

***The Chosen***  
**Season 2 - “Blessed Are the Chosen”**

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## Episodes 1 and 2

### **Opening Prayer**

To open our Bible study on The Chosen, let us read from the Gospel of Matthew Matthew 5:1-12.

"Seeing the crowds, Jesus went up on the mountain, and when he sat down, his disciples came to him. And he opened his mouth and taught them, saying: Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted. Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied. Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy. Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God. Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God. Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

### **Season 2**

In Season 1, we focused on Isaiah 43 and what it meant to be chosen. The anticipation of the coming Messiah, and what the arrival of Jesus meant and still means to His followers. Specifically, we explored what it means to be called and rescued by Jesus, to rest in His presence, to be cherished and protected, to change course in order to follow where He leads, to testify of His kingship, to be cleansed of sin and made new, and to be established and carried along the way.

In Season 2, we will focus on Jesus' way of living, being, and teaching, what the church calls "beatitude". Jesus ushers in a new reality. We have hope no matter the circumstances. We have assurances and riches and resources no matter our circumstances. We are blessed no matter our circumstances because God's favor is upon us.

Today we are covering episodes 1 and 2: *The Poor in Spirit* and *Those Who Mourn*.

### **Episode 1 - The Poor in Spirit (Matthew 5:3)**

Biblical Characters - Jesus, James, John, Andrew, Peter, Thomas, Matthew, Samaritans

Synopsis. The opening finds the disciples in the 40s AD mourning the death of Big James. John decides he needs to write an account of Jesus' life before more disciples die, so that the things Jesus said and did won't be forgotten. Then, it is 26 AD, Jesus is

teaching the crowds in Samaria. Big James and John begin to assert their authority over the other disciples, much to the annoyance of Simon. Thomas and Ramah arrive in Samaria and join the disciples. Jesus heals a lame Samaritan whose past misdeeds may have inspired one of Jesus' parables. Jesus and the disciples then spend the night at Photina's home. Big James and John ask Jesus to call fire down from heaven on some Samaritans who threw stones at them, but Jesus chastises the two disciples instead. A Samaritan priest asks Jesus to speak at the local synagogue. John listens as Jesus reads from the opening verses of Genesis. Then, back to the 40s AD, John thinks back on all these things, he bases the opening verses of his gospel on those verses from Genesis.

**Notable quotes:** "I ask a lot of those who follow me, but I ask little of those who do not." (Jesus)

"We know God pursues the sick more than the healthy." (Jesus)

### **Episode Talking Points**

In this episode, we learn more about James and John.

John, Son of Zebedee (a.k.a. the Beloved Disciple) - Recognized as "the disciple whom Jesus loved", the apostle John, son of Zebedee, authored five New Testament books (the Gospel of John, the letters of 1-3 John, and Revelation), totaling about 21 percent of the New Testament. John was the only named apostle present at Jesus's crucifixion, at which time Jesus assigned the care of His mother, Mary, to him. Church tradition reports that John was a leader of the church in Ephesus in the middle of the first century. After his exile on the nearby island of Patmos, where he had the visions described in the book of Revelation, John returned to Ephesus. Likely to have been the youngest of Jesus's apostles, John is thought to be the only one to die of old age rather than as a martyr sometime between AD 98-106.

James, son of Zebedee (aka, James the Greater) - Jesus dubbed James and his brother John the "Sons of Thunder", perhaps for their harsh response to opposition. Or perhaps it was their father, Zebedee, who was the "thunderous" one. Or perhaps it was all of the above since apples tend to fall near the tree. Regardless, James was in the inner circle of Jesus's friends, which included Peter, James, and John. According to Acts 12, he was the first of the apostles to die as a martyr for the gospel, being put to death by the sword at the command of Herod Agrippa I around AD 41 before persecution dispersed the apostles from Jerusalem.

"I'm here to preach the good news of the Kingdom of heaven. A Kingdom that is not of this world. A Kingdom that is coming soon, where...sorrow and sighing will flee away. I make a way for people to access that Kingdom. But in this world, bones will still break, and hearts will still break, but in the end, the light will overcome darkness." (Jesus)

Jesus acknowledges there will be pain and suffering, but He asks us to trade our burdens, our neediness, our weaknesses for His tender care and limitless strength. Too often, we think and behave like the Sons of Thunder:

- *Do you tend to ask Jesus for swift justice like James and John?*
- *Are there burdens you are attempting to carry in your own wisdom and strength?*
- *Do you remember to offer your pain, suffering, and weaknesses to Jesus at Mass?*

It is ironic that James and John were calling for harsh punishment of others when they'd been receiving unmerited grace from Jesus. But that is what we humans do. We recognize our own desperate need for Jesus only to forget that others need Jesus, too. We have judging hearts while failing to extend the very love and mercy shown by God Himself.

Thomas comments, "It's like he's actively trying to make it difficult to find him."

- *Why does it seem difficult to find Jesus sometimes?*

And Jesus tells Kafni, father of Ramah, "I ask a lot of those who follow me, but I ask little of those who do not."

- *What do you believe Jesus means by this?*
- *How does Jesus' definition of "neighbor" ask a lot of those who follow him?*

"As we gather others, I need you to help show the way, to be humble." (Jesus)

Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Happy are those who are humble and are ready and willing to look to God for help. The poor in spirit are too busy (1) doing battle with their own ongoing sin, (2) continually experiencing the grace that saved them, and (3) keeping their eyes on Jesus and His kingdom.

- *What saints come to mind when reflecting on being Poor in Spirit?*
- *How far away are you from being Poor in Spirit? What progress are you making?*
- *Did you ever notice that the reward, "for theirs is the kingdom of heaven" is present tense instead of future tense like the next 6 beatitudes? Why is the present tense significant? [the way of the heavenly kingdom begins now on earth; it is not something for the future]*

[Watch - The Good Samaritan 39:05 - 43:00]

Consider the crippled Samaritan, his story, and his healing.

