

## Lutheran Study Bible

RE: Explanation of changes in Matthew study notes

Writer: Dr. Duane Priebe, Professor of Systematic Theology, Wartburg Theological Seminary

Shortly after the publication of Lutheran Study Bible in March 2009, Augsburg Fortress received concerned questions and comments regarding three particular Matthew sidebar notes for the Gospel of Matthew. The perception of those expressing concern is that the notes leaned toward a universalistic understanding of salvation. After reviewing the notes again and receiving feedback from some of the LSB board, we took action to edit these notes for the 2<sup>nd</sup> and future printings.

Dr. Priebe has written extensive explanations for his comments online at a blog site where these issues were addressed. He also provided us with a detailed explanation, a portion of which is excerpted here:

As you know, I did not say “all are saved,” although I know people often understand it that way. What I want to say is that since Jesus Christ died for all, all are included in God’s love for sinners in Jesus Christ. What we know as Christians – and believe if we have faith in Jesus Christ and not in something about ourselves, which would be idolatry – is that the incarnation, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ is the event of God’s saving, life-giving love for the whole world, not just some people. I think we also believe that God’s love in Christ is more powerful than any sin – otherwise God would not be God. What we cannot do is to draw boundaries between those included in God’s saving love in Christ and those not – passing judgment on others for any reason is absolutely excluded in the NT. If some are ultimately lost, that is God’s business. But since I am constantly at risk of passing judgment on others, I am the most at risk of being lost under God’s judgment. . . . I know that people seem to draw the conclusion that if Jesus Christ died for all, and if all are included in God’s love in Jesus Christ, that sounds anti-evangelistic.

While this explanation can be made, it is not how the note was read in the original printing. Unfortunately, a study Bible format often limits the number of words available for explanation, so we determined at Augsburg Fortress that the language in the original notes could leave an impression that was anti-evangelistic. We adjusted the notes to remove what we deemed to be the most controversial or offensive language. In the case of the note at Matthew 28:16-20, we simply removed the words:

**That does not mean make everyone disciples. Most people who are helped by Jesus and believe in him never become disciples. Jesus includes in salvation people who do not believe in him or even know about him (5:3-10; 25:31-45).**

Matthew 28 has traditionally been and continues to be a call to make disciples of all nations, that is, everyone. Priebe would argue that his note does not dilute this principle, but we have removed these lines, because, for many, they did seem to be anti-evangelical.

It is also important to say that the notes of Lutheran Study Bible are not meant to take the place of ELCA doctrinal teaching. It is a study resource written by a diverse set of writers and intended to guide and engage conversation in the church. Some have suggested that these notes may signal a change in ELCA doctrine. This is not the case.

Several modifications were made in the study note at Matthew 25:31-46. Here again the original note was making subtle distinctions about the relationship between the unbelieving nations and Jesus. It also spoke of a way that “Jesus creates salvation for those who do not even know him.”

The emphasis by the writer was on the role of Jesus in seeking to save all. But the impression was again made that this language was anti-evangelical and brought into question the traditional understanding that people come to faith through hearing the Word or having a relationship with the Word, Jesus Christ. This note in the 2<sup>nd</sup> printing will read as follows:

[WB] **25:31-46 Son of Man . . . nations will be gathered before him:** The coming of the Son of Man here includes a final judgment. Scholars have argued the identity of the “nations” in this parable. Matthew may be following the Jewish tendency to distinguish between non-Jewish “nations” and Israel as God’s “people.” That distinction is sometimes reflected when the word for “nations” is translated as “Gentiles.” If this is so, the “nations” here are in contrast with God’s “people” and the little ones (see Matt 18:6) who belong to Jesus. And the parable could refer to how the nations respond to the needs of God’s people.

More likely, the meaning is much broader. All are judged by how they treat those in need. This means that both Jesus’ followers and the unbelieving nations are invited to help those who suffer and are broken. What they do to these little ones they do to Jesus. Jesus’ word is a promise that creates what it declares. Jesus makes those who suffer and are broken the place of his presence in our world, even for those who do not claim to be Jesus’ followers. In this way the parable speaks of the surprising way in which the unbelieving nations have a relationship to Jesus, who is present in all the little, insignificant ones, whose suffering Jesus took into himself in his own suffering and death. At the same time, those who believe in Jesus need to guard against the temptation to make serving others a means to achieve salvation.

