



RED LETTERS

Invitation and Challenge in the words of Jesus

If you own a Bible, you might notice a stylistic variation: whenever Jesus speaks, the words appear in the color red. Yes, Jesus is the Word of God made flesh and, consequentially, the entire Bible could be written in red letters. But red letters are used in the Bible, most especially in the Gospels, because God's Son was among us in human flesh at a particular point in history, eating and drinking, touching and healing, walking...and talking. The words that Jesus speaks in the Gospels speak to us today in our lives. And the words He speaks are full of INVITATION and CHALLENGE. Jesus speaks words of Invitation, to a faith and life that He gives purely out of His grace. He also speaks words of CHALLENGE, where Jesus loves us too much to leave us where we are and leads us to where He wants us to be.

How appropriate for the season of Lent. During this 40-day journey of repentance, it is good for us to be challenged by the words of Jesus in order to "deny yourselves, take up your cross and follow Him". But because we cannot do this by our own "reason or strength", we hear the words of invitation from Jesus, where He proclaims Good News, encourages us on our journey and gives us His strength when we are

weak. This year, we will look at many of the “red letters” Jesus speaks in the Gospel of Matthew. In so doing, we will learn from Jesus as His disciples, follow Him from Ash Wednesday to Easter Sunday and learn the rhythm of Invitation and Challenge in the words of Jesus.

February 26: Matthew 4:17: From that time Jesus began to preach, saying, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.”

27: Matthew 4:19: And he said to them, “Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.”

28: Matthew 5:3: “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

29: Matthew 5:13: “You are the salt of the earth, but if salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything except to be thrown out and trampled under people's feet.

March 1: Matthew 5:14-16: “You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.

2: Matthew 6:19-21: “Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

3: Matthew 6:31-33: Therefore do not be anxious, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ For the Gentiles seek after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.

4: Matthew 7:7-8: “Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks it will be opened.

5: Matthew 7:24-27: “Everyone then who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock. And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on the rock. And everyone who hears these words of mine and does not do them will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand. And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell, and great was the fall of it.”

6: Matthew 8:26: And he said to them, “Why are you afraid, O you of little faith?”

7: Matthew 9:12-13: But when he heard it, he said, “Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. Go and learn what this means: ‘I desire mercy, and not sacrifice.’ For I came not to call the righteous, but sinners.”

8: Matthew 9:37-38: Then he said to his disciples, “The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest.”

9: Matthew 10:29-31: Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? And not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father. But even the hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear not, therefore; you are of more value than many sparrows.

10: Matthew 10:39: Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.

11: Matthew 11:4-6: And Jesus answered them, "Go and tell John what you hear and see: ⁵the blind receive their sight and the lame walk, lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear, and the dead are raised up, and the poor have good news preached to them. ⁶And blessed is the one who is not offended by me."

12: Matthew 11:28-30: Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."

13: Matthew 12:48-50: But he replied to the man who told him, "Who is my mother, and who are my brothers?" And stretching out his hand toward his disciples, he said, "Here are my mother and my brothers! For whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother."

14: Matthew 13:31-32: He put another parable before them, saying, "The kingdom of heaven is like a grain of mustard seed that a man took and sowed in his field. It is the smallest of all seeds, but when it has grown it is larger than all the garden plants and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and make nests in its branches."

15: Matthew 13:44: "The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and covered up. Then in his joy he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field.

16: Matthew 13:45-46: "Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls, who, on finding one pearl of great value, went and sold all that he had and bought it.

17: Matthew 16:19: I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven."

18: Matthew 18:4: Whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.

19: Matthew 18:12-14: What do you think? If a man has a hundred sheep, and one of them has gone astray, does he not leave the ninety-nine on the mountains and go in search of the one that went astray? And if he finds it, truly, I say to you, he rejoices over it more than over the ninety-nine that never went astray. So it is not the will of my Father who is in heaven that one of these little ones should perish.

20: Matthew 18:20: For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I among them."

21: Matthew 19:14: but Jesus said, "Let the little children come to me and do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of heaven."

22: Matthew 19:26: But Jesus looked at them and said, "With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible."

23: Matthew 19:30: But many who are first will be last, and the last first.

24: Matthew 20:25-28: But Jesus called them to him and said, "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. It shall not be so among you. But whoever would be great among you must be your servant, and whoever would be first among you must be your slave, even as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."

25: Matthew 21:22: And whatever you ask in prayer, you will receive, if you have faith."

26: Matthew 21:31: Jesus said to them, "Truly, I say to you, the tax collectors and the prostitutes go into the kingdom of God before you.

27: Matthew 21:42: Jesus said to them, "Have you never read in the Scriptures: "The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone; this was the Lord's doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes'?"

28: Matthew 22:14: For many are called, but few are chosen."

29: Matthew 22:31-32: And as for the resurrection of the dead, have you not read what was said to you by God: 'I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob'? He is not God of the dead, but of the living."

30: Matthew 23:11-12: The greatest among you shall be your servant. Whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted.

31: Matthew 24:13: But the one who endures to the end will be saved.

April 1: Matthew 24:35: Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.

2: Matthew 25:21: His master said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful servant.^[e] You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master.'

3: Matthew 25:31-34: "When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on his glorious throne. Before him will be gathered all the nations, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. And he will place the sheep on his right, but the goats on the left. Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.

4: Matthew 25:40: And the King will answer them, 'Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me.'

5: Matthew 21:5: "Go into the village in front of you, and immediately you will find a donkey tied, and a colt with her. Untie them and bring them to me. If anyone says anything to you, you shall say, 'The Lord needs them,' and he will send them at once." This took place to fulfill what was spoken by the prophet, saying, "Say to the daughter of Zion, 'Behold, your king is coming to you, humble, and mounted on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a beast of burden.'"

6: Matthew 26:10-13: But Jesus, aware of this, said to them, "Why do you trouble the woman? For she has done a beautiful thing to me. For you always have the poor with you, but you will not always have

me. In pouring this ointment on my body, she has done it to prepare me for burial. Truly, I say to you, wherever this gospel is proclaimed in the whole world, what she has done will also be told in memory of her.”

7: Matthew 26:31-32: Then Jesus said to them, “You will all fall away because of me this night. For it is written, ‘I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock will be scattered.’ But after I am raised up, I will go before you to Galilee.”

8: Matthew 26:52-54: Then Jesus said to him, “Put your sword back into its place. For all who take the sword will perish by the sword. Do you think that I cannot appeal to my Father, and he will at once send me more than twelve legions of angels? But how then should the Scriptures be fulfilled, that it must be so?”

9: Matthew 26:26-28: Now as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and after blessing it broke it and gave it to the disciples, and said, “Take, eat; this is my body.” And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he gave it to them, saying, “Drink of it, all of you, for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.

10: Matthew 27:46: And about the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, “Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?” that is, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”

11: Matthew 12:40: For just as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.

12: Matthew 28:18-20: And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 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, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”