Journal for Matthew online class Kolleen Lucariello

Week One:

1a: Jesus Grandmothers (this is a new way of looking at them for me. I've never thought of them in such a personal way. They were His grandmothers not just women in a list of names)

Tamar: A woman who had been passed from one brother to another following each of their deaths (due to the fact that God was not pleased with them), and then told to wait for the last brother to become old enough to marry her. When Judah did not keep his part of the bargain (out of fear he'd lose another son), Tamar plays a harlot, sleeps with Judah, takes his staff, signet and cord (a seal on a cord he wore around his neck as legal identification), and becomes pregnant with his child. When Judah discovers Tamar is pregnant he wants her to be burned at the stake. It is then that she identifies him as the father by revealing she has his staff, signet and cord. As a woman without a son life would have been difficult for Tamar and her father-in-law wasn't being true to his word, so she took matters into her own hand. Jesus's grandmother played a harlot and conceived twins. (It's odd to me that God would not allow her to conceive by her first husband, nor her second, but would have her conceive Perez and Zerah through deception by Judah and Perez would be in the lineage of Jesus).

Rehab: A harlot in Jericho who hides the spies and only reveals partial truth to the king when he asks about their whereabouts. She was a woman who had heard about what Lord had done for Israel and negotiated for her families safety. "Go into the harlot's house" – this was how Joshua identified her, but Matthew makes no mention of her being a harlot in his list of genealogy. Jesus grandmother was a former harlot who had the faith to receive and hide the spies, which began to set things into motion for Jericho to fall according to God's plan and for His purposes.

Ruth the Moabite: It's odd that God would use Ruth to conceive in the lineage of Jesus when the Law of Moses excluded Moabite's from the assembly of the Lord for ten generations (Deut. 23:3). Yet, God's plan of redemption is evident through the story of Ruth and her marriage to Boaz – her Kinsman-Redeemer. God's inclusion of Ruth reveals to me that God is never afraid to shake things up and surprise us when we have come to a conclusion of who can be used by God and who can't. Her identity as a Moabitess is never hidden.

Bathsheba: A woman summoned by the king for a one night stand. Daughter of Eliam, granddaughter of Ahithophel the Gilonite, married to Uriah the Hittite. Impregnated by David and then waited while David plotted to hide his sin. She lost her first child with David but then gave birth to Solomon, who was God's favorite!;) While it is sad to me that their child died, this is a reminder to me that God has a plan for every child and doesn't hold our sins against us. This thing that David had done might have disqualified him if I were calling the shots, but our sin and bad choices don't disqualify us from His care and love.

1b: I am often amazed to discover that God isn't afraid to shock us by His decisions to use people that we would disqualify. God used women to fulfill His plan that were not Jewish. While Sarah and Rebekah made their own messes by trying to fulfill God's plan in their time, and make sure things happened their way – they were still Jewish. This would have made it nice and tidy for the Jewish people to accept. The shock for them had to be accepting that God brought His Son forth with tainted DNA. Right?

Week Two:

1a. ***One thing that caught my attention this week*** was learning more about Herod. I didn't realize he was an Idumean (Edomite). It makes sense to me now that Herod, who was only ***half Jew***, would be threatened by those words, "King of the Jews."I always wondered what would drive him to slaughter all of the boys under the age of two – was he that insecure? But now I see that if there was a full-blooded king who could cause the Jews to attempt to overthrow him, it makes sense. His insecurity and worry about being dethroned by someone who was ***full Jew*** was explainable, but to kill his own children? His favorite wife? And anyone else who dared cross him. It sounds like he killed first and asked questions later – putting to death any threat against him. Even if it was unfounded. I do wonder why, though, after reading this did God send the Magi to him to ask King Herod of all people about the "King of the Jews." Couldn't they have skipped that one stop and spared the lives of all those little boys?

I can see now that in the same way Moses led God's people through the wilderness and into the Promised land, Jesus was leading a new Exodus, and God would use Him to lead His people out of their own exile and out from under the harsh Roman rule.

2. Paying attention to the people mentioned in each story, I learned:

The wise men went to Herod seeking a baby, innocently asking for his whereabouts. This led Herod to slaughter innocent young children.

- This reminds me that sometimes an innocent act on my part can lead someone to take what I've shared and create grief for others. Maybe I didn't intend to gossip – but through my words, someone was hurt.

King Herod – an evil man full of insecurity.

- he reveals to me what uncontrolled jealousy and paranoia can produce. It truly is poison to be avoided. Left unchecked it can lead me to inflict horrible pain on others. I must watch my need to control others and circumstances to meet my own needs.

Joseph – A man who listened intently to God and understood, as well as, obeyed when God s poke to him in a dream. He did not hesitate, he did not challenge God with endless questions and commentary on what he thought would be best. God said, "Arise. Take the child and mother. Go to Egypt. Stay until I tell you otherwise."

