



A Summer Devotional

On

The Parables of Jesus

LARGE -PRINT EDITION

By

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North East United Methodist Church

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Introduction

This summer, read through the Parables of Jesus! Have “*Fun in the Son!*” Come to a new understanding of how much God loves and adores you, and the many promises in His Word. Make it a summer in which you draw closer, not only to the SUN by laying out on the beach, playing golf, hosting picnics, and being outdoors, but make it a summer you draw closer to the SON, to the One who gave His life for you!

Week 1 Sontanned.....The Prodigal Son.....Luke 15:11-32

Just like you and I can receive a suntan simply laying out in sun, we need only to accept God's gift. It doesn't matter where we've been. We simply need to ask Jesus to transform us.

Week 2 Sonburned.....Publican & Pharisee.....Luke 18:9-14

Just as God convicted the Publican, Jesus convicts us. He burns His truth into us and makes us take hard look at ourselves. Often it hurts when we are burned by the Son.

Week 3 Sonscreen.....Parable of the Sower.....Mark 4: 3-9, 14-20

Like sunscreen shields us from the harmful rays of the sun, Jesus shields us, giving us strength & protection against Devil, the winds of life, and the thorns that try to choke us.

Week 4 Watch Out For the Seaweed.....The Little Children.....Luke 18:15-17

There have been times we have gone to the ocean and the seaweed was so bad, due to a recent storm, that you could not swim without having seaweed attach itself to your body, covering you, making it impossible to swim. Are you allowing yourself to have a child-like faith, letting go of the things that hold you to this world, the many attachments, and just trusting Jesus?

Week 5 Swimming Lessons.....The Lord's Prayer.....Matthew 6:9-13

Many of us took swimming lessons when we were young. Jesus taught us “swimming lessons,” teaching us to pray so we would not drown when the difficult times hit, when life pressed in on us like raging waters.

Week 6 Sandcastles.....The Rich Man.....Luke 12:13-21

Must build our lives not on money/possessions which are here today, gone tomorrow, but on the Rock. The things of this world are like the sandcastles we build on the beach that are washed away at the end of the day. We must focus on those things which are of eternal importance; we must focus on Christ.

Week 7 Beware the Undertow.....The Great Feast.....Luke 14:12-24

At the beach we must be conscious of the undertow that can pull us out to sea. Everyday we must beware of distractions which pull us away from the blessings & promise of Jesus Christ, from the relationship He invites us to enjoy.

Week 8 Under An Umbrella?.....The Good Samaritan.....Luke 10: 25-37

When we sit on the beach each summer, we position ourselves under umbrellas and watch the people around us. Are we hiding out under an umbrella watching the world walk by or are we in it, involved and helping.

Week 9 Locals Only.....Laborers in Vineyard.....Matthew 20: 1-16

Growing up we drove around Ocean City, Maryland with pride, wearing bumper stickers on our cars that said, "Locals Only." God shows no favoritism. It doesn't matter when came to Christ. We are as much part of body as those been in church for life.

Week 10 Are We There Yet?.....Persistent Widow.....Luke 18:1-8

How our children can be persistent on a road trip, screaming from the back seat, "Are We There Yet?" over and over. We, too, must be persistent in going after God's blessings, in our time of prayer, like the persistent widow.

Week 11 Sea Glass.....The Hidden Treasure.....Matthew 13:44-52

Every summer we comb the beaches for pieces of sea glass, glass that has been sanded smooth by the ocean waves. Jesus encourages us to seek the kingdom of God, a treasure like none other, and to seek it every day with all our heart.

Week 12 Metal Detectors.....Sheep & Goats.....Matthew 25: 31-46

Just as metal detectors separate coins/metal from sand, Jesus will separate those who love Him from those who don't. On the last day, God will look beneath to the heart.

Week 13 Lifeguard on Duty.....The Good Shepherd.....John 10:1-21

We have lifeguard watching over us, ready to pull us out of raging surf.

Week 1

Sontanned: *The Parable of the Prodigal Son*



Sunday, June 10, 2018

Read & Reflect on The Parable of the Prodigal Son - Luke 15:11-32.

Jesus continued: “There was a man who had two sons. The younger one said to his father, ‘Father, give me my share of the estate.’ So he divided his property between them.

“Not long after that, the younger son got together all he had, set off for a distant country and there squandered his wealth in wild living. After he had spent everything, there was a severe famine in that whole country, and he began to be in need. So he went and hired himself out to a citizen of that country, who sent him to his fields to feed pigs. He longed to fill his stomach with the pods that the pigs were eating, but no one gave him anything.

“When he came to his senses, he said, ‘How many of my father’s hired servants have food to spare, and here I am starving to death! I will set out and go back to my father and say to him: Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me like one of your hired servants.’ So he got up and went to his father.

“But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him.

“The son said to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.’

“But the father said to his servants, ‘Quick! Bring the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. Bring the fattened calf and kill it. Let’s have a feast and celebrate. For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.’ So they began to celebrate.

“Meanwhile, the older son was in the field. When he came near the house, he heard music and dancing. So he called one of the servants and asked him what was going on. ‘Your brother has come,’ he replied, ‘and your father has killed the fattened calf because he has him back safe and sound.’

“The older brother became angry and refused to go in. So his father went out and pleaded with him. But he answered his father, ‘Look! All these years I’ve been slaving for you and never disobeyed your orders. Yet you never gave me even a young goat so I could celebrate with my friends. But when this son of yours who has squandered your property with prostitutes comes home, you kill the fattened calf for him!’

“‘My son,’ the father said, ‘you are always with me, and everything I have is yours. But we had to celebrate and be glad, because this brother of yours was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.’”

