disciples, he went on from there, to teach and preach, in their cities, he instructs, his 12 disciples, this number, of course, means, it appeals, to the imagination, as you read, it means Israel, it was like, public theater, for our Lord, to have, the 12, about him, was it provocative, it may have been provocative,

[14 : 29] I don't know, perhaps it was, but there it is, we might say, that Jesus, we forget this, that he was a symbolist, he taught, in many ways, one of the ways, was by using symbol, having 12 disciples, was a symbol, of Israel, then you get, on to verse 2, now when, John, now when, John heard in prison, about the deeds, of the Christ, he sent word, by his disciples, and said to him, are you, he, are you, he who is to come, or shall we look, for another, shall we look, for another, and Jesus answers, he answered them, go and tell John, what you hear and see, the blind receive, their sight, the lame walk, lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, the poor have good news, preached to them, and blessed, says our Lord, blessed is he, who takes no offense, at me, our Lord's answer, to John's question, from this gospel, and others, we know, that this man,

John, the first, important little section, of Matthew 11, is about this man, caused unhappiness, for some very, powerful people, as you know, as you go, through life, it's not lying, to make the powerful people, unhappy, you can help it, sufficient, to land the man, in prison, often it would appear, that the very bad, and the very good, go to prison, such as the world, we live in, isn't it, while in this state, or is it conditioned, by this state, John appears, to have doubted, Jesus, it's right in front of us, are you the one, who is to come, or shall we look, for another, what is this, what's going on here, was John's attention, on Jesus refocusing, was there something, that prompted, his re-evaluation, of Jesus, at the very least, he obviously, needs reassurance, here, doesn't he, are you the one, very interesting, this is in Matthew's, gospel,

John the Baptist, doubts here, John, we know, is some sort of, relative of Jesus, he is portrayed, as the revealing, forerunner, in the gospel, we know, that he baptized, Jesus, an amazing moment, in the gospel, often, called, a moment of, it fits, the scholars, called the criterion, of embarrassment, we know, anything, the Christians, wouldn't have made, up the story, that the one, they worship, as Lord, and God, was baptized, by John, a guy, preaching repentance, they didn't make, this story up, John baptized, Jesus, announcing, the very heart, of the Messiah's, task, as very famous, words, aren't they, anybody knows, anything about, John the Baptist, they'll probably know, that he's the one, who said, behold the Lamb of God, who takes away, the sin of the world, here's some, special, about John, but I think, it's true, I can name, some pretty, hoity, hoity scholars, if you'll forgive the term, who would, who would say, that this is the case, he came, to believe John, and it must have been, an unnerving, uncanny experience,

John came, to believe, that his, friend, relative Jesus, had no sense, of personal, sin, I think, there's, I think they had, the kind of friendship, that was what we would call, over coffee, kind of friendship, they knew one another, really well, they were relatives, there they were, they knew one another, and John came, to believe, that Jesus, had no sense, of personal sin, the Lamb, who takes away, is without sin, he felt, we know, unworthy, in his presence, he said, famously, I'm not worthy, to have dealings, with your sandals, this is heart response, to Jesus, when we read, the gospels, we might ask, ourselves, is it a test, of our true reading, that we come, at times, to feel, unworthy, to even be, reading, about Jesus, maybe we should, have that experience, aren't we, Peter, once said, to Jesus, depart from me,

I'm a sinful man, if we get, really familiar, with Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, maybe at times, we want to, just close up the book, I don't want to, get too close, to this Lamb, of God, he's unnerving, he's uncanny, there he is, Jesus, and John, the Baptist, again, if this is the case, if Jesus, is this uncanny, if his presence, in the Bible, is really like this, we shouldn't be, too surprised, that the Bible, is more praised, than read, we found it so, in our time, in our culture, I think it's a measure, of how our culture, is changing, even a kind of, formal praise, of the Bible, is being put aside, you're much more, likely to find people, who will say, that book, I'll check out, the Quran now, or something else, all of this, is portrayed, as the,

[19 : 54] John the Baptist story, all of this, is part of the, John the Baptist story, right in the gospel, and now, according to Matthew 11, he falters, to the extent, at least, that he requests, as we said, he requests, reassurance, I don't think, it's too strong, a reading here, I think that, John is saying, nothing less, to Jesus, if we put it, into our own, street language, it's something like, John in prison, to Jesus, have I made, a mistake, about you, have I been wrong, have I made, a mistake, and then, we get to, we read, four to six, go and tell, John says, Jesus, what you see, and hear, verse five, again, the blind receive, their sights, come, read sort of, a staccato way, lame walk, leopards cleansed, deaf hear, dead raised, who have good news, preach to them, there it is, you hear that answer, paraphrase, that something like, you know,