At Matthew 5:3-12, this issue emerges again. While the writer was making a consistent argument throughout the notes, the impression left here again could be read as anti-evangelical, so it was edited as well. In this instance, **we simply removed the last two sentences of the note**, which read as follows:

**Notice that they do not depend on faith or even on knowing Jesus. This is one way God creates salvation.**

At Augsburg Fortress, we are deeply appreciative of all feedback and comments received. We take these seriously and will continue to work to improve Lutheran Study Bible and all the resources we develop.

Submitted by Rev. Scott Tunseth  
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## Jesus Ministers to Crowds of People

23 Jesus<sup>a</sup> went throughout Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the good news<sup>b</sup> of the kingdom and curing every disease and every sickness among the people.<sup>24</sup> So his fame spread throughout all Syria, and they brought to him all the sick, those who were afflicted with various diseases and pains, demoniacs, epileptics, and paralytics, and he cured them.<sup>25</sup> And great crowds followed him from Galilee, the Decapolis, Jerusalem, Judea, and from beyond the Jordan.

### The Beatitudes

**5** When Jesus<sup>a</sup> saw the crowds, he went up the mountain; and after he sat down, his disciples came to him.<sup>2</sup> Then he began to speak, and taught them, saying:

3 “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

4 “Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.

5 “Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.

6 “Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.

7 “Blessed are the merciful, for they will receive mercy.

8 “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.

9 “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.

10 “Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

11 “Blessed are you when people revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely<sup>c</sup> on my account.<sup>12</sup> Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

### Salt and Light

13 “You are the salt of the earth; but if salt has lost its taste, how can its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything, but is thrown out and trampled under foot.

14 “You are the light of the world. A city built on a hill cannot be hid.<sup>15</sup> No one after lighting a lamp puts it under the bushel basket, but on the lampstand, and it gives light to all in the house.<sup>16</sup> In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven.

### The Law and the Prophets

17 “Do not think that I have come to abolish the law or the prophets; I have come not to abolish but to fulfill.<sup>18</sup> For truly I tell



**5:1–7:29 Jesus...went up the mountain:** This section is known as the Sermon on the Mount. While it includes things Jesus may have said at different times, in Matthew it is to be read as a single sermon. Like Sinai or the temple mount, mountains are often places of significant religious events (14:23; 15:29; 17:1, 2; 28:16).



**5:3–12 Blessed are:** This section is known as the Beatitudes. The word *blessed* also can be translated as “happy.” So Jesus now declares people blessed in light of God’s coming rule. The Beatitudes create what they declare. Jesus makes the new world of God’s rule actual now in this broken world. Yet it also remains a promised future.



**5:3 Blessed are the poor in spirit:** “Poor in spirit” means to lack spirit. Spirit has to do with life and life beyond self. Jesus includes the spiritually poor in the kingdom. His friendship with sinners interprets this beatitude (8:5–13; 9:9–13; 21:32; see 1 Cor 1:27–29; Rom 5:6–10).



**How does Luther understand God’s spoken word?** Luther understands God’s spoken word as creative power, not information. When God speaks, God’s word creates what it declares. God’s word called the universe and everything in it into existence. The beatitudes create reality. *Matthew 5:3–12*



If Jesus teaches *who* to bless, not *how* to be blessed, how would that change your life?



What do you think it means to be salt and light in the world?



**5:17–21 abolish the law or the prophets:** Jesus has come to fulfill, not abolish, Israel’s Scriptures (see Rom 3:31). God’s covenant with Israel will not end. The scribes were interpreters of the law; the Pharisees applied the law to ordinary, daily life. Yet this righteousness is not enough. God’s will goes beyond what the law requires (5:20).