After reading the scripture, reflect on and answer the following questions:

- (1) What do I learn about God?**
- (2) What do I learn about people?**
- (3) What do I learn about relating to God?**
- (4) What do I learn about relating to others?**
- (5) What does God want me to understand? To think?**
- (6) What does God want me to believe? To desire?**
- (7) What does God want me to do? Stop doing?**

Monday, June 11, 2018

Read Luke 15:11-32.

This past week as I read the story of “The Prodigal Son,” I sat in awe of the love God has for each of us. To think, that no matter how far we have strayed from home, how low we have become, how rebellious we have been, God runs down the lane to welcome us home when we turn back to Him. Wow! What amazing love...amazing grace. All this week in these devotions we are going to look at this story, this parable Jesus told. Perhaps in Jesus’ stories, this one and others we will study and read throughout the summer, we will catch a glimpse of His love for us...a glimpse that will stay with us and change us.

One of the major problems is that many of us have trouble seeing ourselves in the role of “The Prodigal Son.” We don’t see ourselves having traveled so far, been so “bad” (harlots and wild living?), been so lost (willing to eat the food of the pigs). We don’t see ourselves having rebelled like the Prodigal Son did, taking his inheritance, leaving his father. Yet, we have. We have, in many, many instances, done just the opposite in our lives from what we know God would have wanted for us. We have, in many instances, chose possessions over God, television over God’s Word, the beach over God’s house on Sunday morning. We have, in many instances, put God on the “back burner” and placed the things of this world up front. We have treated the poor, those of different color, those of different backgrounds, in ways that Jesus would have never allowed. We have strayed...we have rebelled against the things of God.

The first step in understanding the story of “The Prodigal Son” is to understand that, yes, we are the prodigal son. We have rebelled...we have gone astray...we certainly have not embraced fully the things of God, the way God expects us to live, the priorities God wishes us to place first in our lives.

Take time tonight, to lift up to God your faults, your shortcomings, to admit that you have not lived each day with God and what He wants for your life at the forefront of your thoughts. Confess where you have placed the world above God, your own desires above His desires. Repent and turn back to Him and know that He will run out to meet you.

Tuesday, June 12, 2018

Read Luke 15:11-32.

Take another look at the story of “The Prodigal Son,” but this time take a look at the older brother. The older brother gets extremely upset over the fact that his father is willing to go to great lengths for the brother who rebelled, wasted his inheritance, slept with prostitutes. The older brother sees himself as having been faithful all these many years and never having received a party for his faithfulness and devotion.

How many of us have been here? How many of us have been the older brother, seeing ourselves as superior to another, looking down on another for their life of sin, their years of running away and rebellion? How often do we look at ourselves and say, “I deserve a party...look at what I have done...look at how faithful I have been?”

We are so quick to see ourselves in a good light...like the older brother, “*Lo, these many years I have been serving you; I never transgressed your commandment at any time...*”

Again, take time tonight to humble yourself...to recognize the areas in your life, where you are thinking more highly of yourself than you ought. Are there people that you look down at for their life of sin, their past rebellions? Like the older brother, do you see yourself superior to others sitting in the pews across from you because you’ve been part of the church longer, a Christian longer, or you’re involved more heavily in the ministry? Pray that God will help you to not judge another and know, remember, as the father says to the older son, “*Son, you are always with me, and all that I have is yours.*” You are a child of the living God. Be sure to give God thanks for such an amazing gift.

Wednesday, June 13, 2018

Read Luke 15:1-10.

Jesus wanted to make sure we understood the great love God has for each of us, so He not only told one story, but three. The “Parable of the Lost Sheep” and the “Parable of the Lost Coin” continue to point out how willing God is, the great depths and lengths God will go, all that God will do to reach us...to touch our hearts...to pull us into His family. Remember in the “Parable of the Prodigal Son” that the Prodigal, the younger son, had the thought of his father in his mind and heart while he

was off in the far-away country. The thought of his father never left him...God will travel the lengths of the earth to reach us. His presence never leaves us. He is always attempting to connect with us.

Take time to simply give God thanks that He went to and continues to go to great lengths to let you know how much He loves you. Give God thanks that you can rest in knowing that He will continue to, through you and others, reach out to your loved ones and neighbors who do not know Christ. You might be at the point of giving up on someone, but God never will. Pray for those you know that do not know Christ, that are lost like the sheep, the coin, the Prodigal Son. Pray that they will open their eyes to the God that is pursuing them with a never-ending love.

Thursday, June 14, 2018

Read I John 3:1-3 and Romans 8:12-17.

Throughout the scriptures we are told that we are children of the living God, we are sons and daughters of the Almighty, having been adopted into His family through Jesus Christ. Think about that for a moment. We are adopted children...sons and daughters of the creator of the universe.

We have been given this status in the family of God, not because of anything we have done or anything that we can do. We have been given this gift of adoption not because of our own merit, but because of God's mercy and love. It is a free gift, bestowed on us through Christ. Free. Amazing Grace. Unmerited love. But like the Prodigal Son, we must accept it. We must turn back to our Father in heaven. We must turn back from this far-away country, this world and its values, priorities that we have been immersed in since birth. Just as we leave the indoors each summer and travel to the beach, to lay and face the sun, to seek that perfect suntan, we must turn our backs on the world, seeking and turning toward the gift of "*sonship*" that God offers us. We must let His love and grace burn into us.

As someone once said...the problem isn't that we don't love God enough...the problem is that we don't truly understand how much God loves us.

Take time to reflect on the gift of grace, unmerited love and mercy, that God offers us. Reflect for a time on being a child of God...being given that opportunity to be adopted into God's family. Take time tonight to simply give God thanks and if you have not accepted that gift, or if you have strayed into a far-away country, turn to your Father in heaven, accept his gift of love, and allow Him to run to you.

Friday, June 15, 2018

Read Luke 15:11-32.