John, that there, are signs, of the special, messianic age, perhaps, it's beneath, the surface of the text, of remembrance, we discussed them, John, didn't we, better, we adored them, as we read together, the holy prophet Isaiah, you have heard, that they are appearing, in my ministry, at Isaiah 26, 29, 35, 42, Isaiah 61, all over the place, in Isaiah, you come across, the clear witness, in this great prophet, from the day, the day of the Messiah, comes, this kind of thing, will start to happen, deaf hearing, lying, seeing, lame, walking, dead raised, in other words, a new order of things, is going to start, to break in, for now, says Jesus, for you, John, that is enough, take no offense, John, and honor, our God's timing,

I think, that's what, Jesus is saying, here to John, go and tell John, what you hear, and see, he virtually quotes, Isaiah, and then he says, blessed is he, who takes, no, no offense, at me, and there, Jesus leads it, apparently, John is in prison, and he receives, the freeing gift, if they are that, I think they are, the freeing gift, of these words, words from Isaiah, the creed of Nicaea, says, we remember, of the Holy Spirit, that he spoke, by the prophet, wisely, wisely, Matthew's gospel, Matthew's gospel, has no technical method, which describes, why, this kind of reading, of the prophet Isaiah, you might read Isaiah, differently, than you do, why these passages, and not others, why one kind of reading, specifically of the servant, in Isaiah, those famous servant passages, and not another kind of reading, about the servant passages, there are other ways, of reading it, well,

Matthew's interpretive key, is, and we mentioned this, in the introduction, Matthew's interpretive key, is, after the fact, Matthew's gospel, is written, after the fact, of the resurrection, Matthew is reading, everything, in the scripture, through the eyes now, that Jesus taught, but more so, the one who taught, was raised, from the dead, there it is, that's his motif, we won't look at it today, but in the very next chapter, Matthew 12, there's a long, long, long citation, from the book of Isaiah, about the servant, it's on his mind, verse 6, and blessed is he, who takes no offense at me, I take it, that's meant to be, poignant, or almost, ironic, in the most, somber sense, blessed, blessed are those, who take, no offense at me, at this work, that I'm doing, it's as if, if the Messiah, shows up, we want better, than a healer, of a few people, and certainly, after the fact, of all of the mystery, of Jesus, for the, for the, for we, the current readers, of Matthew's gospel, some will say, we want better, than not only a healer, of a few people, but we want better, than a crucified, field creature, everyone, more or less, took offense at Jesus,

Matthew 11, makes that clear, and everyone, still, more or less, takes offense, at this man, during his ministry, he was an offense, and to this day, he remains, an offense, for many, Matthew, the wisdom writer, is talking about, his readers, and that includes us, so moving on, seven to nineteen, are perhaps, very surprising words, read a few of them, at least, as they went away, these are the people, who came from John, with the question, as they went away, Jesus began to speak, to the crowds, concerning John, Jesus doesn't let, the John, if you draw, why did you go out, into the wilderness, to behold, what did you go out, into the wilderness, to behold, a reed shaken, by the wind, these words are well known, aren't they, why then did you go out, to see a man, clothed in soft raiment, behold those, who wear soft raiment, are in king's houses, why then did you go out, to see a prophet,

[25 : 42] I tell you, yes more than a prophet, this is he of whom, it is written, behold I send my messenger, before thy face, who shall prepare, thy way before thee, he quotes Malachi, here the prophet, Malachi chapter 3, truly I say to you, among those born of women, there has risen no one, greater than John the Baptist, yet, he who is least, in the kingdom of heaven, is greater than he, from the days of John the Baptist, until now, the kingdom of heaven, has suffered violence, and men of violence, take it by force, for all the prophets, and the law, prophesied until John, and if you are willing, to accept it, he is Elijah, who is to come, he who has ears to hear, let him hear, let him hear, again, these are surprising words, it seems to me, Matthew remembers, that Jesus went out of his way, to praise John, and Matthew, goes out of his literary way, if you will, to defend, and praise,

John the Baptist, interesting passage, isn't it, Jesus here, what is it, would you say, that he chides, or he scolds, or he rebukes, the crowd, nice undefined group, they had the crowd, I don't know who they were, what did you go out to see, a reed shaken by the wind, something apparently, as ordinary as that, surely, well you didn't go out, to see that, or perhaps you went out, to see someone, dressed like, like a king, well Jesus says, they are in palaces, in king's houses, they rarely, go out into the desert king, is Jesus, at the edge of sarcasm here, mainly, but I think, something else is here, this is in fact, an interpretive key, kind of moment, regarding scripture, unless you allow heaven, to fulfill its promises, in its own way, Jesus is saying, to these crowds, unless you allow heaven, to fulfill its promises, in its own way, you will remain blind, the messianic age, will arise, and it will make its way, in God's timing, in God's way, it will come, in God's way, that is to say, and not man, so in a sense, as Jesus speaks to John, so he speaks, to the crowd, you must pay attention, believingly, to God's timing,