**5:17 law:** The law, or Torah, is God’s covenant with Israel at Sinai. Its basis is their election as God’s people. The Torah also includes God’s covenant with Noah, the nations, and all living things (see Gen 9:1–17).

<sup>a</sup> Gk *He*    <sup>b</sup> Gk *gospel*    <sup>c</sup> Other ancient authorities lack *falsely*

another two, to another one, to each according to his ability. Then he went away.<sup>16</sup> The one who had received the five talents went off at once and traded with them, and made five more talents.<sup>17</sup> In the same way, the one who had the two talents made two more talents.<sup>18</sup> But the one who had received the one talent went off and dug a hole in the ground and hid his master's money.<sup>19</sup> After a long time the master of those slaves came and settled accounts with them.<sup>20</sup> Then the one who had received the five talents came forward, bringing five more talents, saying, 'Master, you handed over to me five talents; see, I have made five more talents.'<sup>21</sup> His master said to him, 'Well done, good and trustworthy slave; you have been trustworthy in a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master.'<sup>22</sup> And the one with the two talents also came forward, saying, 'Master, you handed over to me two talents; see, I have made two more talents.'<sup>23</sup> His master said to him, 'Well done, good and trustworthy slave; you have been trustworthy in a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master.'<sup>24</sup> Then the one who had received the one talent also came forward, saying, 'Master, I knew that you were a harsh man, reaping where you did not sow, and gathering where you did not scatter seed;<sup>25</sup> so I was afraid, and I went and hid your talent in the ground. Here you have what is yours.'<sup>26</sup> But his master replied, 'You wicked and lazy slave! You knew, did you, that I reap where I did not sow, and gather where I did not scatter?'<sup>27</sup> Then you ought to have invested my money with the bankers, and on my return I would have received what was my own with interest.<sup>28</sup> So take the talent from him, and give it to the one with the ten talents.<sup>29</sup> For to all those who have, more will be given, and they will have an abundance; but from those who have nothing, even what they have will be taken away.<sup>30</sup> As for this worthless slave, throw him into the outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.'



**25:31-46 Son of Man . . . nations will be gathered before him:**

The coming of the Son of Man here includes a final judgment. Scholars have argued the identity of the "nations" in this parable. Matthew may be following the Jewish tendency to distinguish between non-Jewish "nations" and Israel as God's "people." That distinction is sometimes reflected when the word for "nations" is translated as "Gentiles." If this is so, the "nations" here are in contrast with God's "people" and the little ones (see Matt 18:6) who belong to Jesus. And the parable could refer to how the nations respond to the needs of God's people.

More likely, the meaning is much broader. All are judged by how they treat those in need. This means that both Jesus' followers and the unbelieving nations are invited to help those who suffer and are broken. What they do to these little ones they do to Jesus. Jesus' word is a promise that creates what it declares. Jesus makes those who suffer and are broken the place of his presence in our world, even for those who do not claim to be Jesus' followers. In this way the parable speaks of the surprising way in which the unbelieving nations have a relationship to Jesus, who is present in all the little, insignificant ones, whose suffering Jesus took into himself in his own suffering and death. At the same time, those who believe in Jesus need to guard against the temptation to make serving others a means to achieve salvation.

### The Judgment of the Nations

31 "When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on the throne of his glory.<sup>32</sup> All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats,<sup>33</sup> and he will put the sheep at his right hand and the goats at the left.<sup>34</sup> Then the king will say to those at his right hand, 'Come, you that are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world;<sup>35</sup> for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me,<sup>36</sup> I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me.'<sup>37</sup> Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when was

you can.”<sup>a</sup> <sup>66</sup>So they went with the guard and made the tomb secure by sealing the stone.

## The Resurrection of Jesus



**28:1-15 He has been raised:** See Mark 16:1-8. Matthew interweaves two stories of the empty tomb: the soldiers guarding the tomb for fear someone would steal Jesus’ body (27:62-66; 28:2-4; 28:11-15), and the women at the tomb. Jesus appears first to the women, and they are the first messengers sent to tell of his resurrection. Meanwhile, the priests and elders bribed the soldiers guarding the tomb with money, so they wouldn’t say anything about Jesus’ resurrection.