Take one more look at this parable. Note what the younger son plans to say to his father upon his return home after years of rebellious living. The Prodigal has his speech rehearsed. He is going to tell his father, "*Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me like one of your hired men.*" It is clear here that, not only is the younger son willing to admit that he has destroyed the father-son relationship, he has sinned greatly against his family, but that he is willing to work off the damage done. The son is willing to work off the pain he has caused, the money he has spent. He is willing to work as a hired servant to make up for what he has done.

Like the Prodigal son, we all, after messing up, feel that we need to first undo our mistakes, we need to work hard to make up for what we have done. We feel if we work hard enough to make up for our mistakes, God will truly forgive us and love us. God will see our faithfulness and reward us.

Now take time to read again the father's response to seeing his boy return. **Read verses 20-24.** The father doesn't give the son time to complete his rehearsed speech...the son only gets out, "*Father, I have sinned against heaven and in your sight, and am no longer worthy to be called your son.*" The son doesn't even have time to get out the request to be made one of his father's hired servants.

We must come to understand that God doesn't even give us time to say, "Lord, I know I've sinned but I'm going to join the church and work real hard...I'm going to be a good person and make up for what I've done." God stops us after, "Lord, I know I've sinned." And then He robes us with His forgiveness and cleanses us...coming into our lives in

a powerful way. We cannot earn God's forgiveness...we cannot work off our sin, our years of rebellion...we must simply accept the gift...accept His love.

If we truly understand this forgiveness...we will want to serve Him and we will want to let everyone know His love for them.

Take time to reflect on this gift and to give God thanks. What can you do to serve in gratitude for what God has done for you?

Saturday, June 16, 2018

Read and Reflect on the lyrics to the song, “*Prodigal*,” by Casting Crowns. Remember to invite someone to church tomorrow!

*Living on my own, thinking for myself
Castles in the sand, temporary wealth
Walls are falling down, storms are closing in
Tears have filled my eyes, here I am again
And I've held out as long as I can
Now I'm letting go and holding out my hand*

*Daddy, here I am again
Will You take me back tonight
I went and made the world my friend
And it left me high and dry
I drag Your name back through the mud
That You first found me in
Not worthy to be called Your son
Is this to be my end
Daddy, here I am...Here I am again*

*Curse this morning sun
Drags me in to one more day
Of reaping what I've sown
Of living with my shame
Welcome to my world
And the life that I have made
Where one day you're a prince
The next day you're a slave*

*And I've held out as long as I can
Now I'm letting go and holding out my hand*

*Daddy, here I am again
Will You take me back tonight
I went and made the world my friend
And it left me high and dry
I drag Your name back through the mud
That You first found me in
Not worthy to be called Your son
Is this to be my end
Daddy, here I am...Here I am again*

Week 2

Sonburned: *The Parable of the Publican & The Pharisee*



Sunday, June 17, 2018

**Read & Reflect on The Parable of the Publican & The Pharisee
- Luke 18:9-14.**

To some who were confident of their own righteousness and looked down on everyone else, Jesus told this parable: “Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee stood by himself and prayed: ‘God, I thank you that I am not like other people—robbers, evildoers, adulterers—or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week and give a tenth of all I get.’

“But the tax collector stood at a distance. He would not even look up to heaven, but beat his breast and said, ‘God, have mercy on me, a sinner.’

“I tell you that this man, rather than the other, went home justified before God. For all those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted.”

After reading the scripture, reflect on and answer the following questions:

- (1) What do I learn about God?**
- (2) What do I learn about people?**
- (3) What do I learn about relating to God?**
- (4) What do I learn about relating to others?**
- (5) What does God want me to understand? To think?**
- (6) What does God want me to believe? To desire?**
- (7) What does God want me to do? Stop doing?**

Monday, June 18, 2018

Read Luke 18: 9-14.

Jesus stands before the religious leaders of his day and tells them this parable of “Publican & Pharisee.” To truly get the “punch” of this story and how shocking it was to Jesus’ audience, we have to modernize it. As you read this story, and read about the Pharisee, replace “Pharisee” with your pastor or yourself. As you read the story, and read about the Publican or tax collector, replace “Tax Collector” with prostitute or drug addict or adulterer. Then allow Jesus’ words, *“I tell you, this sinner, not the ‘pastor,’ returned home justified before God. For the proud will be humbled, but the humble will be honored.”*

Let’s take a hard look at this parable. The “Pharisee” was the religious leader of the day, the pastor. The Pharisee was very committed to God; in fact, his actions showed great sacrifice on behalf of his faith. He would fast twice a week, on Tuesdays and Thursdays. Jews were only expected to fast once a year on a special day designated for the Lord. They went beyond this expectation. The Pharisee was committed to high moral living. The Pharisee gave a tenth of all he owned to the Lord and God’s work. Even today, he would be considered a great spiritual leader. People would look to him as an example to follow.

The tax collector on the other hand was a “traitor.” He was a traitor to his people. He was a Jew, who accepted a job with the Roman

occupier, and went around collecting taxes from his fellow Jews. If they did not pay, he had the Roman soldiers support his request. He became rich, collecting a little extra each time for himself, while his fellow people became poor.

On the outside, we would not hesitate to judge who was more in line with God, who was the greater person; but Jesus saw on the inside. Jesus saw the heart. The tax collector was truly repentant, saw his “true self,” truly understood the majesty of the God he prayed to. His heart had been burned by the light of God’s love and mercy. The Pharisee was proud and lacked humility. He did not see himself as the Prodigal, did not see himself in need of God’s mercy.

Who are you? Are you the Pharisee? Are you the tax collector? Are you proud and walk around “strutting” your Christianity...you have it together...God is “lucky” to have you on His team? Are you humble...recognizing that you are a sinner...you continue to mess up...you are in need of God’s mercy? Are you proud seeing yourself better and more spiritual than your neighbor? Are you humble seeing yourself in need of a Savior?

Pope John Paul VI once said, “*The most serious sin is one of thought, the sin of pride.*” Ask God to help you fight against the pride that plagues all of us and to be humble, recognizing our need for God and recognizing His grace, His unmerited love, for us.