- Joseph shows me the importance of obeying right away. Sometimes, I need a few confirmations that I've *actually* heard God correctly. God has a way of letting us know He's talking and it's in our best interest to listen and obey right away. Not to mention the fact that Joseph obeyed God by marrying Mary to begin with. He was such an honorable man.

God – God fulfills His plans and His purposes. While we want to rush through life making our plans fit into God's, He has a perfect time for all things. I really liked how Matthew added "that it

might be fulfilled" in his narrative. I am a bit confused by the fact that he added "spoken by the prophets" in verse 23 if it wasn't spoken by the prophets.

John the Baptist - The voice God used to tell others to prepare the way for Jesus, the Messiah! He knew his role and he was willing to admit he wasn't even worthy of carrying the sandals of Jesus. No pride or selfish interest there.

- I'd love my heart to get to the point when I refused to be threatened by the ministry of others. In the same way John moved out of the way for Jesus, I'd like to be able to move out of the way when I know it's time.

Week Three

Level 1:

a. I have really been challenged by the study of the Sermon on the Mount this week. There is so much truth in the statement that we seem to know the Ten Commandments and try to live by a list of do and don't rules. Yet, we don't spend much time on the Sermon on the Mount, which focus on who we are rather than what we do. I want to remember that if I live out of who I am in Christ, I will live according to the Ten Commandments because I am living as He intended for me to be. This has reset my focus, and my desire to think more about my identity as His child who lives and thinks by Jesus' sermon.

Level 2:

1a. Choose several beatitudes and identify what fallen condition of humanity these beatitudes reveal (the condition could be as simple as rebellion, pride, etc. or involve a larger reflection of human brokenness or limited creatureliness. Might even be fear, lack of understanding, or anxiety.). Look for any aspect of human nature that requires God's grace.

Verse 3: Blessed are the Poor in Spirit. I think this reveals the fallen condition of the greed that drives us to have more than enough and hoard what we do have. I also think it reveals the fallen condition of fear and jealousy when we feel the need to keep up with others to have what they have. The fear of not-enough and lack of trust that God will supply all of our needs, as well as, the condition of pride that believes we don't need God to accomplish anything. Jesus reminds us that while people may seek to shame those who don't fit into the mold they've created, God actually wants to give them the kingdom of heaven.

Verse 4: Blessed are those who mourn. Perhaps, in our fallen condition, we have also become a "pull yourself together people" who refuse to listen to the heartbreak one feels in their loss, or refuse to allow ourselves to feel the heartbreak we've experienced. We look for ways to find comfort without allowing God to be the One to comfort us and become hardened to the emotion of sadness. Jesus reminds us that it's okay to mourn your loss because God cares for you in your sorrow and is the Ultimate comforter.

Verse 5: Blessed are the meek. We live during a time when the need to be noticed and liked pushes us to be someone other than who God intended for us to be. Once we realize our identity is found in Christ alone, we must persist in our pursuit to be comfortable with who we are and how He has created us. In our fallen condition, however, we live to out-insult others and prove we are just as good as the next guy. We never want to think someone pulled one over on us so we have our comebacks ready and loaded.

Verse 6: Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness. In our fallen nature it is quite easy to believe we must take justice into our own hands. Vengeance, perhaps? When we see injustice

seemingly win over and over again, and the godless get rewarded, we must remember that eventually, God will reveal true justice. Our human nature wants to be vindicated when we know true justice was not served.

Verse 7: Blessed are the merciful. In our fallen condition we become insecure when we feel honor is lacking. Then we become demanding and demeaning towards anyone who steps out of line. I think of husbands who misinterpret submission and remind the wife of her responsibility to "honor him." When we are merciful, when we show mercy, we never need to demand honor from others, it will be there.

Verse 8: Blessed are the pure in heart. In our fallen nature, the lust of the flesh pulls us toward feel-good idols and away from the purity of God. When we refuse to find our comfort in the Lord, we run to food, sex, drugs, shopping, the need for more and that's what stains us. It drives us away from the purity God deserves – and demands. I think about the verse in 2 Chronicles 25:2 that says, "even though Amaziah obeyed the Lord by doing right, he refused to be completely faithful" (CEV). Ouch. When we are completely faithful – we are pure and can see God.

Verse 9: Blessed are the peacemakers. In our fallen nature we fight and claw our way to the top. Fear of being used or taken advantage of causes us to fight for our rights, for what we believe deserve. Pride won't allow anyone to one up us – so we get the last word and put people in their place. Words can cut others to their knees. But, that's not what God is all about. That's not how He plays. I've had to learn how to bite my tongue and keep my lips from speaking evil and trust God will be honored when I keep silent and keep the peace.