**28** After the sabbath, as the first day of the week was dawning, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to see the tomb. <sup>2</sup>And suddenly there was a great earthquake; for an angel of the Lord, descending from heaven, came and rolled back the stone and sat on it. <sup>3</sup>His appearance was like lightning, and his clothing white as snow. <sup>4</sup>For fear of him the guards shook and became like dead men. <sup>5</sup>But the angel said to the women, “Do not be afraid; I know that you are looking for Jesus who was crucified. <sup>6</sup>He is not here; for he has been raised, as he said. Come, see the place where he<sup>b</sup> lay. <sup>7</sup>Then go quickly and tell his disciples, ‘He has been raised from the dead,<sup>c</sup> and indeed he is going ahead of you to Galilee; there you will see him.’ This is my message for you.” <sup>8</sup>So they left the tomb quickly with fear and great joy, and ran to tell his disciples. <sup>9</sup>Suddenly Jesus met them and said, “Greetings!” And they came to him, took hold of his feet, and worshiped him. <sup>10</sup>Then Jesus said to them, “Do not be afraid; go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee; there they will see me.”

## The Report of the Guard

**11** While they were going, some of the guard went into the city and told the chief priests everything that had happened. <sup>12</sup>After the priests<sup>d</sup> had assembled with the elders, they devised a plan to give a large sum of money to the soldiers, <sup>13</sup>telling them, “You must say, ‘His disciples came by night and stole him away while we were asleep.’ <sup>14</sup>If this comes to the governor’s ears, we will satisfy him and keep you out of trouble.” <sup>15</sup>So they took the money and did as they were directed. And this story is still told among the Jews to this day.

## The Commissioning of the Disciples

**16** Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. <sup>17</sup>When they saw him, they worshiped him; but some doubted. <sup>18</sup>And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. <sup>19</sup>Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, <sup>20</sup>and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”<sup>e</sup>



**28:16-20 the eleven disciples went to Galilee:** The eleven meet Jesus on a mountain in Galilee. Even when the eleven see him, some doubt. Jesus’ resurrection returns to the question of his authority in 7:28—9:34; 21:23-32. Through the resurrection, God has given Jesus all authority in heaven and on earth. This does not mean that only now does Jesus have authority. It establishes his authority exercised throughout his life and ministry (28:20). The end of the Gospel sends the reader back to the beginning (4:12—9:34), and it gives God’s answer to the Pharisees’ charge (9:34). In contrast to 10:5-6, 23, Jesus now sends the disciples to make disciples of all nations. Disciples are students, called for the sake of the world to learn from Jesus and to bear witness to the kingdom. They are salt and light (5:13-16). Jesus promises to be with them always as they carry out this mission. Previously, Jesus promised to be present in the exercise of forgiveness (18:18-20) and in the “least of these” who suffer (25:31-45).

<sup>a</sup> Gk you know how    <sup>b</sup> Other ancient authorities read *the Lord*    <sup>c</sup> Other ancient authorities lack *from the dead*    <sup>d</sup> Gk *they*    <sup>e</sup> Other ancient authorities add *Amen*

before the saints? <sup>2</sup>Do you not know that the saints will judge the world? And if the world is to be judged by you, are you incompetent to try trivial cases? <sup>3</sup>Do you not know that we are to judge angels—to say nothing of ordinary matters? <sup>4</sup>If you have ordinary cases, then, do you appoint as judges those who have no standing in the church? <sup>5</sup>I say this to your shame. Can it be that there is no one among you wise enough to decide between one believer<sup>a</sup> and another, <sup>6</sup>but a believer<sup>a</sup> goes to court against a believer<sup>a</sup>—and before unbelievers at that?

<sup>7</sup>In fact, to have lawsuits at all with one another is already a defeat for you. Why not rather be wronged? Why not rather be defrauded? <sup>8</sup>But you yourselves wrong and defraud—and believers<sup>b</sup> at that.