Tuesday, June 19, 2018

Read Luke 18: 9-14.

Again, take a look at Jesus’ parable. The Pharisee is quick to look over and judge the tax collector. He says, “*I thank you, God, that I am not a sinner like everyone else, especially like that tax collector over there!*” He has the tax collector “pegged.” “That tax collector is a sinner. He is not nearly as spiritual or as godly as I am,” the Pharisee is thinking. Remember the story of the Prodigal Son we spoke about last week. Remember the older son, who stayed home, did not rebel, and got angry with his father when the younger son returned home. The older son saw his brother as a sinner, and saw himself as having always been faithful.

Like the older son in the Prodigal story and like the Pharisee in this parable, do you ever find yourself looking across the pews in church, across the table at a meeting, in conversation with one of your friends... do you ever find yourself labeling someone else in church, in your family, in your neighborhood, as less spiritual, less godly, less “good” than yourself? Do you ever see yourself as more spiritually mature and together than another? Are you ever quick to judge someone else?

Dietrich Bonhoeffer said it best. He wrote, *“Anybody who has once been horrified by the dreadfulness of his own sin that nailed Jesus to the cross will no longer be horrified by even the rankest sins of his brother.”* Thomas a’ Kempis wrote, *“How rarely we weigh our neighbor in the same balance in which we weigh ourselves.”*

Have you put down someone else; have you judged them? Ask God to forgive you and perhaps seek forgiveness from the person you passed judgment on. Ask God to help you to stop judging others and take more time looking inward at your own life. Sit with God and take a hard look at yourself, “weigh” your own sins, and be thankful for God’s forgiveness and mercy. We would not be anybody without Christ. Give God Praise.

Wednesday, June 20, 2018

Read Romans 5:6-11.

Like the tax collector in Jesus’ parable admits before God, we are sinners. We have all *“fallen short of the glory of God,”* as Paul writes. We say it all the time – “Nobody’s Perfect.” Compared to a Holy and Perfect God we all fall short and we all continue daily to place God low on our priority list, placing so many other things above Him. Yet, there is “Good News!” *“When we were utterly helpless, Christ came at just the right time and died for us sinners.”*

Once we have admitted that yes, indeed, we are sinners, we then can discover the wonderful unconditional love, the wonderful gift of mercy and forgiveness, the ultimate sacrifice of Jesus Christ for us on the cross. Barbara Brown Taylor writes, *“The full impact of forgiveness cannot be felt apart from the full impact of what has been forgiven.”*

We must face our sin...face our faults...face our fears and past... we must confront the part of us that we don’t like. Richard Baxter said,

“Kill sin before it kills you.” We must confront it before it eats away at us and there is only one way we can confront our sin. We know we cannot make up for it. We must confront it with the power of God. Henry Drummond writes, *“Sin is a power in our life: let us fairly understand that it can only be met by another power.”* That power is Jesus Christ.

Confess your sins before God. Lay them all out in front of the cross of Christ in prayer and allow God’s forgiveness to sweep over you. There is “Good News!” *“Christ died for us while we were yet sinners”*...You are forgiven. Simply accept the gift. Let the Son burn His love into you!

Thursday, June 21, 2018

Read 2 Corinthians 3:16-18 and Romans 8:29.

The tax collector stood before the altar of God and could not even lift his face to God because he felt so ashamed. God had revealed to him an understanding of his sin, his willingness to cheat his own people, his disobedience to God, his putting God low on the priority list of his life, his hearing the word of God but not living it. The tax collector had been “convicted” of his sin and it hurt. It hurt. *“He beat his chest in sorrow, saying, ‘O God, be merciful to me, for I am a sinner.’”*

Throughout our lives God continues to reveal to us our sin...where we are not putting God first...where we are living ungodly lives. Many times when God shows us this we are ashamed, it hurts, and it hurts to change our behavior, our habits, the things we watch and listen to. Yet, God wants to make us into the likeness of His Son, Jesus Christ. God wants to make us just like Jesus.

Max Lucado writes, *“God loves you just the way you are, but refuses to leave you that way...He wants you to be just like Jesus.”* Lucado goes on to say, *“God is willing to change us into the likeness of the Savior. Shall we accept his offer? Here is my suggestion. Let’s imagine what it means to be just like Jesus. Let’s look long into the heart of Christ...considering his compassion, reflecting upon his intimacy with the Father, admiring his focus, and pondering his endurance. How did he forgive? When did he pray? What made him so*

pleasant? Why didn't he give up? Let's fix our eyes on Jesus. Perhaps in seeing him, we will see what we can become."

How can you become more like Jesus? What is God showing you that you need to get rid of...that you need to seek forgiveness for...that you need to throw out of your life in order to be a "better man or woman?" Pray. Spend time with God tonight and ask Him to help you to see what needs to change in your life and to help you become more like Jesus Christ.

Friday, June 22, 2018

Read Psalm 136 & 148.

God is so good. God shows us mercy even while we are sinners. God offers us forgiveness. God sent His Son Jesus Christ. God gave us the world, our families, our children. God allows us to experience love. God makes us stronger through our difficulties. God loves us with an everlasting love.

Spend some time with God tonight, simply giving God praise... simply saying "Thank you." Take a walk in God's creation and give God thanks.

Saturday, June 23, 2018

Read and Reflect on the lyrics to the hymn, "Amazing Grace" by John Newton. Remember to invite someone to church tomorrow!