- *What were your thoughts on the writer's telling of the Good Samaritan in this way*

Believe my words, return to synagogue...then listen to the Word read aloud, and let it affect your heart. See what happens. Tell others." The last instruction is the same request of us at the end of each Mass.

- *How faithfully do you honor God's request?*

## Reading

Let's read from Revelation 21:1-4:

Then I saw "a new heaven and a new earth," for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Look! God's dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. 'He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death' or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away."

**Episode 1 prayer:** Dear Lord, Thank You for extending Your generous and undeserved love toward me. Forgive me for all the ways I attempt to earn the favor You've freely offered in Jesus, rather than simply acknowledging my spiritual poverty and dependence on You. Help me to acknowledge it, Lord. Thank You for extending to me Your kingdom. Through Your Holy Spirit, help me to allow Your kingdom to break through in my life, even today. Despite my current circumstances, help me recognize my happiness in You and all the gifts You have already provided. St James and St John, pray for me that I may be poor in spirit. Amen"

## Episode 2 - Those Who Mourn (Matthew 5:4)

Biblical Characters - Jesus, Thaddeus, Philip, Nathanael, Andrew, Simon, Thomas, Mary Magdalene, and Matthew

Synopsis. A Jewish architect named Nathanael suffers a major career setback when one of his projects collapses. He sits under a fig tree and cries out to God, asking if God sees him. Meanwhile, a disciple of John the Baptist's named Philip shows up and joins Jesus' followers while they are camping in a field. Philip befriends Matthew and takes him under his wing, showing him how to work with his hands and giving him advice on how to deal with Simon. Mary Magdalene offers to teach Ramah how to read so that they can both study Torah, like the men. Jesus and the disciples walk north towards Syria, stopping for a night in Caesarea Philippi. There, Philip introduces Nathanael to Jesus, and Jesus says he saw Nathanael under the fig tree.

**Notable quote:** "I was something else once too. They want to define us by our past, our sins." (Philip)

In this episode, we learn more about Nathaniel and Philip.

Nathanael (a.k.a. Bartholomew) - While at first reluctant, Nathanael became a follower of Jesus as a result of Philip's persistent encouragement to investigate the possibility that Jesus might be the promised Messiah. John explicitly named Nathanael among the apostles, though the name Nathanael does not otherwise appear in the four Gospels; rather, the other three name "Bartholomew" in their lists of apostles, and

we're led to conclude that the one man had two names: Nathanael Bartholomew. Incidentally, double-naming was common in the first century, even among the twelve apostles (for example, Simon Peter and Levi Matthew). Various traditions say that Nathanael Bartholomew later ministered in Turkey with Philip (not a surprise), in Parthia with Andrew (the region of modern-day Iran and Afghanistan), in Egypt with Peter, and even as far as India. A variety of traditions report quite different means for Nathanael's martyrdom: flayed alive, crucified, beaten to death, beheaded, and/or drowned in the sea around AD 82.

Philip - The Gospel of John reports that two of John the Baptist's, disciples became early followers of Jesus and explicitly name Andrew, who then recruited his brother Simon Peter. Like Peter and Andrew, Philip was from Bethsaida, and he is known for recruiting Nathanael (a.k.a, Bartholomew) to follow Jesus as well. Thus, Philip is sometimes presumed to be the second of John the Baptists former disciples to follow Jesus. Philip is mentioned by name several times in the Gospel of John and is said to have ministered later in Turkey, Tunisia, and northern Africa. He was martyred by stoning in AD 54.

### **Episode Talking Points**

Prayer doesn't help your relationship with God, prayer *is* your relationship with God. "I am thankful before you, living and enduring king, for you have mercifully restored my soul within me. Great is your faithfulness."

- *Are you noticing the Jewish morning prayer, as well as the other prayers before meals and before bed?*
- *Remembering to praise and thank God during your day does not need to be a long nor ritualistic prayer. What kind of prayer does God request?*

Jesus' revolutionary message to us was (1) God wants to have a intimate personal relationship with us, and (2) everyone is our neighbor. Jesus is answering Cain: yes, you are your brother's keeper...and every human is your brother.

In this episode, we see that the Apostles were still struggling with the whole "neighbor" message. We experience their nervousness when Philip approaches, even readying their weapons. We find Matthew confiding that he feels like an outsider to the world... and to the disciples. But John the Baptist has taught Philip the message that Jesus brings: Christians are not to be of this world...Christians are awake...Christians see and embrace the light. If you feel comfortable in this world, then you are not doing Christianity right.

- *In what ways does being Christian make you uncomfortable in this world?*
- *How have you gone out of your way to make someone feel included and not excluded?*

[Watch Under the fig tree 15:12 - 18:03]

Let's be honest ... happiness is a better selling point than "comfort in grief." In fact, our human tendency is to assume that following Jesus = more happiness.

We may not always be aware that's our spiritual expectation, but when life goes awry and grief sets in, we quickly rear back at God with questions like: How could You? Why would You? Don't You see me? Don't You love me?

The truth is that grief can be utterly derailing. We know God has the power to heal, but He doesn't always heal. At least not always on this side of eternity. We know He has the power to save our reputations, our jobs, our loved ones, our hopes, our dreams. But sometimes He doesn't. We know God has the power to change, fix, protect, and provide in exactly the ways we want God to. So, when God doesn't, it calls into question His love for us and even His very character.

But "blessed are those who mourn." In the face of suffering or death, God's comfort in grief seems like a pretty pathetic consolation prize.

- *Why do you think Jesus says "Happy are those who mourn"? What's happy about it?*
- *What Bible character did the writer's mimic with Nathaniel's backstory? [Job]*

We can't skip grief. At its core, grief is the soul's recognition that the world isn't what God seated it to be. God grieves with us because He loves us and nothing we experience escapes God's scope. As Psalm 38:18 states, "The LORD is close to the brokenhearted; he rescues those whose spirits are crushed." And John 11:35, "Jesus wept." Like a good parent responding to a hurting child, God moves toward you in your pain. Which means blessed are you who mourn, because you will be comforted by the God who loves you.