Matthew's gospel, is saying, I think here, that, the whole world, the whole creation, must be given time, in a sense, in a sense, to be offended, by this man Jesus, and it will be given time, time enough, to get to know him, and to decide about him, after all, the end of Matthew's gospel, famously says, go into all the world, and preach the good news, let everyone, in the world, hear about this, offensive rabbi, from Nazareth, who has been raised, from the dead, Matthew is saying, this wisdom literature, the next moment, here, is, is well enough, known, but I think, it's obviously, a moment in the gospel, that is passing, strange, Jesus identifies, John, with the promise, of Elijah, of Elijah, he who has ears, behold, he quotes Malachi, behold,

I send my messenger, before thy face, who shall prepare, thy way before thee, truly, I say to you, among those, born of women, there is risen, at verse 11, no one greater, than John the Baptist, yet, as we heard earlier, he who is least, in the kingdom of heaven, is greater than he, then there's, from the days of John the Baptist, until now, the kingdom of heaven, suffers violence, men of violence, take it by force, for all the prophets, and the law, prophesied until John, and again, as we heard, if you are willing, to accept it, if you are willing, to accept it, he is Elijah, he is the prophet, he who has ears, to hear, let him hear, see, see, I'm sending my messenger, ahead of you, who will prepare your way, before you, says Malachi 3, 1, if we take the context, seriously here, I take that we are seeing, something strange, it's almost strange, in itself, in this, in this passage, fulfillment of God's promises, happens strangely, this is a principle, that's at work, in Matthew 11,

I take it, did anyone, at this time, believe, that John the Baptist, was Elijah, not literal, back from the dead Elijah, but Elijah, as a, as the type, of one, who confronts, and prepares Israel, for her Messiah, according to Matthew 11, it's right in front of us, Jesus made this, identification, is it true, I think it is, that according to Matthew 11, John the Baptist himself, did not make this identification, he didn't know he was Elijah, Jesus thought he was Elijah, he did not know, John, his prophetic identity, in a sense, he was again, he was Elijah, but didn't know it, there's almost, a bit of funny wisdom here, if this is the true reading, and I think it is, the book of Proverbs says, subtle is the Lord, how subtle can the Lord get, the Elijah he sent, doesn't know he's Elijah,

[31 : 46] Proverbs, is appropriate to quote here, in Matthew's gospel, Jesus is the divine wisdom, revealing God's way, a revealed divine wisdom, which is often rejected, there's a certain tone, isn't there, in biblical wisdom, that I think pervades Matthew 11, it is sometimes, almost appalling, when it leaps out at you, in scripture, it kind of startles us, you'll know, these words from, Psalm 18, to me, these are the most, startling words, which reveal, God's appalling wisdom, if you will, when he approaches us, you remember these words, from Psalm 18, with the loyal, you show yourself loyal, with the blameless, you show yourself blameless, with the pure, you show yourself pure, and with the crooked, you show yourself, perverse, God knows how to deal, strangely, with sinful, perverse people, like ourselves, he knows how to fulfill, the promises he gave, to his people, through the prophets, but we'll be tied to them, if they think that, the fulfillment will be, obvious and simple,

Jesus says, if you're able to hear it, John the Baptist, in prison, he who's doubting me, that's Elijah, the one who announces, the messianic age, about to break in, there is strange wisdom, in the scriptures, Matthew's gospel, reflects it all over the place, something, of that tone again, is in this passage, especially, as it, has this surprising reference, again, if you're able, to receive it, he is Elijah, if you're able, it's not easy, it won't fall, into your lap, if you're really, a pure one, a loyal one, a good one, in Israel, you'll know, who that is, few fits, the world, apparently, so continuing, Jesus continues, to talk about, John the Baptist, look at the children, Jesus says, verse 16, and forward, you've got it, there in front of you,

I know it's a little, hard to read up here, to what shall I compare, this generation, Jesus doesn't let the crowd, off the hook, does he, to home and think, these things over, he's got more, to say to them, what shall I compare, this generation, what shall I compare, this generation, of anger, and Christians, it is like children, sitting in the marketplaces, and calling, to their playmates, we piped you, and you did not dance, we wailed, you did not mourn, John, came neither eating, nor drinking, and they say, he has a demon, the son of man, came eating, and drinking, they say, behold, a glutton, and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors, and sinners, yet wisdom, is justified, by her deeds, look at the children, Jesus says, we played the flute, no dancing, we played some sort of, funeral game, I guess it was, but no wailing, is this really, go back to our, our preface, what we bring, to our reading, of the gospel, very God, and very man, within them, is this, the God man speaking, we believe so, and Matthew believes so, shouldn't we be more surprised, when we hear, the divine wisdom, actually addressing us, the way we really are, you are a hard people, to reach, isn't that what Jesus, is saying here, it's so ironic, it's so surprising, the divine wisdom, from heaven, is in front of his own people, and he says, you're very hard to reach, very hard, every approach,