*Amazing grace (how sweet the sound) that saved a wretch like me!
I once was lost, but now am found, was blind, but now I see.*

*'Twas grace that taught my heart to fear, and grace my fears relieved;
how precious did that grace appear the hour I first believed!*

*Through many dangers, toils and snares I have already come:
'tis grace has brought me safe thus far, and grace will lead me home.*

*The Lord has promised good to me, his word my hope secures;
he will my shield and portion be as long as life endures.*

*Yes, when this flesh and heart shall fail, and mortal life shall cease:
I shall possess, within the veil, a life of joy and peace.*

*The earth shall soon dissolve like snow, the sun forbear to shine;
but God, who called me here below, will be forever mine.*

Week 3
Sonscreen: *The Parable of the Sower*



Sunday June 24, 2018

Read & Reflect on The Parable of the Sower - Mark 4:1-20.

Again Jesus began to teach by the lake. The crowd that gathered around him was so large that he got into a boat and sat in it out on the lake, while all the people were along the shore at the water's edge.

He taught them many things by parables, and in his teaching said: "Listen! A farmer went out to sow his seed. As he was scattering the seed, some fell along the path, and the birds came and ate it up. Some fell on rocky places, where it did not have much soil. It sprang up quickly, because the soil was shallow. But when the sun came up, the plants were scorched, and they withered because they had no root.

Other seed fell among thorns, which grew up and choked the plants, so that they did not bear grain. Still other seed fell on good soil. It came up, grew and produced a crop, some multiplying thirty, some sixty, some a hundred times."

Then Jesus said, "Whoever has ears to hear, let them hear."

When he was alone, the Twelve and the others around him asked him about the parables. He told them, "The secret of the kingdom of God has been given to you. But to those on the outside everything is said in parables so that, 'they may be ever seeing but never perceiving, and

ever hearing but never understanding; otherwise they might turn and be forgiven!’”

Then Jesus said to them, “Don’t you understand this parable? How then will you understand any parable?”

The farmer sows the word. Some people are like seed along the path, where the word is sown. As soon as they hear it, Satan comes and takes away the word that was sown in them. Others, like seed sown on rocky places, hear the word and at once receive it with joy. But since they have no root, they last only a short time. When trouble or persecution comes because of the word, they quickly fall away. Still others, like seed sown among thorns, hear the word; but the worries of this life, the deceitfulness of wealth and the desires for other things come in and choke the word, making it unfruitful. Others, like seed sown on good soil, hear the word, accept it, and produce a crop—some thirty, some sixty, some a hundred times what was sown.”

Monday, June 25, 2018

Read Mark 4:1-20.

Jesus tells this parable of the farmer scattering seed and then Jesus explains it to His disciples. There are four different types of people that are spoken of in this parable. Today, let’s look at the first.

First, Jesus talks about the farmer scattering seed across his field and some of that seed falling on the footpath where birds came and ate it. Jesus goes on to explain that the seed that fell on the “*hard path* represents those who hear the message, but then Satan comes at once and takes it away from them.”

Brian C. Stiller writes, “*The seed along the path had no chance of survival. It is not as if the farmer did not try to keep the seed from falling where the birds could pick it up. No farmer can guarantee that 100 percent of the seed will land in favorable places. Fields in Palestine were small, separated by footpaths. As the sower walked the field, some seed would fall on hardened paths where birds would more readily pick it up. People’s lives become resistant as they choose familiar cultural paths often hardened to the gospel. When the seed of faith falls on worn paths, the hardened soil leaves it vulnerable to “birds” searching for food.*”

What familiar paths of money, material possessions, relationships, career, tradition have you chosen? What familiar paths of the world are taking precedent over God's path? What worldly paths are so surrounding your life that when the Word of God is sown in your life, when you hear the message Jesus offers, much of it falls on worn paths that you have walked for years, paths of addictions, selfishness, greed, pride, tradition, prejudice and other things of the world?

Pray that God would show you the "worn paths" in your life, the paths of the world you have walked for years, hardening the soil, so that Jesus' Word cannot penetrate. Pray that God will allow you to remove these worn paths, to rake them over, to break the soil up and make it good for planting. Pray that God will protect you from the enemy snatching up the Word He lays on your heart.

Tuesday, June 26, 2018

Read Mark 4:1-20.

Let's take a look at the second person spoken of in Jesus parable of the farmer scattering seed.

Jesus talks about the farmer scattering seed and some of the seed falling on rocky ground where plants quickly sprang up but then wilted beneath the hot sun and died because the roots did not go deep. Jesus goes on to explain to the disciples that this soil represents those who hear the message and receive it with joy, *"but like young plants in such soil, their roots don't go very deep. At first they get along fine, but they wilt as soon as they have problems or are persecuted because they believe the word."*

Read Revelation 2:1-7.

God speaks to the church in Ephesus and criticizes that congregation because they do not love God like they first loved Him... they have lost their enthusiasm...their passion. Many times people hear the word of God and are excited; yet when troubles come or the realization of commitment draws near, enthusiasm shrivels. They begin to back away and the plant which had sprung up excited about Jesus begins to fade away.

Do you still have the same enthusiasm you had when you first discovered and came to Christ? Do you still have the same passion? Or

have the troubles of life and the realization of commitment caused you to shrink, to back away from the One who loves you so much?

Pray that God will help you break free from the rocks of life...that God will help you not be afraid to take the next step, to trust Him, and commit your life fully. Pray that God will help you keep your passion and enthusiasm for Christ, and will help you share it with others.

Wednesday, June 27, 2018

Read Mark 4:1-20.

Now, we take a look at the third person spoken of in Jesus' parable of the farmer scattering seed.

Jesus talks about the farmer scattering seed and some of the seed falling among thorns. This seed was choked out by the thorns that grew up among the tender blades. Jesus goes on to say, *"The thorny ground represents those who hear and accept the Good News, but all too quickly the message is crowded out by the cares of this life, the lure of wealth, and the desire for nice things, so no crop is produced."*

Read Luke 12:22-34.

Jesus tells us not to worry and not to get concerned with the cares of this world, that God will give us all that we need. People get so preoccupied with the worries of life and the deceitfulness of wealth. These things choke out the Word of God, push God down on the priority list, and place themselves at the forefront of our lives.