- *How does knowing Jesus experienced grief in his earthly life impact the way you see your own grief?*

Take notice of Jesus' comments on the word "soon". It took 1000 years for God to fulfill His promise to Abraham that Israel would become a great nation. It took 600 years for God to fulfill the promises made through of Isaiah, Ezekiel, and Jeremiah that the Messiah, the Good Shepherd, would come. You will find the writers use the word "soon" in future episodes to mean "soon...in God's timeline".

### **Read 2 Corinthians 1:3-7**

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God. For as we share abundantly in Christ's sufferings, so through Christ we share abundantly in comfort too. If we are afflicted, it is for your comfort and salvation; and if we are comforted, it is for your comfort, which you experience when you patiently endure the same sufferings that we suffer. Our hope for you is unshaken, for we know that as you share in our sufferings, you will also share in our comfort."

**Episode 2 prayer:** Dear Lord, You know more fully than even I do that there are things troubling me and causing me great sorrow. Thank You that You understand my grief. Jesus, I recognize that in Your life on earth, You experienced all kinds of grief too, and it gives me some comfort to know that You truly understand and empathize with me. Help me to be sad about the same things that make You sad. But at the same time, I need Your help to move forward in my life in the midst of this mourning. Through Your Holy Spirit, help me to allow joy in You to be

a part of my life, even now while I wait. St Nathaniel Bartholomew and St Philip, pray for me that my mourning brings me closer to God. Amen.



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## Episodes 3 and 4

### Opening Prayer

To open our Bible study on The Chosen, let us read from 1 Corinthians 1:27-35:

"But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are, so that no human being might boast in the presence of God. And because of Him you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, righteousness and sanctification and redemption, so that, as it is written, 'Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord!'"

### Episode 3 - The Meek (Matthew 5:5)

Biblical Characters - Jesus, Mother Mary, The Disciples

Synopsis. A long line of people are waiting to be healed by Jesus in a field in Syria. The disciples take turns doing crowd control, and the off-duty disciples sit by the fire and talk about their hopes, their childhoods, and how to interpret different prophecies. Jesus' mother Mary arrives and joins the disciples, and she shares some memories of the night that Jesus was born. She says she misses being needed by him. Simon and Matthew get into an argument, and Simon says he'll never forgive Matthew for being a tax collector. Jesus, exhausted after a full day of healing people, walks past the disciples on his way to his tent. Mary gets up and helps him get ready for bed.

**Notable quotes:** "I don't think He's waiting for us to be holy. I think He's here because we can't be holy without Him. " (Mother Mary)

### Episode Talking Points

In this episode, we learn what it means to be meek.

James, Son of Alphaeus (a.k.a. James the Lesser) - As the second of the two apostles named James, "James, son of Alphaeus" is consistently named as such in the gospel lists of the apostles. Otherwise, he is seldom mentioned in the New Testament. Tradition suggests Little James had a ministry with Armenian people and was martyred among them in the region of modern Iran around 70 AD. Looking at common Bible translations, James "The Lesser" is used in 18, "The Younger" in 32, and "The Little" in 2.

Meekness is a rare, misunderstood, and unadmired trait. Perhaps that's due to the word rhyming with "weak", hence that's what many people think it means. We humans prefer adjectives like bold, brave, impressive, fierce. We pay attention to the people out front, the ones making names and taking names. We vote for strong political candidates, watch the red carpet, and stand in line for autographs because we admire the popular, the wealthy, the beautiful, the successful, the outspoken.

Our culture praises the self: self-protection, self-seeking, self-empowerment. We have entire library sections, TV programs, and podcasts devoted to “self-help”. The self has become our idol to worship, contrary to the commands of God. Meekness is a lost art.

Being meek is having quiet strength, strength that is hidden under the surface, never wielded with recklessness or cruelty. A meek person isn't deficient in strength, rather they choose to put others ahead of themselves.

- *What characters in literature or movies reflect this virtue of being meek?*
- *What Saints reflect this virtue of being meek?*
- *Are these Saints and characters viewed as being heroic? Why do they stand out in our society?*

Jesus choose disciples whom the world did not esteem: fishermen, tax collectors, zealots, and women. Jesus was showing that God's kingdom has a very different set of priorities than what humans deem important. If the Disciples, the ones closest to Jesus, were confused by who Jesus was and what Jesus chose to do, imagine how those in esteem in Jewish society thought about Jesus.

- *Since meekness is not genetic, how can we adopt an attitude of meekness?*
- *How is being meek like being a strong person in control of their emotions?*

[Watch - Goodnight 30:15 - 34:50]

Consider the military leader the Jews wanted and the image of Jesus in the “Goodnight” scene.

- *In what ways does Mary's description of Jesus, “You have blood on your hands,” reflect a warrior coming home from battle?*
- *What battle was Jesus waging during the day?*
- *How does Jesus look after battling your sins so you can be saved?*
- *What can we do to keep us from being sidetracked with our human priorities, our human squabbles, our attraction for human pettiness, and keep our focus on our mission build the kingdom of God?*

## **Reading**

Let's read from Galatians 5:6-25:

I say, then: live by the Spirit and you will certainly not gratify the desire of the flesh. For the flesh has desires against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; these are opposed to each other, so that you may not do what you want. But if you are guided by the Spirit, you are not under the law. Now the works of the flesh are obvious: immorality, impurity, licentiousness, idolatry, sorcery, hatreds, rivalry, jealousy, outbursts of fury, acts of selfishness, dissensions, factions, occasions of envy, drinking bouts, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. In contrast, the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law. Now those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified their flesh with its passions and desires. If we live in the Spirit, let us also follow the Spirit.”

