



WHERE LIFE & PURPOSE CONNECT

Grow, Pray, Study for the Week of August 27, 2023

Weekly Prayer

Good and loving God, you have created, called, equipped, and loved me without end. Empower and encourage me this week, to love you and my neighbor more fully. Amen.

Monday, August 21

Scripture: Matthew 5:1-12 (Common English Bible)

Now when Jesus saw the crowds, he went up a mountain. He sat down and his disciples came to him. He taught them, saying:

“Happy are people who are hopeless, because the kingdom of heaven is theirs.

“Happy are people who grieve, because they will be made glad.

“Happy are people who are humble, because they will inherit the earth.

“Happy are people who are hungry and thirsty for righteousness, because they will be fed until they are full.

“Happy are people who show mercy, because they will receive mercy.

“Happy are people who have pure hearts, because they will see God.

“Happy are people who make peace, because they will be called God’s children.

“Happy are people whose lives are harassed because they are righteous, because the kingdom of heaven is theirs.

“Happy are you when people insult you and harass you and speak all kinds of bad and false things about you,

all because of me. Be full of joy and be glad, because you have a great reward in heaven.

In the same way,

people harassed the prophets who came before you.

Observation

Chapter 5 begins with the Beatitudes. This is an important message from Jesus on Christian life. While most of our translations read “blessed,” the Common English Bible (CEB) translates this as “happy.” Jesus means here that we experience a “transcendent happiness” which is rooted in Christ.

Application

When have you experienced “transcendent happiness” - that is, a deep sense of happiness or joy that is “soul-deep” and not dependent on surrounding circumstances?

Prayer

Dear God, you have entrusted me with your good news and promised to be with me always. Make me faithful to this charge, reaching out to all the world in words and deeds of love. In Jesus’ name, Amen.

Tuesday, August 22

Scripture: Matthew 5:1-4 (New Revised Standard Version Updated Edition)

When Jesus saw the crowds, he went up the mountain, and after he sat down, his disciples came to him. And he began to speak and taught them, saying:

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

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

Observation

What a strange contrast between these verses. Happy are those who are hopeless and grieve? At first glance, it might even feel offensive to name these most difficult times in life as “happy” or “blessed.” And yet, Jesus is introducing a new kind of kingdom, where the ways of our world are turned upside down.

Application

For many of us, when we look back on times of hopelessness or grief, we can see signs of God’s faithfulness to us. We can recount glimpses of hope and happiness, where someone showed us a particular kind of mercy or grace. Within these verses, Jesus is reminding us that feelings of grief and hopelessness are not the final word. Rather, Christ will be with us so that we can “be made glad” (v4). How might Christ be present to you today, “making you glad”? How might Christ be working through you for the gladness of others?

Prayer

Dear God, you have entrusted me with your good news and promised to be with me always. Make me faithful to this charge, reaching out to all the world in words and deeds of love. In Jesus’ name, Amen.

Wednesday, August 23, 2023

Scripture: Matthew 5:5-9 (The Message)

“You’re blessed when you’re content with just who you are—no more, no less. That’s the moment you find

yourself proud owners of everything that can’t be bought.

“You’re blessed when you’ve worked up a good appetite for God. He’s food and drink in the best meal you’ll

ever eat.

“You’re blessed when you care. At the moment of being ‘care-full,’ you find yourself cared for.

“You’re blessed when you get your inside world—your mind and heart—put right. Then you can see God in the

outside world.

“You’re blessed when you can show people how to cooperate instead of compete or fight.

That’s when you

discover who you really are, and your place in God’s family.

Observation

You might try reading this passage a few times this week, in various translations. Does one ‘speak’ to you in a certain way? Do you hear Christ encouraging you through words of another? Today we read Eugene Peterson’s Message translation, which sounds to me a little more conversational. Rest in your seat, and imagine Jesus sitting across from you, speaking these words right to you.