Verse 10: Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness: I think in our fallen condition, fear of what people think, or fear of being different keeps us bound to fitting in with the crowd. Especially in this time of social media, if you have a position against what others believe – it can be very hard to stand up for what you do believe in. We look for ways to have Jesus in comfort because fear of being uncomfortable or singled out might be too hard of a cost.

Verse 11 – 12: Blessed are you when insulted or persecuted. My flesh does not like to be insulted or persecuted. Not, one bit. I want to be thought well of. I don't want people to misunderstand my heart or my intentions, so to have someone insult me or talk poorly of me – or about me – causes me to try to defend myself. It's difficult to let people think something that isn't true and not set them straight. Yet, I am reminded that when Jesus stood before those who sought to kill Him – He never defended Himself. Not even as He carried His cross to Golgotha.

b. How does God in Christ and the Gospel provide a redemptive solution to this condition of brokenness you identified in 'a'? Are there other Scriptures that come to mind which support this liberating solution for our experience of sin, immaturity, suffering, and brokenness?

> God provided a way for us to change through a new life in Christ. The Holy Spirit dwelling in us makes it possible for change. Jesus redeemed us from the need to live a carnal life Christian life that never changes or has any type of fruit from our relationship with Him.
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> Jesus said He would "…pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever— the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you. I will not leave you orphans; I will come to you" (John 14:16-18 NKJV). The Holy Spirit living within us changes us and helps us overcome.

> “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new” (II Corinthians 5:17 NKJV).
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> “For “who has known the mind of the LORD that he may instruct Him?” But we have the mind of Christ” (I Corinthians 2:16 NKJV). We have the mind of Christ! We don’t need to think like we always done! As we spend time in the Word of God we are changed. We know His mind and heart and it changes us! (If we allow it, too!)
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> “For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit” (Romans 8:5 NKJV). Where you set your mind matters.
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> “My old self has been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me. So I live in this earthly body by trusting in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me” (Galatians 2:20 NLT). I am dead to the old me – alive to Christ within me!

c. God is concerned with our spiritual formation, or what the pastoral team at Abundant Life encourages us to do in order to go deeper into our commitment to know God and live out the Gospel. What virtue or habit of character does this text exhort me to pursue as a result? How does my answer align with the attitudes and behaviors given in Galatians 5:22; Ephesians 5:9; and Philippians 4:8?

Goodness. Reading and studying through the Sermon on the Mount, and watching the YouTube video has reminded me that God’s plan was for me to change. To become more like Him. To think like Him as well as listen intently to His instruction. He calls me to be like Him. To represent Him well. His plan and purpose has always been for me to grow in the love of God so I manifest the fruit of joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. The light within me should produce only that which is good, right and true! I will fix my thoughts “on what is true, and honorable, and right, and pure, and lovely, and admirable. I will think about things that are excellent and worthy of praise” (Philippians 4:8 NLT). This is how my life is changed.

d. Knowing our present context. These beatitudes are counter cultural. The Scriptures talk about coming out of darkness into light. In fact, Col. 1:13-14, “For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.” In what ways do these beatitudes clash with societal values today? How would the values and behaviors Jesus teaches his people to follow bring about change in our families or communities in which we live? Give examples to support your statements.

We don’t want to be second. We live in a culture focused on self – not wanting to be uncomfortable or inconvenienced. We don’t like sacrifice – goodness, sometimes I get frustrated if I need to wait on my husband or kids more than I want to.

I’ve seen a marriage on the brink of divorce come through the darkness of the night because one spouse was at the end of their rope – poor in spirit – recognized their need to break the addiction and the other spouse decided to become the peacemaker. This couple is a testimony to the power of God living through individuals who were willing to humble themselves. I think of all the marriages that could be restored and saved if only we learned to live by the principles found in Jesus instruction through the Sermon on the Mount.

Week Four

Level 1:

A. One thing that struck me as I read through this weeks chapters was the common factor of “unclean.” Jesus healed those who were unclean without fear of the law or the Pharisees. Not only did He heal them, He touched them, which was unheard of. His Gospel was a Gospel for everyone. I found myself challenged to never again overlook anyone based upon my opinion or fear that they were too “unclean.”

Level 2:

1. Re-read Matthew chapters 8 and 9, 11 and 12.
a. Choose one person (Jesus, the woman with the issue of blood, etc.) or character group (the crowds/people, the disciples, the authorities, minor characters who favor Jesus, or any group you recognize). Create3 columns for the choice you made and make separate, brief notes (not quotes) in the following categories:
b. What the character says that illumines her or his character.
c. What the character does that illumines her or his character.
d. What others say to or about them that illumines their character.