**Episode 3 prayer:** Dear Lord, You know everything, including when I'm frustrated or hurt or I'm being overlooked. I acknowledge that I have not always responded with the proper meekness. Forgive me for the places where I've been thinking only of myself--of my own pain, embarrassment, and shame- and for where I may be desiring an inordinate level of justice. Even vengeance. Help me to think clearly and rightly and wisely, Lord. Help me to let go of petty grudges and, when necessary, with loving confrontation, to offer forgiveness instead of seeking revenge. You have given me so much to be grateful for, and I trust that You have even more for me ahead. For all of that I give You thanks. Amen.

#### **Episode 4 - Those Who Hunger (Matthew 5:6)**

Biblical Characters - Jesus, Simon the Zealot, the Disciples, the invalid at the pool of Bethesda

Synopsis. The opening shows a boy named Jesse fall from a tree and lose the use of his legs. His mother dies while giving birth to his brother Simon. Years go by: their father remarries, Simon leaves home to join the Zealots, and Jesse spends his adult years waiting by a supposedly supernatural pool for a miracle that never comes. Jesus and the disciples go to Jerusalem to celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles. Simon the Zealot goes there too, to assassinate a magistrate. Jesus goes to the Pool of Bethesda and heals Jesse's legs. The Pharisees are outraged when Jesse picks up his mat and carries it, because the healing took place on the Sabbath. Simon the Zealot is on the verge of carrying out his assassination attempt, but he stops when he sees Jesse walking.

**Notable quote:** "Jesse, when you stand on two feet, I will know the Messiah has come." (Simon the Zealot)

Simon the Zealot - It is interesting that the gospels distinguish the two Simons by stating the political leaning of Simon the Zealot. The Zealots were part of an anti-Roman movement among 1st Century Jews. So Simon "the Zealot" is noted for his passion against the Roman occupation. Little is known about Simon. Records indicate Simon had a ministry in Persia. It is thought Simon preached the gospel to parts of Africa and Turkey. He was martyred in Persia around 72 AD.

#### **Episode Talking Points**

In this episode, we learn more about being hungry and thirsting for righteousness.

All humans hunger for something because we long to fill the void in our hearts. Sometimes we seek the right things in the wrong places. Sometimes we seek the wrong things in the right places. Sometimes we seek the wrong things in the wrong places. And sometimes, by the grace of God, we seek the right thing in the right place.

We live in a deeply unsatisfying world despite the manmade paradise we've created. We have more choices, more conveniences, more comforts, and more free time than at any point in history. So why is the mental health of society at an all-time low? Why is the suicide rate so high? Such quality of life advancements should have secured our contentment. But the opposite is true, and humanity is more unsettled, unfulfilled, and divided as ever. Social media allows us to see even more choices including other people's choices. It creates greater discontentment because there's always more to do, to see, to be, to have, and to experience. We continue to be thirsty and hunger for more.

- *Was God right when He warned Adam and Eve about following their own will and choices instead of following God's will?*
- *What are some things you thought would bring you contentment and satisfaction, only to find either it did not or was fleeting?*

How would you like to be remembered throughout history for the person you were right **before** you met Jesus? Think of the disciples. What do we know of them?

- Simon "the Zealot"
- Matthew "the Taxman Traitor"
- Mary Magdalene "the Demonic Possessed"
- Nathaniel "the Rude"
- Simon Peter "the Emotionally Unstable"

[Watch Two Brothers 38:06 - 43:20]

The writers present Simon and Jessie as brothers who are both looking for the right thing but in the wrong places. For Simon, he was seeking to bring forth the kingdom of God...through military might. He was seeking an intimacy with God...as a servant slave to the Lord. For Jessie, he was seeking healing from God...through magic healers and superstition. Jesus essentially asks both brothers, "Do you want to be healed?"

- *Have you ever looked for God in the wrong place?*
- *When you got to confession, you ever felt or thought that maybe Jesus is asking you, "Do you want to be healed?"*
- *Who had a more difficult conversion: the brother who had to believe the promised Messiah was not an anti-Roman military leader and did not have a mission to make Israel a self-ruling nation again, or the brother who had to believe that Jesus could make him walk?*

Simon Peter tells Jessie, "You're not coming back here. That life is over. Everything changes now." When we really find Jesus, our lives are changed forever.

**Read 2 Timothy 2:22-26**

Flee youthful passions and pursue righteousness, faith, love, and peace, along with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart. Have nothing to do with foolish, ignorant controversies; you know that they breed quarrels. And the Lord's servant must not be quarrelsome but kind to everyone, able to teach, patiently enduring evil, correcting his opponents with gentleness. God may perhaps grant them repentance leading to a knowledge of the truth, and they may come to their senses and escape from the snare of the devil, after being captured by him to do his will.

**A prayer for those searching in the wrong place:**

Father, I thank you for your blessings. I thank you for the gift of faith which you pass on from generation to generation. I pray for those searching in the wrong places that they may have an encounter with you because we sow the seeds, you alone, Lord, can change their hearts. Receive them, bless them, and bring them wholly to you. I ask your blessing, in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

**Episode 4 prayer:** Dear Lord, I find within myself a strong desire to make a difference in the world. Even if it's a small impact, I want my life to have significance and to influence others for good. But I admit that sometimes my competing desires get in the way. Please forgive me. I'm grateful for Your conviction and guidance to keep me moving toward You and the things You care about. May Your Holy Spirit work in me to desire right things so that I find my satisfaction, significance, rest, and hope in You. Amen.

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## Episodes 5 and 6

### Opening Prayer

To open our Bible study on The Chosen, let us read from Colossians 3:12-17:

"Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body. And be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God. And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him." Amen.