Jesus says here, doesn't he, causes trouble, every step, by the divine wisdom, is resisted, there you have it, verses 18, and 19, so John came, neither eating, nor drinking, and they say, as a demon, the son of man, came eating, and drinking, they say, behold a glutton, and a glutton, a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors, and sinners, John was too extreme, he is even charged, with possession, Jesus is too laughed, he eats, he drinks, he has, he has, tax collectors, and sinners, obviously, non-observant fellow Jews, as his friends, he's just not, living up to expectations, as contradictory, as the expectation is, 19b, is so interesting, the way the section ends, isn't it, yet, wisdom says Jesus, wisdom is justified, by her deeds, what words those are, wisdom, justified by her deeds, it, it echoes,

I think, and re-echoes, verse 15, the same kind of truth, already stated, let anyone, with ears listen, he who has ears to hear, let him hear, there is a taste, that you must cultivate, to hear wisdom, which means, I take it, that it is possible, to discern, significance, but it remains, apparently, very difficult, again, Jesus is saying, to these crowds, I think he says, to us, that we are difficult, of approach, it's hard to approach, so difficult, that an appropriate, picture, what is the man, intended for the pursuit, of wisdom, is actually, an image of violence, as we've already seen it, at verse 12, from the days, of John the Baptist, until now, the kingdom of heaven, has suffered violence, and men of violence, take it by force, amazing words, the violent, are the ones, who approach the kingdom,

[37 : 51] I take it, this is a picture, of the deep, and abiding, humility, which is the condition, for wisdom, rejection, of self, is needed, a violent activity, if ever there was one, a rejection, of opportunity, a rejection, of self-reliance, it's that need, to always confess, yourself to be, dust and ashes, and ashes, there's a kind of, violent, putting aside, of self, that has to precede, the reception, of wisdom, truth, it's hard, to get these truths, Paul is filled, with this truth, I think, do we habitually, think that without, Christ crucified, as our only, wisdom, we just will remain, pure, that's what the, Christian gospel, tells us, without our Lord, as our Lord, we will remain, pure, it is, it will always, be heard, as a kind of, violent truth, this thing, calling us, to many, many deaths,

I like to call, you know, he says, I die, that's the violence, that he, in a sense, did to himself, received from providence, so that he could, grow into Christ, likeness, I die, daily, Matthew 11, it seems to me, the longer you look at, is not, for the faint of God, heart, but, it does, and happily, it kind of, loosens up, as we're going to see, just two more sections, very quickly, swiftly, 20 to 24, is pretty straightforward stuff, then he, Jesus, began to upbraid the cities, where most of his mighty works, had been done, these are the mighty works, referred to, that John was told about, or reminded of, they did not repent, when they saw these mighty works, and he says, woe to you, the mighty works done, and you had been done, in Tyre, and Sidon, they would have repented, long ago, and sackcloth, and ashes, but I tell you, it shall be more tolerable, in the day of judgment, for Tyre, and Sidon, than for you, and you,

Capernaum, Capernaum, you will be exalted, will you, will you be exalted, will you be exalted, to heaven, you will be brought down, to Hades, for if the mighty works, done in you, had been done, in Sodom, it would have remained, until this day, but I tell you, that it shall be more tolerable, in the day of judgment, for the land of Sodom, than for you, these verses, could be right out, of any number, of the prophets, couldn't they, cities have seen, and heard, what John, has been reminded of, mighty works of God, should at least, receive their attention, and when they don't, judgment is announced, judgment is, promise, this, this it seems to me, in this whole, chapter, is the only approach, to a really extreme, a really extreme rhetoric, it will be, more tolerable, for Sodom, than for you, Jesus warns, these deaf cities, they had seen, and heard, what John, had seen, and heard, what the crowds, had seen, and heard, they are told, to expect judgment, in their rejection, 25 to 30, at that time, this ends the chapter,

Jesus declared, I thank thee father, Lord of heaven, and earth, that thou, has hidden, these things, from the wise, and understanding, and revealed, them to babes, yes father, for such, was thy gracious will, all things, have been delivered, to me, by my father, no one knows, the son, except the father, no one knows, the father, except the son, and anyone, to whom the son, chooses, to reveal him, come to me, all who labor, and are heavy laden, I will give you rest, take my yoke, upon you, learn from me, I am gentle, and lowly, in heart, you will find rest, for your soul, for my yoke, is easy, my burden, is light, and you read those words, without just beginning, to hear Handel, stepping forward, with his rendition of it, wow, famous from Handel, the section, of Matthew 11, I hope you'll agree with me, is one of the lightning passages, in Matthew, one of the lightning passages, in the gospel, one of the mountain peaks, in the Bible,