The Leper		
He asked for healing from his leprosy. He was unclean according to the law probably very lonely. Leper’s were outcasts until the leprosy left them. He also wondered if Jesus was willing to heal him. “If you are willing.” There must have been a little doubt about his worth to Jesus. Whether he was worth His time.	He came to Jesus – He didn’t wait for Jesus to come to him, he made the effort to get to Jesus. When He met Jesus, he worshipped Him. I see humility in his act of worship – He exalted Jesus over his infirmity.	Jesus told the leper he was worth healing. He was worth His time and effort. He was worth investing in.

Week Five:

Level 1 a: The parables have caught my attention this week. Specifically the parable of the sower. It challenges me to think about the Word of God and how I allow it to resonate within my heart. What seed has God tried to plant, but I lost due to improper soil? Did he try to plant a seed within me that I refused to allow take root because I didn’t like the delivery or the person who delivered the message? Ouch. I just wonder how much seed has died that He intended to produce a good harvest because I didn’t care for it properly.

Level 2: question 1

Scripture Passage	What Historical and Cultural Details Do You Need to Know? (Step 1)	What do you think is the specific need, question, problem, or situation Jesus is addressing? (Step 2)	What do you think is the spiritual meaning of the story? (Step 3)
Parable of the Sower and types of Soil (13:3-9; 18-23)	Jesus drew on an ancient farming conventions and principles the poor (tenant farmers) and rich used alike: • The sower must sow widely to assure a good harvest. • Not all soil will yield good fruit. • One does not know which seed or which day's labor will succeed, so you labor widely (Ecclesiastes 11:3-6). • We do not know where our sowing will bear fruit, but we can be confident that the overall harvests will make up for every effort.	Jesus was addressing the need for seed to be sown in good soil, fertile soil, that will produce a good crop. When seed produces a good crop, many can be fed from it.	Satan is always waiting, lurking to steal the seed of the Word of God that gets planted in our heart. It is his desire that any seed of God's truth never gets properly planted. He doesn't want a healthy plant to come of it in our lives.
Parable of the Tares (13:24-30; 36-43)	These agricultural images are familiar to the readers: • Owner is a wealthy landowner, unlike the peasant farmer of the previous parable. • Tares is a term that only appears in Matthew's parable. It was known to Semitic people as a weed that looked like wheat in the early stages of growth.	One owner of a prosperous and bountiful crop has his field destroyed by a rival that decides to destroy the good crop by adding an imposter to the field that will produce nothing	Jesus is the rich farmer who owns the best of the best field and has a great crop growing, but His enemy is going to plant look-a-like imposters into His field and they are going to poison
Parable of the Mustard Seed (13:31-32)	Botanically, the mustard seed is not the smallest of all seeds and it grows into a bush, not a tree. • The black mustard seed was small, and it did grow up to 9 feet. • The people would have known this fact. • Makes Jesus' point: the inconspicuous (the tiny) becomes mighty.	Don't be fooled into thinking the smallest seed can't produce something great. What appears to be insignificant to the human eye holds the potential to grow into a great tree. One	The future kingdom of God is here, right before you, but you view it now as insignificant. One day those who put their faith in that little seed with find their home in the kingdom of God
Parable of the Leaven (13:33)	Galilean women baked their own families' bread. • Amount of flour here is about 50 lbs. (You do the math!) • Would feed 100 people.	She doesn't need to rely on others to feed her family. She understands the value of what she has and tries to hide it but can't because yeast expands. It produces	The kingdom of God grows from within. Yeast can't be seen but it expands and those with the kingdom of God implanted within their hearts can't keep it to themselves

	A housewife would not have kneaded a batch of this magnitude.		
Parable of the Hidden Treasure (13:44)	People in Palestine often hid treasures in their fields: Would have stayed hidden if the owner died Hidden treasure was a popular idea in Near Eastern folklore Most discovered treasure stories emphasized the extravagant lifestyle afterwards Jesus' emphasis is on the price the finder was willing to pay	Poverty widespread during this time, making it relatable to why someone would rejoice over finding a hidden treasure. They would be instantly wealthy!	Finding the kingdom of God is equivalent to finding a hidden treasure and becoming exceedingly wealthy. There is great worth in finding this treasure. More than anything on the earth.
Parable of the Merchant Seeking Pearls (13:45-46)	Divers fished for pearls in the Red Sea, the Persian Gulf, and the Indian Ocean. Merchants were people with money for purchasing things • Pearls were sold for wealthy women's necklaces Ancient sources speak of some pearls worth tens of millions of dollars by current money standa rds	The desire to have something of worth and value. It seems the parables relate to financial value and the need for money.	While owning pearls of great value will look nice around your neck, the real value is found when the kingdom of God is found in your heart. The kingdom is worth more than anything pearls could buy.
Parable of the Large	People living around the Sea of	Good fish are separated from the	The same is true at the end of the age.

Fishing Net = Dragnet (13:47-50)	Galilee would have seen fishermen separating the edible and kosher fish from the inedible ones.	bad fish. Those who hold no value are cast away.	Only the good fish will remain.