### Episode 5 - The Merciful (Matthew 5:7)

Biblical Characters - Jesus, John the Baptist, Simon the Zealot, The Disciples

Synopsis. As the Feast of Tabernacles comes to an end, Yanni and Shmuel finally confirm that Jesus was the one who healed Jesse—but their efforts to report him to the Sanhedrin are stymied by Nicodemus. Jesus sits for a chat with his cousin John the Baptist, who says he is planning to confront Herod Antipas again. Simon the Zealot, curious to learn more about the man who healed his brother, watches the disciples from a distance, but he comes to their defense when a demoniac approaches the camp. The demoniac disarms Simon, but Jesus returns in the nick of time and casts the demon out. Atticus watches as Jesus talks to Simon the Zealot and bids farewell to John the Baptist. Mary Magdalene, triggered by the demoniac and the sight of two Roman soldiers, begins to revert to her old way of life by going to Jericho to gamble in a pub. Jesus tells Simon Peter and Matthew to go and find her.

#### Notable quotes:

"I have everything I need. But I wanted you." (Jesus)

- *What a wonderful God that He wants you, too.*

"I just dropped the basket and ran. I totally ignored the prayers in my hands." (Mary)

- *When faced with life's risks, do you totally ignore "the prayers in your hands"?*

"My followers will love it." (John the Baptist)

- *How does this statement contrast with what others were saying about Jesus or about being Poor in Spirit?*

#### Episode Talking Points

In this episode, we learn what it means to be merciful.

The first four Beatitudes focus on the individual transformation resulting from God's work: Poor in Spirit, Mourn, Meek, and Hunger for Justice. The last four focus on interactions with others resulting from God's work: Merciful, Pure in Heart, Peacemakers, Persecuted.

Like the Pharisees and Sadducees, there are Christian denominations and some within the Catholic Church that are hyper-focused on outward behavior, rules, regulations, and rituals, while neglecting the heart. One could say that religion is humanity's attempt to reach God, while Jesus is God's attempt to reach humanity. Religion without Jesus hardens your hidden sins: pride, self-centeredness, judgmentalism, and unforgiveness. Whenever we judge others harshly, hold on to grievances, or cease to associate with people we deem unworthy, then we have forgotten Jesus. As the famous quote says, "I like your Christ, I do not like your Christians. Your Christians are so unlike your Christ."

- *In what ways have you been like a Shmuel?*
- *Are you a practicing atheist? Outside of church, can someone tell you apart from an atheist?*

Jesus commanded, "Go and learn what this means: "I desire mercy, and not sacrifice."

- *Have you learned the meaning of "I desire mercy, not sacrifice"?*
- *What are some of the ways God has shown you mercy?*
- *When do you often fail to show mercy?*

If you want to continuously receive mercy, then Jesus instructs us to give mercy. We as God's children receive mercy in endless doses for the purpose of spreading it around. It's a free gift and a promised reward. Withhold mercy, and God will withhold mercy from you. We who follow Jesus are a broken but redeemed people. You are chosen by God to experience His mercy from now until your judgement day. Our only responsibility is to follow Jesus: go where he goes, do what he does, love who he loves. In doing so, God's mercy will flow to us and through us to others.

- *How challenging will it be for Simon the Zealot to learn to mercy?*
- *How did choosing Matthew as a disciple help the other disciples learn mercy? Have you ever thought of that before?*
- *In this moment, to whom is the Holy Spirit leading you to show mercy?*

When confronted by the demoniac, Simon the Zealot is overpowered. Did this surprise you? Remember, Simon was not yet an official disciple. The writers were alluding to Acts 19:13-16: Some Jews who went around driving out evil spirits tried to invoke the name of the Lord Jesus over those who were demon-possessed. They would say, "In the name of the Jesus whom Paul preaches, I command you to come out." Seven sons of Sceva, a Jewish chief priest, were doing this. One day the evil spirit answered them, "Jesus I know, and Paul I know about, but who are you?" Then the man who had the evil spirit jumped on them and overpowered them all. He gave them such a beating that they ran out of the house naked and bleeding.

[Watch Simon Z and Demoniac - 7:30 - 9:15]

“There is a smell on you, something vile....Is he a holy person?....It has a bad feeling about you.” (Caleb the demoniac). Caleb says something similar to the disciples, that the smell is worse.

- *Have you ever thought about how demons think of holy people?*
- *Will a demon have a similar reaction when it encounters you?*
- *Why did Simon Z ask whether he was a Roman or a Tax Collector?*

## Reading

Let's read from Luke 6:32-36:

[Jesus said] “If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? Even sinners love those who love them. And if you do good to those who are good to you, what credit is that to you? Even sinners do that. And if you lend to those from whom you expect repayment, what credit is that to you? Even sinners lend to sinners, expecting to be repaid in full. But love your enemies, do good to them, and lend to them without expecting to get anything back. Then your reward will be great, and you will be children of the Most High, because he is kind to the ungrateful and wicked. Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful.”

**Episode 5 prayer:** Dear God, I acknowledge that You have not treated me as my sins deserve. Rather, You have mercifully provided Jesus as the willing sacrifice to take the punishment I deserve. I cannot earn Your forgiveness. Jesus, thank You for paying my debt with Your life. Your resurrection assures me of Your power over sin and death, and I look forward to Your return when Your full mercy will be expressed for eternity. Meanwhile, Lord, as I struggle to live for You on this side of eternity, empower me by Your Holy Spirit to be merciful toward others as You would have me to be. Amen.

## Episode 6 - Pure in Heart (Matthew 5:8)

Biblical Characters - Jesus, Mary Magdalene, Simon Peter, Matthew

Synopsis. The episode opens with a scene describing 1 Samuel 21 about David and the showbread which Jesus references at the end of the episode. Matthew and Simon find Mary Magdalene outside the bar in Jericho and take her back to the disciples' camp, where Jesus welcomes her and forgives her. Yanni and Shmuel can't get a representative from the school of Hillel to take up their case against Jesus, so they decide to approach the school of Shammai. The disciples get news that John the Baptist has been imprisoned again, this time for good. The disciples are also running out of food, so they go with Jesus to a nearby synagogue. There, Jesus heals a man with a withered hand, which offends the synagogue leaders because the healing happened on the Sabbath. The disciples leave the synagogue and pluck some grain to eat, which offends the synagogue leaders even more.