Matthew has presented Jesus, as a prophet, reaching like a prophet, mighty in word and deed, but now, he takes a big step, beyond that, here is where, it's not controversial at all, it's common sense, here's where Judaism, and Islam, and other world religions, simply part company, from Christianity, Jesus is a prophet, but more than a prophet, Jesus is a wisdom sage, in Israel, but he is more, one of the great gospel themes, of Jesus as wisdom, is in chapter 11, Jesus here, is seen, by this wisdom teacher, Matthew, he is seen as nothing less, than the Torah itself, and more, and the one, who will fulfill it, Torah is not, the final wisdom, says Matthew, no, it needs fulfillment, here is God incarnate, revealing its full meaning, here he is, come to me, he said, come to me, whoever spoke like this, come to me, all who labor, and are heavy laden,

[43 : 26] I will give you rest, this is language, this is language, known in Israel, in the book of Sirach, chapter 7, we hear about wisdom, a book written roughly, 200 years before our Lord's time, the Roman church, receives it as holy scripture, Protestants receive it, as good for God the reading, it's not part of this, Palestinian Jewish canon, why Protestants, don't receive it as scripture, but in that book, we hear words like, speaking of wisdom, come to her, with all your soul, for at last, you will find, the rest that she gives, Jesus takes this wisdom literature, and says, that's me, come to me, I am the divine wisdom, in your presence, come to me, at Nicaea, they just read the scriptures, profoundly, said that's the divine wisdom, that's God with us, come to me, all who labor, I will give you rest, what is this, but a kind of, a new world, of meaning, is in the world, with these kind of words, and Matthew knows it, there's, you hardly need, to comment on it, there was a man, who once said, come to me,

I will give you rest, promise stands, there it is, I've always kind of, resented the word soul, maybe I've heard it too much, too often, from bad pop singers, or, a kind of, or, if you're stupid enough, as I've been over many years, to read western philosophy, western philosophers, have been so stupid about soul, that it reaches a crescendo, of stupidity in Descartes, who speculated, that yes, we have souls, and it's probably, in the pituitary gland, you know, the ancient Greek fathers, the guys who led up, to the council of Nicaea, they thought, no such nonsense, Gregory of Nicaea, he says this, I think he's right, this is what your soul is, your soul is an infinite exodus, from nothing, into God's inexhaustible, transcendence, have you thought of yourself, like that, before breakfast today, did you think of yourself, like that,

I am an infinite exodus, from nothing, and I move into God's, inexhaustible, transcendence, that's right, you know, Christian church, got its idea, that creation, is out of nothing, it is founded on nothing, but God's desire, to freely give it, it has no foundation, other than God's, gracious gift, you come, seemingly, from nowhere, philosophers, often think, deep thoughts, like, where was I, before I was born, Gregory of Nicaea, says, you were, you were nowhere, but out of this, infinite, exodus, from nothingness, you're called into God's, inexhaustible, transcendence, Jesus says, come to me, I'm your creator, I know, how to make your life, now, and for all eternity, an infinite adventure, into my father's, transcendence, that's what Jesus, promises, in Matthew 11, that is the most, exciting thing, ever spoken, come to me,

I will give you rest, I am the Sabbath rest, of God, and I can give it to you, I can give it to you, it stands, as a promise, on this man, Jesus, there it is, souls are called, to Jesus, by Jesus, there it is, Jesus is, perplexing, John, the great prophet, prophet, but what kind of, response is there, I like to think, that this last section, you might call it, it has in it, the serenity, of eternity, earlier, we noted, that there was, at least one approach, to extreme rhetoric, in Matthew 11, that, that, that, that pronouncement, of judgment, worse than, Sodom's judgment, what might you call, this kind of speech, all things, says Jesus, have been committed, to me, by my father, by my father, this relationship, between father, and son, except the participants, father, and son, it's as if, in Matthew 11, heaven opens, and reveals itself, to us, heaven is a father, and a son, the spirit, is quietly present, as their relationship,

Matthew, it seems to me, in the last section, is turning to us, his readers, his hearers, what has gone before, is the old story, prophets preached, people more or less, usually less, called to respond, and now, we have a scribe, announcing, a new dispensation, in the world, who is prepared, for the kingdom, will bring, out of their treasure chest, things old, and things new, now is revealed, Matthew is saying, now has been revealed, by the resurrection, this new dispensation, there is a new treasure, in the world, that fulfills, the old treasure, here, is Israel, in Jesus fulfilled, Jesus, with his father, it echoes, you know, prophets like Daniel, that, who pictured, I saw in the night, vision, he saw one, like a son of man, raised up, to be with the ancient, of days, apocalyptic,