“You’re blessed when you’re content with just who you are: no more, no less. That’s the moment you find yourself a proud owner of everything that can’t be bought. You’re blessed when you’ve worked up a good appetite for God... You’re blessed when you can show people how to cooperate instead of compete or fight. That’s when you discover who you really are, and your place in God’s family.” (portions, v5-9)”

Application

What did you hear from Jesus today? What stood out as something to bring your comfort? Words to challenge you? Beloved one, you are blessed by God. This is true when everything goes right, and when nothing seems to do so. You are blessed, because you have been created and redeemed by a God who loves you deeply.

Prayer

Dear God, you have entrusted me with your good news and promised to be with me always. Make me faithful to this charge, reaching out to all the world in words and deeds of love. In Jesus’ name, Amen.

Thursday, August 24

Scripture: Matthew 5:10-12 (The Message)

"You're blessed when your commitment to God provokes persecution. The persecution drives you even deeper into God's kingdom.

"Not only that—count yourselves blessed every time people put you down or throw you out or speak lies about

you to discredit me. What it means is that the truth is too close for comfort and they are uncomfortable. You

can be glad when that happens—give a cheer, even!—for though they don't like it, / do! And all heaven

applauds. And know that you are in good company. My prophets and witnesses have always gotten into this kind of trouble."

Observation

"Know that you are in good company. My prophets and witnesses have always gotten into this kind of trouble" (v12). Sounds a bit like the "good trouble" that John Lewis spoke of, doesn't it? And of course, John's words were grounded in a belief that God has created all people with sacred worth, knowing that living a life committed to that would cause others to become angry or afraid. Jesus reminds us that we are blessed when we say and do the hard things. "Heaven applauds" us when we do.

Application

How might Jesus be inviting you to do, or say, the hard thing? This might be standing up for someone who is being harmed. It might be repenting of your own actions or thoughts that have harmed others. What might you do today that keeps you in "good company"? How might you look to ancestors of faith for encouragement when you feel nervous or afraid?

Prayer

Dear God, you have entrusted me with your good news and promised to be with me always. Make me faithful to this charge, reaching out to all the world in words and deeds of love. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Friday, August 25

Scripture: Matthew 5:13-16 (Common English Bible)

"You are the salt of the earth. But if salt loses its saltiness, how will it become salty again? It's good for nothing except to be thrown away and trampled under people's feet. You are the light of the world. A city on top of a hill can't be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a basket. Instead, they put it on top of a lampstand, and it shines on all

who are in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before people, so they can see the good things you do and praise your Father who is in heaven.”

Observation

My husband has been teaching my boys the secret behind grilling a good burger or steak. The secret? Salt, of course! Salt, like butter, is a “magic” ingredient that helps highlight and amplify the flavors within any dish.

Application

How are you living a life that is “salty” today? How is it that your prayers are amplifying the ministry of Jesus in our community and world? How might your words and actions, your gifts and passions, be ones that highlight and elevate the message of God’s love today?

Prayer

Dear God, you have entrusted me with your good news and promised to be with me always. Make me faithful to this charge, reaching out to all the world in words and deeds of love. In Jesus’ name, Amen.

Saturday, August 26

Scripture: Matthew 28:18-20 (Common English Bible)

Jesus came near and spoke to them, “I’ve received all authority in heaven and on earth. Therefore, go 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 obey everything that I’ve commanded you. Look, I myself will be with you every day until the end of this present age.”

Observation

We read our guiding verse for this series again. And now, I’m thinking about last words. What are the last words you say before hanging up a phone call? The last words you heard from a parent before they passed? The last words you said before your child took the car out for the first time? Last words have a big impact on our lives. These are the last words of Jesus, according to Matthew’s gospel.

Application

If this were the final thing you would hear from Christ about how to be a faithful follower of Jesus, how might that change you? Where do you sense Christ inviting you to serve? How do you notice confirmation of Jesus’ presence in your life today?

Prayer

Dear God, you have entrusted me with your good news and promised to be with me always. Make me faithful to this charge, reaching out to all the world in words and deeds of love. In Jesus’ name, Amen.