- *Have you ever thought about the connection between the Tabernacle showbread (bread of presence) and the Eucharist?*
- *What did the showbread represent in the Tabernacle? What does the Eucharist represent in the Tabernacle?*
- *Who could eat the showbread? Why can you eat the Eucharist?*

### **Notable quotes:**

“What if you were cut off from Jesus by something in your past? Would you want help getting back to him as soon as possible?” (Matthew)

Mary Magdalene - With so many women named Mary in the Bible, this one was distinguished by her hometown of Magdala - one of several fishing villages on the Sea of Galilee. What we know of her from the New Testament is that prior to meeting Jesus, she was a tormented woman, possessed by seven demons. Jesus drove them out, and Mary of Magdala became one of His devoted followers. Her alias in The Chosen is “Lilith”, and derives from an ancient Middle Eastern term for “female demons” or “wind spirits.” In a culture that tended to view women as being less valuable than men, Mary conversely turned out to be a noteworthy follower of Jesus in that (1) she was among the female disciples who traveled with Him and financially supported His ministry (Luke 8.1-3), (2) she was present at Jesus’s crucifixion and burial (Matt. 27:56, 61), and (3) she was the first to witness the empty tomb (John 20:1) and to meet the resurrected Jesus (John 20:11-18; Matt. 28:1; Mark 16:1-6).

### **Episode Talking Points**

In this episode, we learn more about being pure in heart.

Every good Jew knew that anyone who looked at directly at God would immediately die: death-by-holiness. Hence, each prophet feared seeing God. Yet, Jesus proclaims the pure in heart will see God. How can this be? Being pure in heart means to have a heart focused on God who is truth. Since God is truth, being pure in heart is to see the truth...to see God.

And what is truth? In today’s world, most people think they are “good”. Why? Because they are comparing themselves to others whom they deem as “not good”. But people are not the standard of goodness. God is the gold standard of goodness. How good are you when compared to God? We should be lying prostrate, repenting of our sins, and praising Him for not striking us down due to our unworthiness. It’s these people, the ones who know how not good they really are who are “pure in heart”.

- *Do you understand your need for a Savior due to your “not good” thoughts and actions that cause you to not be faithful to God?*
- *Do you understand your preciousness to God? That God has promised to be your God, to have and to hold, for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health, to love and to cherish all the days of your life?*

The commandments were intended to represent the condition of the hearts of God's people. They were meant to be an outpouring of what was already in the hearts of God's people. Their purity of heart was not to be based on man-made rules, nor was it to be measured by our own judgement on one's sinfulness or lack of sin. Only God can read a person's heart. Mary Magdalene knew this. She knew the Jesus was the way, the truth, and the life, and that all other roads led back to darkness. Mary was pure in heart because she surrendered herself to Jesus. Mary knew she needed a Savior, yet Mary also understood that Jesus would cleanse her, keep her on the narrow path, and lead her to eternal life where she would be made perfect. Being pure in heart, we can live hope-filled lives that with the help of Jesus we are heaven bound instead of fearing to be vaporized on sight of God.

- *What outward behaviors do you tend to focus on the most when it comes to "being good"?*
- *What attitudes of the heart do you tend to ignore or deprioritize?*
- *What changes do you need to make to be pure in heart?*

[Watch Jesus forgives Mary 27:58 - 31:05]

"I just want your heart. The Father just wants your heart. Give us that, what you already have....Did you really think you would never struggle or sin again?" (Jesus)

- *How is this scene like the Sacrament of Reconciliation?*
- *Have you ever been too ashamed to seek forgiveness?*
- *Does it make it easier to seek forgiveness knowing that God sees all and knows what is in your heart, even your failed struggles against temptations?*
- *Did you notice who led Mary Magdalene to Jesus for forgiveness?*

What a wonderful God to give us the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

### **Read 1 John 3:1-3**

"See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are. The reason why the world does not know us is that it did not know him. Beloved, we are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is. And everyone who thus hopes in him purifies himself as he is pure."

**Episode 6 prayer:** Dear God, As much as I might try to look good to other people, I acknowledge that I sinfully fall short of Your standard of goodness. Please forgive me for the impurity of my sin and for the hypocritical ways in which I've tried to cover it. Forgive me for trying to feel better about my own sinfulness by condemning those around me. Thank You for providing salvation through faith in Jesus rather than through my inadequate efforts. Please purify my heart and empower me by Your Spirit to recognize Your work in and around me, and to live joyfully for You now until I meet You face to face in eternity. Amen.

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## Episodes 7 and 8

### Opening Prayer

To open our Bible study on The Chosen, let us read from Isaiah 11:6-9:

"The wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the young goat, and the calf and the lion and the fattened calf together; and a little child shall lead them. The cow and the bear shall graze; their young shall lie down together; and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. The nursing child shall play over the hole of the cobra, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the adder's den. They shall not hurt or destroy in all my holy mountain; for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea." Amen.

### Episode 7 - The Peacemakers (Matthew 5:9)

Biblical Characters - Jesus, The Disciples

Synopsis. Atticus comes to Quintus in Capernaum with news about Jesus of Nazareth. Quintus sends Gaius to bring Jesus in for questioning. Several disciples panic at the thought that Jesus might be on the verge of getting arrested just like John the Baptist. Andrew discovers that Tamar and her ex-paralytic friend are standing on street corners, telling everyone about Jesus, and he tries to get them to stop. Yanni and Shmuel also return to Galilee, hoping to dig up more evidence against Jesus. Quintus chats with Jesus and lets him go, because he doesn't think Jesus is a threat. Jesus returns to the camp and teaches his disciples how to say the Lord's Prayer..