[48 : 55] Jewish literature, knew, that there had to come, a time, when Israel, would be lifted up, in apocalyptic glory, and Matthew knows, the resurrected Jesus, the ascended Jesus, is Israel now, fulfilling Daniel, he's fulfilled it, is that speculation, in front of Caiaphas, Jesus quotes Daniel, you will see, the son of man, coming on the clouds, of heaven, they knew what that meant, Jesus was saying, I am Israel, in the father's presence, he'd already taught it, in the days of his ministry, in Matthew 11, the light is here, but it's almost, too bright for us, but, the last thing to note here, before our discussion time, this may be my imagination, but I don't think it is, there's such a contrast, in Matthew 11, remember, we've already heard, that the kingdom of heaven, suffers violence, and the violent, take it by force, and now, the famous, come to me, all you who are, who are heavy laden, I will give you rest, take my yoke upon you, learn of me,

I am gentle, I am meek, of approach, you can come to me, come to me, I have a lowly heart, you will find rest, no need anymore, for violence, just come to Jesus, the wisdom teacher, Jesus says, and his faithful, gospel writer, says the same thing, no more violence, just come to Jesus, however strangely, that may, whatever form, that may take, in your life, take the step, prayer, what you read, how you spend your time, somehow, step towards him, he will meet you, he is God, he will meet you, he's as good as his word, all begins in peace, in the biblical world view, so easy to forget that, all begins in peace, just the trinity, an eternity, of splendor, and peace, sin enters in, and leads to a violent, a violent creation, filled with darkness, force, necessarily confront, violence, that's why Christians, have a debate all the time, about should I be a pacifist, should I believe in just war, there's a place, for a confusing discussion there, but we must always remember, that it all ends in peace,

Matthew 11 is wisdom, and its challenge, is very simple, isn't it, somehow, we make this move, of approaching this, infinitely gentle, approachable God, come to me, I am lowly, and gentle, whoever spoke like that, come to me, I am lowly, and gentle, and in such, a move, will find, a real wisdom, will find, the God, who knows, how to approach us, Matthew, shows the splendor, of his approach, here is the one, who will even do, final judgment, on the world, this infinitely, gentle one, will inflict, a final wrath, here is the wrathful lamb, only he can do judgment, we can't do it, he's the one, this love, who casts out fear, we can trust him, with judgment too, so it seems to me, there's no extreme, rhetoric, at the end, of Matthew 11, there, just isn't, there isn't a need for it, there's a kind of, invitation rhetoric, this is a, a form of Christ, as the orthodox theologians, so wisely see, the gospels to be, here's a form of Christ, and it stands, in front of us, and welcomes us, it is, it is the most, hospitable thing, you could ever hear, come to me, come to me, this God says, come to me, the gospel is a kind of, it's a form of truth, it is our way of doing, battle with other things, that claim to be, forms of truth, it's a gentle form of truth, it speaks for itself,

I think, things like Matthew 11, should, in a certain sense, form our imagination, let it speak you deeply, find those passages, in the gospels, that you love, and just love them, don't be ashamed, Matthew 11, is just glorious, how it is, this invitation, isn't that important, that it is, is eternally important, it's just there, this is wisdom, according to the wisdom teacher, Matthew, Jesus is there, come to him, children can understand, this passage finally, you don't have to be violent, anymore, to seek the truth, come to Jesus, he is the truth, that's what Matthew, is to say to us, I think it's, a great thing, to contemplate, I think there's movement, and progression, in this, this amazing story, of Jesus and John, Jesus and the crowds, Jesus and the big cities, Jesus issuing, a great invitation, in its band, great, great words, I love Matthew 11, I hope you do too,

I'll say a word of prayer, and then, we can talk about it, Lord, we thank you that, you are this God, and not another, that you come to us, in great gentleness, in great humility, in great love, and just invite us, to step towards you, teach us, to do that today, and to keep on doing it, until we step into your presence, and enter into that, transcendent glory, that you promise, with your father, pray this in Jesus name, Amen.

[54 : 36] That's Jim Packer calling, Amen.

Good sir. No, no, in fact, who they are, appears to be so unimportant, that the lists, of who they are, in the gospels, are different, one from another, I think Jesus always, just had a symbolic 12, and that, because it was symbol, who they specifically were, beyond the inner circle, Peter, James, John, appeared to be, Tom Wright even thinks, an inner circle, that echoed David's inner circle, of a special bodyguard, Jesus had close friends, and a 12, and it was always, I wonder if they publicly, announced it, certainly the gospels, always say it, don't they?

