

# St. John's Episcopal Church

## Bible Study: Gospel of Matthew

### MATTHEW'S CONTEXT

**WHO:** Traditionally, the author is said to be Matthew the Apostle, who was a tax collector (also known as Levi), but scholars acknowledge that the author is anonymous and is a Greek-speaking second generation Jewish Christian. Through the details of Jewish ritual, it's likely that the author was trained as a rabbi and may have helped to found the community to which he belonged.

**WHEN AND WHERE:** Scholars estimate this Gospel was likely written sometime between 85-90 CE. Antioch, Syria. A prosperous, urban, Greek-speaking area. North along the Mediterranean coast.

**COMMUNITY:** The Matthean community understood themselves to be primarily Jewish, reading the Hebrew Scriptures and following the law. But they were no longer able to worship in the synagogue with other Jews because of their belief in Jesus as the messiah. Furthermore, they were seen as Jewish by non-Jews. They faced persecution and suspicion from both Jews and non-Jews. As the community continued, however, a growing number of "Gentiles" converted to join them.



### WHAT TO LOOK FOR IN MATTHEW'S GOSPEL

#### THEMES:

- **ANTI-JUDAISM:** Jewish religious leadership is depicted as hostile and corrupt to the point that their deviance brings about the destruction of the Temple. Characters are written in a way that invites our judgment as the reader.
- **CHRISTOLOGY:** Opening genealogy connects Jesus to David making him the anointed inheritor of the kingship.
- **ETHICS:** Jesus summons Israel to repentance through his ministry of teaching, preaching, and healing.
- **THEOLOGY OF HISTORY:** moves from the "Lost Sheep of Israel" to "all nations" depicting God's movement across time.

#### NOTED PASSAGES:

- Birth narrative, chapters 1-2
- Call of the first disciples, chapter 4
- Sermon on the Mount, chapters 5, 6, 7
- Mission Discourse, chapter 9
- Parables, chapters 13, 19, 21
- Feeding of the Multitudes, chapter 15
- Transfiguration, chapter 17
- Apocalyptic Discourse, chapter 24
- Passion Narrative, chapter 26-27