### Notable quotes:

"You can't just shut down when you're fearful." (Jesus)

- *Do you ever struggle with fear and its impact on your life?*
- *Several times over the past two seasons, we have seen the disciples try to take matters into their own hands when there is fear instead of turning to the Lord. How do you manage fear?*

Andrew - Growing up in Bethsaida on the sea of Galilee as brother of Simon Peter, Andrew was involved in the family business of fishing (Matt. 4:18-20; Mark 1:16-17). He'd been a disciple of John the Baptist before deciding to follow Jesus (John 1:35-44), and he is credited with quickly recruiting his brother Simon Peter to follow as well. At some point, Andrew and Simon Peter relocated to nearby Capernaum on the Sea of Galilee, which became the headquarters for Jesus's ministry (Mark 1:29; 2:1), Andrew appears to have been a positive, can-do kind of guy who made himself and his resources available to Jesus (like the fish and loaves at the feeding of the five thousand in John 6:8-9) and who was very approachable (John 12:20-22). Andrew is mentioned once in Acts, and tradition reports that his ministry after Acts was in places like Greece, Turkey, and Macedonia, with a trip to Ukraine where God utilized him to rescue Matthias from cannibals. Hippolytus reported that Andrew was crucified on an olive tree at Patras, Greece around AD 70. Tradition suggests it was an X-shaped cross.

Andrew's bones are thought to have been relocated in the fourth century to Scotland, and the eighth-century King Hungus of the Picts is said to have won a promised victory in battle under a X symbol in the sky. Thus, Andrew has been the patron saint of Scotland ever since symbolized by the St Andrew's X-shaped cross.

### **Episode Talking Points**

In this episode, we learn what it means to be a peacemaker.

What does it mean to be a “peacemaker”? Too often we confuse peacemakers with “peacefakers” and “peacebreakers”. Peacefakers seek to avoid conflict by pretending there is no conflict. They smile and say they’re fine while they sweep the things they’d rather not deal with under the rug. Peacebreakers seek to resolve conflict by demanding it be acknowledged and dealt with now. They claim to want peace while offering resolutions on their own terms. Both have the origin of SELF: self-protection, self-righteousness, and self-entitlement.

- *To what extent are you a peacefaker or peacebreaker?*
- *Why is it challenging to not focus on the self in times of conflict?*

Modern society teaches that in order for us to be happy, we must first please the self. Basically, whatever we think, feel, or want takes precedence over everything and everyone. This promotion of self is not making society happier. Instead, we are experiencing a steady decline in our collective mental health that has led to the rise of loneliness, substance abuse, divorce, suicide, and mass shootings.

In Matthew chapters 5 and 6, Jesus instructed his followers to make peace - not to fake it or to demand resolution on their terms:

- Be reconciled to one another (Matt. 5:21-26).
- Be respectful of the opposite gender and remain faithful in marriage (Matt. 5:27-32).
- Keep their word (Matt. 5:33-37).
- Avoid retaliation (Matt. 5:38-42).
- Love their enemies (Matt. 5:43-48).
- Abstain from trying to impress (Matt. 6:1-8, 16-18).
- Forgive one another (Matt. 6:9-15).

Denying yourself and obeying Jesus’ teaching is counterintuitive. But blessed are the peacemakers because God’s wisdom actually preserves our lives and relationships. It keeps us from self-destructing. Blessed are those who seek peace and pursue it with the people Jesus died for...everyone.

- *With whom in your life is it difficult to make peace?*
- *Is your peacemaking efforts originating from the self?*

To be called by a particular name is to be identified as having a particular characteristic connecting us to someone or something. One of God's characteristics is that He's relentlessly loving, which is why He entered into the story. Our Creator sacrificed Himself to save us from ourselves and to usher in the eternal kingdom of peace. Once we belong to the kingdom, we are charged with making peace with others...others whom God loves but which we sometimes find ourselves at odds with. We are representing Jesus to them. As peacemakers, we are drawing others to Him just as Jesus, the Son of God, does.

- *How would shifting focus from yourself to God enable you to live more peaceably with others?*
- *Who do you need to love differently?*

Jesus didn't always keep the peace. He often found himself at odds with those who opposed his mission. There's a difference between extending peace towards others and their refusal to accept peace. How do you know the difference? As James 1:5 states, "If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him." In other words, pray.

[Watch - Lords Prayer 37:00 - 39:00]

In the Old Testament, it is always Judah that goes up first among the tribes of Israel. Judah means "praise". So God instructs Moses to always send up praise first. Likewise, Jesus instructs us to always send up praise to the Father first. Jesus' explanation of the first two petitions, "hallow be thy name" and "thy will be done" aligns with the Catholic Catechism's explanation of The Lord's Prayer. If you have never done so, you are encouraged to read the end of the Catechism, paragraphs 2857-2865 or listen to Fr Mike's *Catechism in a Year Day 365* which summarizes the meaning of the Lord's Prayer.

## Reading

Let's read from Ephesians 2:13-18:

"But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For he himself is our peace, who has made us both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility by abolishing the law of commandments expressed in ordinances, that he might create in himself one new man in place of the two, so making peace, and might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby killing the hostility. And he came and preached peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near. For through him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father."

**Episode 7 prayer:** Dear heavenly Father, Thank You for creating peace in my life by sending Your Son Jesus to rescue me from sin. I acknowledge that it's a gift from You and that it cost You dearly. I confess I don't always let Your peace rule in my heart, so please help me with that. Help me trust You so much that I'm willing to work toward peace with others-even when it might cost me something. I want to be a tool in Your

hands for making peace. So help me recognize the opportunities You provide, and grant me Your Spirit's wisdom and power to work toward peace as Your child. Amen.