Always the 12. I take any means by that, I take it, he's not saying that, John the Baptist, when you meet him in heaven, he'll be a lowly figure, compared with yourself, not being so banal, he's saying that, the new dispensation, is that much greater, than the old, yeah, that's a, hyperbolic way, of saying that, is that there, the New Yorker, and that, because, and, and,

I think that I remember what you said, that, you know, there's a lot of facts that most of the people, you know, and there's a lot of people who, you know, say about them.

And people who visit their website, they're such a lot, so I'm not sure I'm wrong in the other side of the world. No way to look at the new, you know. I could understand that after these are practically on COVID, that we would begin to find it.

[57 : 08] Yeah. Yeah. You know, often at that point, he was not thrilled that he was there and now, and he did have the sense that that was really about the weather, and he said, you know, I could have been here, but I don't know that.

Oh, yeah. I think Jesus did too, sure. I don't think he doubts towards unbelief, but he just says. He may have been, John the Baptist may have been actually beginning to think that Jesus was Elijah, and that he was, in fact, a forerunner of someone yet to come.

You know, something like that. But you're right about it. It's interesting, I think it's in Luke where the, some Pharisees, the Pharisees got a raw deal from Christians, you know. Some of the Pharisees were, they're variously portrayed in the Gospel.

There's a moment, isn't there, when some Pharisees came to you and said, you better get away from here, Herod has heard about you. You know, they were, Jesus, humanly speaking, kept a distance from Herod. Herod could just snap out of his ministry in a moment.

He kept a distance. He probably wasn't surprised that poor John had fallen afoul by him too much. So, if you say, then, the Pharisees didn't.

[58 : 32] Well, some of them. Some of the Pharisees liked Jesus, I think. Jesus liked some of the Pharisees. And that means, Christians think of them as one bad group, but they're variously portrayed, I think, in the Gospel.

John's Gospel has that amazing moment when it says that some of them, few of the Pharisees had actually figured out that Jesus was the Messiah, but they didn't confess him for fear of the public reaction that was created.

It's amazing. Some had been taken that far. They thought. I mean, I'm comforted by John the Baptist's trouble.

Because Christians have trouble. I think along the life's way, we sometimes say, are you really? Just really real? Things are just too dark, too difficult.

Things aren't unfolding reasonably as we were expecting. So, I find this passage helpful. That John could start to wonder and ask a question.

[59 : 51] He saw these, I think, but he didn't think they were enough. He thought the prophetic promises should be more fulfilled by you, Jesus. I see what you're saying, but I want more. I think that's him.

Yeah, the timing is out of sync. It often is in life, isn't it? I think Matthew's Gospel, by the way, since people are thinking through their questions now, I think Matthew's Gospel is proof that Christians weren't expecting the end of the world, the first generation of Christians, as often some people say they were.

I don't think leisurely documents like Matthew would have been written if they thought, well, any day now, you know, the heavens are going to open and it's all over. They were expecting, they didn't dismiss the idea that the Gospel may have a long story ahead of them.

But they could meditate on Jesus in this immensely, I call it, leisurely way. That's a side issue, but that's, people are interested in biblical history, New Testament scholarship, it goes right to the heart of some big questions.

Albert Schweitzer thought all the first Christians were wild-eyed people, literally expecting them to the world, any moment. I don't think, why did they write like this? But that's another question.

[61 : 14] I should answer. You just said, after that, John's back to the mind of the government, the dove coming down and Jesus is a back to the earth, he witnessed that.

And yet, he said that, that's an example. And he said, he didn't get to the fact, he didn't know that. He didn't know that. But, the idea that he witnessed that, then, he was thinking, I really want.

Yeah. And he said, he didn't get to the end of it. Well, I was, when I wrote, that's a good question. When I first wrote this through, I was going to put in a big section about all the people in the Gospels who didn't believe in Jesus.

In the light of the Da Vinci Code nonsense, some people seem to give the, there's a tone out there, unbelief started around the Enlightenment. Everybody was a solid Christian believer without arguments against Jesus for 2,000 years.

The Gospels tell us that, for instance, the brothers and sisters of Jesus didn't believe in him, according to John's Gospel. You could be right up close to Jesus and not believe in him. So, I'm not offended by, I think the doubt is encouraging.

[62 : 20] A lot of people didn't believe in Jesus. And the belief they did have was often flaky. Lord, I believe, help my unbelief. It's sort of the tone. The best thing, that's as far as they get.

And I think, doesn't that show you to read the Gospels humbly? What, we don't know what's meant by John had some mystical experience, whatever it was, visionary experience when Jesus was baptized. What do we, we don't know what that means.

Gee, apparently Mary had visionary experiences at the birth of Jesus, but she was quite capable of believing later on in her life that her son Jesus was more or less off his, out of his mind. He's beside himself.

So, I think Matthew's Gospel has this theme of, expect Jesus to be strange. He's just barely within the range of our intellectual capacity, this man.