Have you allowed the things of this world to push away and choke out God from your life? Are your days filled with worry or with trust in God to care for your needs? Are your days filled with thoughts of money and possessions or thoughts of God and His love for you? Are your days filled with the need for material possessions and getting further in your career or are your days filled with thinking of ways to serve God and reach out to others? Are your days so busy with the cares of this world that you spend no time with God and His Word, the Bible?

Pray that God will help you to push the cares of this world aside and trust in Him. Pray that God will help you to focus on Godly things and not worldly things. Pray that God will help you find time to spend in His Word each day.

Thursday, June 28, 2018

Read Mark 4:1-20.

Let's look at the last person spoken of in Jesus' parable of the farmer scattering seed.

Jesus talks about some of the seed falling on good soil and producing a crop thirty, sixty, a hundred fold. The good soil, Jesus says, are those who hear and accept God's message; they will produce a huge harvest.

Read Proverbs 6:20-23.

The Word of God is a lamp to our feet in the darkness. It is counsel to lead us through the curves of life. It is protection and wisdom that leads to many blessings, a harvest, not only in the next life, but in this one.

Pray that God will give you a love for the Word of God, the Bible. Read everyday. The Bible is God's foremost way of communicating with us. Pray that God will help you to listen, to hear, and to accept God's message. Pray that you may be the "good soil" that reaps a harvest. Just like you wear sunscreen to protect you from the sun's harmful rays, wear God's Word in your heart and life to protect you from the enemy and the cares of this world.

Friday, June 29, 2018

Read Psalm 34.

"Taste & See That The Lord Is Good...The Lord Hears His People When They Call To Him For Help." Read His Word tonight. Taste God by reading the Bible. Cry out to Him for help & in Praise!

Saturday, June 30, 2018

Read and Reflect on the lyrics to the hymn, "Jesus Calls Us, O'er The Tumult." Remember to invite someone to church tomorrow!

*Jesus calls us; o'er the tumult of our life's wild, restless sea;
day by day His sweet voice soundeth, saying, "Christian, follow me."*

*Jesus calls us from the worship of the vain world's golden store,
from each idol that would keep us, saying, "Christian, love me more."*

*In our joys and in our sorrows, days of toil and hours of ease,
still He calls, in cares and pleasures,
"Christian, love me more than these."*

*Jesus calls us-- by Thy mercies, Savior, may we hear Thy call;
give our hearts to Thine obedience, serve and love Thee best of all.*

Week 4

Watch Out For The Seaweed: *Let the Little Children Come to Me*



Sunday, July 1, 2018

Read and Reflect on Jesus' words in Luke 18:15-17.

People were also bringing babies to Jesus for him to place his hands on them. When the disciples saw this, they rebuked them. But Jesus called the children to him and said, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. Truly I tell you, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it."

After reading the scripture, reflect on and answer the following questions:

- (1) What do I learn about God?**
- (2) What do I learn about people?**
- (3) What do I learn about relating to God?**
- (4) What do I learn about relating to others?**
- (5) What does God want me to understand? To think?**
- (6) What does God want me to believe? To desire?**
- (7) What does God want me to do? Stop doing?**

Monday, July 2, 2018

Read Luke 18:15-17.

Jesus says, “*Whoever does not receive and welcome the kingdom of God like a little child shall not in any way enter it.*”

What does it mean to accept, to welcome, and to receive the kingdom of God like a little child? What gives children access to the kingdom of God? Is it their innocence? Their powerlessness? Their lack of credentials? Their readiness to receive God’s love? What do you have to give up, let go of, in order to “*receive the kingdom of God as a little child?*” Are you trusting in God fully, freely? Are you trusting in your own efforts? Do you stand before God powerless, in need of His grace? Are you ready to receive God’s love or is there no room left because of the things of this world?

Pray that God would help you to approach His throne with the trust and innocence of a child. Pray that God will allow you to push aside the things of this world that call you to question God’s will and to simply turn to Him, crawling up in His lap, knowing that in your weakness, He is made strong.

Tuesday, July 3, 2018

Read Matthew 19: 13-26.

Jesus said, “*Allow the little ones to come to me...for of such is the kingdom of heaven composed...*” Immediately, following this, the rich young man asks Jesus a question. He asks, “*What...good deed must I do to possess eternal life?*” Jesus tells him to obey the commandments, which the young man says he has followed since his youth. The young man asks, “*What still do I lack?*” Jesus tells him to sell everything and give it to the poor.

What a contrast. A small, innocent child who comes to Jesus, holding nothing back, because the child has nothing. The child is small and young, having not built up the wealth and experiences of this world. The rich young man, on the other hand, has built up great wealth and experience. It is this wealth and experience that causes the young man to not be able to give everything to Jesus. He has become “attached” to the things he has earned in this world. Like seaweed can attach itself to us as we swim in the ocean, his possessions have attached themselves to

the rich young ruler and he cannot easily escape them. Surrounded by and carrying so many possessions, he cannot simply crawl up into the Master's lap as the small child.

What have you become attached to in this world that is difficult to give up, that makes it hard to give Jesus everything? Pray that God will show you those "attachments" that hold you back from having the same relationship with God as a child is able to have. Pray that God will help you not allow anything to stand in the way of your relationship with Him.

Wednesday, July 4, 2018

Read 2 Chronicles 7:14.

On this 4th of July we celebrate our freedom, we remember in our prayers our troops who are fighting for that freedom, and we ask God to bring healing to our land.

Fifty-six men signed the Declaration of Independence. Their conviction resulted in untold sufferings for themselves and their families. Of the 56 men, five were captured by the British and tortured before they died. Twelve had their homes ransacked and burned. Two lost their sons in the Revolutionary Army. Another had two sons captured. Nine of the fifty-six fought and died from wounds or hardships of the war. These men were willing to "stand up" for what they believed in...to lose everything for what God was "calling" them to do.