## **Episode 8 - Persecuted (Matthew 5:10)**

Biblical Characters - Jesus, The Disciples, Judas

Synopsis. Little James, Thaddaeus, and Nathanael are walking around Galilee, looking for a place where Jesus can deliver his Sermon on the Mount. They find a spot they like, but the local landowner is reluctant to let them draw a crowd there. As they all talk about it in the pub, a couple of businessmen with an interest in real estate overhear the conversation and propose a deal that works for everyone. Meanwhile, Yanni and Shmuel give their list of complaints about Jesus to Shammai, who plans to use this information against the school of Hillel when the time is right. Jesus and Matthew go over the latest draft of the sermon, and conclude that it needs a more positive intro. Finally Jesus comes up with the Beatitudes. The disciples build a stage, spread leaflets all over town, and help Jesus pick what to wear. A crowd shows up—including the two businessmen, one of whom reveals his name is Judas—and Jesus steps out from behind the curtain, ready to give his sermon.

### **Notable quotes:**

“I want a life I can be proud of...that will be remembered throughout history.” (Judas)

“If someone wants to find me, those are the groups they should look for.” (Jesus)

“They all love our Rabbi and want to follow Him the right way. They just can’t agree on what that right way is.” (Thomas)

- *What truth were the writers pointing out in the body of Christ today?*

“I don’t want passive followers.” (Jesus)

- *Why does Jesus not want passive followers?*

- *What kind of follower are you”?*

Thaddaeus - As with some of the other apostles like Simon Peter and Levi Matthew, Judas Thaddaeus had several names. The name “Judas”, which means praise, was common in the New Testament era. So it's no surprise that two men among the twelve apostles shared the name. The potential confusion was evident from the beginning, so much so that John literally introduced him as "Judas (not Iscariot)" (John 14:22). Luke called him "Judas the son of James" (Luke 6:16; Acts 1:13), but Matthew and Mark both used his Greek name, "Thaddaeus" (Matt. 10:3; Mark 3:18). Little is known about Thaddaeus, and we hear him speak only once in the Gospels when he asks Jesus this question: "Lord, how is it that you will manifest yourself to us, and not to the world?" (John 14:22). Tradition suggests that Thaddaeus ministered in Syria and in Armenia. He is believed to have preached the gospel in the midst of pagan priests and to have taken part in exorcisms. His name is mentioned multiple times alongside Simon the Zealot (Matt. 10:3-4; Mark 3:18; Luke 6:15-16; Acts 1:13), and some traditions pair

the two in ministry in Iran. Stories of their martyrdom together include being clubbed to death and sawn into pieces.

### **Episode Talking Points**

In this episode, we learn more about the persecuted.

We all want to feel like we belong. We have an innate desire to fit in, to be liked and to be included. We're driven by it, but it can get us into trouble seen we tend to look for belonging in the wrong places...which is anywhere on earth. Choosing to follow Jesus means leaving this world behind. Since we being to God, we no longer belong here.

- *What and who are competing with your sincere desire to belong to God?*

Jesus warned that living the Beatitudes won't always be reciprocated by the world. Do not expect mercy in return for mercy. Or the absence of duplicity in return for pureheartedness. Or peace as a result of effort to make peace. The world is a tough place. Even when we achieve happiness, it is not permanent. What Jesus did promise in response to acting the Beatitudes is the Holy Spirit...eternal blessings.

- *Have you ever experienced ridicule or persecution due to your faith? What was your response? Confusion? Anger? Compassion? Joy?*

- *Why do some people believe and others do not? Why are some violently opposed?*

The first Beatitude's reward is the kingdom of heaven. The last Beatitude's reward also is the kingdom of heaven. They are bookends, and they are present tense, "is the kingdom of heaven", because the kingdom of heaven is for those who trust in Jesus. The kingdom of heaven is present on earth in the lives of "the chosen": you.

Despite the grief we may suffer on this side of eternity on account of Jesus, we can anticipate future joy in heaven: comfort, eternal life, righteousness, mercy, seeing God, and being children of God. The Holy Spirit who lives inside us is the constant herald of the gospel: we are God's precious children, that this world is not our home, that we are called to our future home which is in heaven.

When preparing for the big sermon, each disciple did what came most naturally to them.

- *What did you think about all the preparations for the big sermon? Did the scene change your mind about how the disciples evangelized about Jesus and the gospel?*

- *How are you currently using your natural abilities and spiritual gifts to help with the overall execution of spreading the gospel?*

[Watch Sermon on Mount beginning 31:25 - 34:20]

While practicing, Jesus spoke "blessed are you" and we see Jesus thinking of each of his disciples.

- *How did it hit you when Jesus spoke the Beatitudes?*

- *Which Beatitude is Jesus speaking to you about today?*

- *How are the Beatitudes a map, the way, to Jesus?*

The message of Jesus is hidden in the Old Testament. Jesus says he is the fulfillment of the Law. It's why we read from the Old Testament first at mass.

- *Have you ever noticed the parallel between the first Psalm and the Beatitudes?*

### **Read Psalm 1**

"Blessed is the one who does not walk in step with the wicked or stand in the way that sinners take or sit in the company of mockers, but whose delight is in the law of the Lord, and who meditates on his law day and night. That person is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither— whatever they do prospers. Not so the wicked! They are like chaff that the wind blows away. Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the assembly of the righteous. For the Lord watches over the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked leads to destruction."

**Episode 8 prayer:** Dear Lord, Your Word says that hardship and opposition are part of what it means to follow Jesus, and I'm actually frightened by the idea. Thank You that nothing can come my way without first being measured out by You, and thank You that You have already provided Your Holy Spirit to be my Helper. Please help me remain faithful to You even when I'm pressured and persecuted by those who (perhaps even unknowingly) oppose the truth of the gospel. Help me to lovingly respond to people, knowing that at one time I too was opposed to You. Thank You for rescuing me. Help me to experience Your joy now as part of Your eternal kingdom. Amen.

This concludes Season 2. Now that Jesus has given his disciples the map, Season 3 follows the disciples attempting to follow the map. We'll see that reading the map is easy, but following the map is hard.