That's why Jesus is so strange and produces Da Vinci Code stuff. A history of New Testament criticism that just goes off in every direction imaginable.

[63 : 23] Because it's hard to capture him. Who is this guy? Yeah. If you're, I like the, I like the divine wisdom, the divine rhetoric, which tells me that if you're wise in understanding, well, you can expect to find these things hidden from you.

If you're a baby, a little one, teachable, humble, you'll get it. Just sitting there. So you learn to die daily.

Wait. Wait. Yeah. What were the people that were? Were they? Were they? Some people, yeah. Yeah, some were obviously. The, uh... Yeah.

Sure. Sure. At least one of Jesus' twelve was almost certainly one of those. Were they? Were they? Were they? Were they? Were they?

Were they? Were they? No, it wasn't enough. They wanted more. They didn't like the timing. Sure.

[64 : 44] There's all sorts of potential spectrum of possible responses to Messiah figures, in the first sense. You see, uh, the Romans obviously thought that his language was political, but it was found frightening after all.

Yeah. Sure. Like, Jacob Newsner and other really good Jewish scholars, that's their final position.

They said, no, when Messiah comes, it has to be a, um, a world-changing apocalyptic event. Without doubt, it's not overwhelming. And so, it's the issue of timing comes down. It's just like in this passage.

John is saying, well, okay, okay, I've heard about the Isaiah-like things in the ministry, but he thinks that it's not enough. I want more.

Can I look for someone else? So, the issues that are discussed today are right in the New Testament. I can't remember. Ancient Israel obviously read the servant songs as referring to all of Israel.

[65 : 51] He was the suffering one waiting to be lifted up. So, Jesus is the suffering one who's lifted up according to this community of confession. It's already happened.

It happened in two stages. Jesus is the first stage of the film. Yeah. Jesus is the first stage to hear about.

Yeah, what is this point? Mr. Consort is the part of the Gospel by Ian Giro. To watch about the Gospel by Ian and Barbara. Nicholas one day.

In this life, almost all that we experience comes to our body. And if we can set that aside and realize that that's a temporary condition, and ultimately our soul is the important thing, that's the only way that we're going to get rest, because we aren't going to get rest necessarily for our body.

There are those who accept that Jesus is God, and they, in an actual state, reject Jesus' Lord.

[67 : 15] They accept those truths and still will not have rest within the body. They'll die for our nation, they'll be persecuted and mutilated. But the rest will only come, I think, when you accept that, ultimately our soul is the only way.

And in that condition, the soul is kind of the eternal thing. And when you accept eternity, it is going to be that we can have to be that.

We may not have a chance to have a body. Yeah, the last thing that's sort of interesting, aren't they? That the order's straight and everything.

It's good. As Tom Wright likes to say, I'm calling Tom Wright a lot today, I think he says it just recently in a book he wrote, not many Christians realize that the pretty clear teaching of the Bible is that when you die, you go to a place called paradise, which is in heaven.

Paradise is where you go and you wait for the day of resurrection. He loves to quote the hymn, and yet there breaks a yet more glorious day.

[68 : 22] The saints triumphant, rise in bright array. Paradise, the rabbis believe that apparently paradise was a multi-dimensional kind of place.

The place where our Lord went when he died to preach to the spirits in prison. It's the place that he promised the thief on the cross today, he'll be with me in paradise. Not in heaven, in paradise.

Then God's going to create a new heaven and a new earth wherein dwells righteousness. We're going to still be here in heaven, so to speak. Interesting story ahead of us.

However it happens, it'll be fun, apparently. I think it's, my guess is it's because he likes to think of the spirit as Proverbs 8.

That is wisdom. He refers not by name, but to the spirit by task. By office, the bringer of wisdom. The Holy Spirit is there in the gospel and present in Jesus as wisdom.

[69 : 28] That's the best I can do. But you're right, the baptism formula right at the end evokes the full Trinitarian name. Well, I stand corrected.

I think the baptism narrative, as they say, would have the spirit there. I think he comes, does he come as a dove in Matthew? Does Matthew acknowledge it? I think the spirit there is wisdom, anyway, for sure.

That's my best guess. Matthew's gospel of Christ in the Essene is very wise. It is a wisdom document. You can imagine first century Christian believers in Jesus having good conversations with well-intentioned, thoughtful people in the synagogue over the issues that Matthew raises.

It could be a discussion paper for such communities. Matthew's very Jewish. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah.

Yeah. Well, we have thanks. Well, that you haveeery from everyone. The next level. Victoryogic, I see him that was a fondant Freud. Yeah. Yeah. unsererMON Um... Hey. Ouromers are... You are today. Yeah. I know señora. Who are...

[70 : 43] Yeah. The next level. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Okay. All right. Yeah. Okay. Okay. Why are you?