Every day people die for freedom...every day people die for faith in Jesus Christ...and every day our country seems to grow farther and farther away from the Christian principles that it was founded upon.

Take time today to pray for those who fight for our freedom. Take time today to pray for those who die (165,000 every year) for professing Christ, to pray for those countries where there is no freedom to worship. Take time today to pray for our country, that our land and the family may be healed, that Christian values may once again be incorporated into our schools and society, that Christians may continue to freely share their faith, and that "*In God We Trust*" will be more than a "catch phrase" printed on our money. Lift up our country and our world to the God who created it all.

Thursday, July 5, 2018

Dan Schaeffer writes in his book, Why I Wear a Plastic Dinosaur, about his son, Andrew. He writes about how his son, then seven years old, was very upset that his friend did not believe in Jesus. Schaeffer writes, *“My son believed in hell. It was very real for him, and he didn’t want his friend to go there. He liked his buddy. He was willing to try anything to get him to believe. Oh, his theology was questionable at times, and his doctrine was fuzzy, but understood just enough to know that his friend didn’t have to go to hell. He knew that Jesus could save him and that his friend only had to ask for it. It all seemed so terribly simple that it frustrated him when his friend didn’t respond. I, on the other hand, was thirty-five years old, had a Bachelors in Bible, a Masters in Divinity, twenty years of being born again and seven years as a pastor under my belt...and yet I felt something was terribly wrong with me. I realized that the thought of acquaintances going to hell didn’t bother me much anymore. Oh, it bothered me mentally and spiritually, but not personally...that seem[ed] so inadequate compared to my son’s crying for his one young friend because he was afraid he would go to hell.”*

What a wonderful description of a child-like faith verses the grown-up in us that becomes detached and caught up in our own problems and work. Andrew, mirroring the heart of our Lord, who doesn’t want any to perish but all to come to Him. A child-like faith. Andrew saw it simply enough. A friend in need and a Savior that could help.

Is that what we see when we run into a neighbor hurting? Are we ready to share this simple message of salvation or have we allowed it to become complicated? Pray that God will lay on your heart someone to share this simple message of faith with and that we may live a child-like faith, like Andrew, praying and reaching out for the lost with the message of a Savior.

Friday, July 6, 2018

Lori Wick writes about being a comparative shopper when it comes to thankfulness. She talks about sitting in an airport thinking how much her feet hurt and then seeing a man with one leg walk by and

being thankful. Or reading about a child who shot his mother and being thankful that her children only gave her a hard time about doing the dishes last night.

Don't we all do this? Don't we all rationalize that our lives aren't as bad as others? Do you ever find yourself complaining about your life only to be reminded someone else is worse off? What Wick later describes is the difference between this comparative shopping for thankfulness and a child-like faith and gratitude.

Wick goes on to write, *“Enter the cross. Enter the gift of eternal life because I believe in the Savior who died on that cross. I never have to waste my time comparative shopping for thankfulness again. If I keep the cross at the forefront of my mind, I will constantly remember that I have something which to be thankful. I have eternal life. My feet hurt today. I have eternal life. My child doesn't always obey me. I have eternal life. I forgot once again to control my tongue. I have eternal life. I can't honestly tell you that I am thankful all the time, but I can assure you that because of the cross, I have no excuse not to be.”*

A child-like faith? It is a faith that focuses on the cross, not on what we have and others don't. All our joy comes from the cross. Thank God for eternal life. Pray that God will fill you with joy unspeakable, knowing that you will one day be with Him. Pray for child-like faith.

Saturday, July 7, 2018

Read John 3:1-7.

One summer, as my family and I traveled on vacation to the Shenandoah mountains, I found myself listening to the children and their conversation in the back seat as we drove along the Skyline Drive. My son, and his friend, began to get into a discussion on prayer, the Garden of Eden, creation. I was beaming with excitement that my son and his friend were talking about God and with great faith. At one point, my son's friend said, *“You don't pray and then worry...once you pray there is no need to worry.”*

Wow! From the mouths of babes. She said it all. A child-like faith. No questions asked...no problem...just belief...if we pray then

we need not worry because God will answer our prayer...He will hear us.

Do you go into prayer with God with such faith and surrender? Do you trust that God is listening and will answer your prayers? Pray that God will give you such child-like faith.

Jesus speaks to Nicodemus and tells him that in order for one to enter the Kingdom of heaven, they must be born again, they must become like a child. They must leave the attachments of this world, and become weak, innocent, and needy. We are in such need of God and His son, Jesus Christ; yet, we allow the world to convince us that it has what we need, that we can be in control, that we can solve the problem. But it is only Jesus Christ who can lift us out of the mire of our sin and bring us into relationship with God. We must accept Him into our hearts and allow ourselves to be “born again.” To become like children, without all the answers, just believing by faith in things unseen.

Open your heart to Jesus and accept the adoption God has proposed for you, His children. Pray for those you know who make it all so complicated. Pray that they and you will simply see a loving God that has, is and will continue to reach out to you. **Remember to invite someone to church tomorrow.**

Week 5
Swimming Lessons: *The Lord's Prayer*



Sunday, July 8, 2018

Read and Reflect on Lord's Prayer in Matthew 6:9-13.

Jesus taught us how to swim in a spiritual ocean; He gave us “swimming lessons,” teaching us how to pray. Take the time to really study the Lord's Prayer phrase by phrase.

“*Our Father...*” Do you realize you have a Father in heaven, that you are His child, that you are precious in His sight? “*Your will be done on earth...*” Are you allowing God to use you to do His will on earth? Are you promoting the name of Jesus Christ? Are you praying for peace throughout the world, your church, your community? “*Give us this day our daily bread...*” Are you simply praying for today's needs, not wants? Are you focused on now, not tomorrow? “*Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven...*” Is there anyone you have not forgiven that has hurt you? Is there anyone you have not let know that you care for them and hold nothing against them? “*And lead us not into temptation...*” Are you constantly asking God to help you fight against those things that tempt you away from Him? When you are tempted by the world, do you turn to God?

