

The Gospel of Matthew The Beloved Community

Interpreting the Text:

1. Is the Transfiguration (chapter 17) a successful demonstration of Jesus' identity in the story? How does it affect the disciples' understanding of the man they have been following?
2. Several parables appear at key points in this part of the gospel. How do they compare with the parables that appear elsewhere in Matthew? What should we make of the differences between Matthew's version of the parable of the Lost Sheep (18:10–14) and the Luke version of the story? (Luke 15:1-7)
3. In what ways is the teaching about divorce and sexual restraint (19:1–12) distinctive within the gospels?

Applying the Text:

1. Matthew's treatment of life in the "Church" balances advice and guidelines for discipline. How does the discourse of chapter 18 relate to the life of Christian community as you have experienced it?
2. In his teaching about divorce, Jesus says, "Let anyone accept this who can" (19:12b). What does it mean to accept this teaching in today's world? How do we reconcile this with Paul's teaching on divorce (1 Corinthians 7:1-16)?
3. Jesus teaches that it is difficult for a rich person to get into heaven (19:23-26). In what ways should this teaching shape our ethic of earthly wealth?