<sup>9</sup>Do you not know that wrongdoers will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived! Fornicators, idolaters, adulterers, male prostitutes, sodomites, <sup>10</sup>thieves, the greedy, drunkards, revilers, robbers—none of these will inherit the kingdom of God. <sup>11</sup>And this is what some of you used to be. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God.

## Glorify God in Body and Spirit

<sup>12</sup>“All things are lawful for me,” but not all things are beneficial. “All things are lawful for me,” but I will not be dominated by anything. <sup>13</sup>“Food is meant for the stomach and the stomach for food,”<sup>c</sup> and God will destroy both one and the other. The body is meant not for fornication but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body. <sup>14</sup>And God raised the Lord and will also raise us by his power. <sup>15</sup>Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Should I therefore take the members of Christ and make them members of a prostitute? Never! <sup>16</sup>Do you not know that whoever is united to a prostitute becomes one body with her? For it is said, “The two shall be one flesh.” <sup>17</sup>But anyone united to the Lord becomes one spirit with him. <sup>18</sup>Shun fornication! Every sin that a person commits is outside the body; but the fornicator sins against the body itself. <sup>19</sup>Or do you not know that your body is a temple<sup>d</sup> of the Holy Spirit within you, which you have from God, and that you are not your own? <sup>20</sup>For you were bought with a price; therefore glorify God in your body.

## Directions concerning Marriage

**7** Now concerning the matters about which you wrote: “It is well for a man not to touch a woman.” <sup>2</sup>But because of cases of sexual immorality, each man should have his own wife and each woman her own husband. <sup>3</sup>The husband should give to his wife her conjugal rights, and likewise the wife to her husband. <sup>4</sup>For the wife does not



### 6:9-11 wrongdoers... sodomites.

The last two examples of injustice in verse 9 stir controversy: the Greek words *malakoi* (literally, “soft ones”) and *arsenokoitai* (literally, “the ones who ‘bed’ males”). Bible versions beyond the NRSV (here “male prostitutes”) translate *malakoi* as “passive homosexual partners” (NET) and “homosexuals” (NKJV); *arsenokoitai* (here “sodomites”) appears as “practicing homosexuals,” (TNIV) and “homosexual offenders” (NIV). Two Bible versions (RSV and ESV) even join the separate words; one reads “sexual perverts” and the other “men who practice homosexuality.” Recently, scholars have asked how ancient, Greek-speaking audiences might have heard the two terms. “Softness” signified lack of self-control in matters including but not limited to sex, as reflected in the KJV’s “effeminate” and NJB’s “the self-indulgent.” Some early Christians (Theophilus of Antioch, Eusebius, and Macarius) heard in *arsenokoitai* a male’s desire to increase his reputation for power by shaming other males through coerced penetration. In a word, rape.



### 6:12-20 united to a prostitute: In

Greek antiquity, elite, married males regularly maintained women for sexual relationships outside of marriage. Although Paul does not say so directly, this use of prostitutes or mistresses would have emphasized the social power of elite males even within the church. Readers will note that the arguments of 6:12-20 seem disconnected from each other. From Paul’s viewpoint they are. Any argument that puts an end to the behavior will do. His stated concern is not for the economic and psychological ruin that prostitution might bring to women. Rather, he seeks to shame the men out of this behavior by appealing to a widespread male attitude that in a romantic affair a man subordinated himself to the authority of a woman (6:12, 14-16).



### 7:1-9 It is well for a man not to touch a woman:

The quotation marks in 7:1, which imply that the enclosed phrase is not Paul’s own opinion, are not in the Greek text. For Paul, marriage is a second-best option provided for those who “burn,” that is, those unable to control their passion. Some scholars have seen a breakthrough to equality between husband and wife in 7:3-5, but the underlying metaphors are drawn from the world of ownership and commerce. Sex is described as a matter of mutual “use,” a fairly typical attitude in the ancient world.



How do Paul’s views on sex and marriage here compare with the best moral reflection in our culture and the experiences of the faithful today?

<sup>a</sup> Gk brother    <sup>b</sup> Gk brothers    <sup>c</sup> The quotation may extend to the word *other*    <sup>d</sup> Or sanctuary