Each day, this week, close with the Lord's Prayer as Jesus taught us to pray, in Matthew 6:9-13:

“Our Father, in heaven, may your name be honored. May your Kingdom come soon. May your will be done here on earth, just as it is in heaven. Give us our food for today, and forgive us our sins, just as we have forgiven those who have sinned against us. And don’t let us yield to temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.”

After reading the scripture, reflect on and answer the following questions:

- (1) What do I learn about God?**
- (2) What do I learn about people?**
- (3) What do I learn about relating to God?**
- (4) What do I learn about relating to others?**
- (5) What does God want me to understand? To think?**
- (6) What does God want me to believe? To desire?**
- (7) What does God want me to do? Stop doing?**

Monday, July 9, 2018

Read Matthew 6: 14-15.

David Nasser, in his book, A Call To Die: A 40 Day Journey of Fasting From the World and Feasting on God, speaks on seeking forgiveness from others, *“Often, when the Lord taps us on the shoulder and says, ‘Remember this? Make it right,’ we come up with a lot of ‘what ifs’: What if he hurt me, too? What if he yells at me and refuses to accept my apology? What if it happens again? What if I get tongue-tied and can’t say anything? What if I can’t stand him? What if I don’t have the means to make restitution? What if it’s really embarrassing? Those are just a few of the excuses we might use at that moment.”*

What are some of the excuses that you have been using? Ask God to bring to your mind a person that you need to forgive. Reread the excuses above. Have you used any of those excuses to harbor bitterness, resentment, or unforgiveness in your heart? Jesus Christ wants you to forgive the person or persons. Jesus does not ask us if we feel like forgiving the person or persons. He states in Matthew 6:14-15, *“If you forgive those who sin against you, your heavenly Father will forgive you. But if you refuse to forgive others, your Father will not forgive your sins.”* Who do you need to forgive?

Prayer: Dear Lord, please forgive me of the bitterness, resentment, and unforgiveness I have demonstrated to _____. Lord, I forgive _____. Help me to know what You would have me do to seek reconciliation with _____. In Jesus' Name I pray. Amen.

Close with the Lord's Prayer.

Tuesday, July 10, 2018

Read Psalm 51.

David had sinned and he knew it. Psalm 51 vividly describes David's pain and desire for forgiveness and restoration into right relationship with God. We too are in need of God's forgiveness. We also at times, hold onto areas of weakness and failures. We may ask God to forgive us, but we may not be willing to forgive ourselves. God wants us to learn from our mistakes, seek His forgiveness, and press on. Philippians 3:13–14 tells us, *“No, dear brothers and sisters, I am still not all I should be, but I am focusing all my energies on this one thing: Forgetting the past and looking forward to what lies ahead, I strain to reach the end of the race and receive the prize for which God, through Christ Jesus, is calling us up to heaven.”*

What areas of your life do you need to forgive yourself for? What past mistakes are you clinging to? Like David, have you asked for God's forgiveness? In Psalm 51:7, David says, *“Purify me from my sins, and I will be clean; wash me, and I will be whiter than snow.”* Are you ready to *“forget the past”* and *“look forward to what lies ahead”*?

Prayer: Dear Lord, You see and know my sin. Lord, I ask for your forgiveness of my sins. Lord, please let me enter into right relationship with You. Lord, help me to move forward as I pray, *“forgetting the past and looking forward to what lies ahead”* (Philippians 3:13).

Close with the Lord's Prayer.

Wednesday, July 11, 2018

Read Matthew 6:9-13.

The Lord's Prayer. How often do we run through the words of The Lord's Prayer without contemplating the words? *“Forgive us our sins, just AS we have forgiven others”*. As you think back on this week, who are the persons who have offended you? Who do you need to forgive?

Sometimes, it helps to speak out loud that we forgive a person who has offended us. Have you asked the Lord to forgive you for the sins you have committed this week? Take time to pray and reflect on the words of The Lord's Prayer.

Prayer: Dear Lord, please forgive us for the times we have rushed through The Lord's Prayer and not contemplated the words of life that are found in the prayer You gave us. Lord, thank You for Your love and forgiveness in our lives. Help us to accept Your forgiveness of our sins and to shine Your Light into the lives of others. In Your Precious Name I pray. Amen.

Close with the Lord's Prayer.

Thursday, July 12, 2018

Read Psalm 46:10.

"Be still, and know that I am God!"

Mother Theresa was once asked, *"What do you say to God when you pray?"* She replied, *"I don't speak, I listen."* The reporter responded, *"Well, what does God say to you?"* Mother Theresa replied, *"God doesn't speak, He listens."*

Sometimes prayer can be simply sitting with God, the two of you personally connected, sitting with one another in quiet, in love, in praise. Spend fifteen minutes today simply listening to God, simply sitting with Him. When your thoughts go on to other things, simply repeat the Lord's Prayer over and over. This will help you focus back on God.

Sit quietly and allow God to speak to you in silence. Pray The Lord's Prayer and then sit quietly and listen for God's voice.

Friday, July 13, 2018

Read Matthew 6:7-8 and Proverbs 15:29.

Therese of Lisieux writes, *"I always have the feeling that our Lord doesn't supply me with provisions for my journey – he just gives me food unexpectedly when and as I need it; I find it there without knowing how it got there. It simply comes to this, that our Lord dwells unseen in the depths of my miserable soul, and so works upon me by grace that I can always find out what he wants me to do at this particular moment."* God knows what we need and when we go to Him in prayer, He provides

those needs at just the right moments, in His timing. If we continue to turn to God in prayer, each day, we will find “unexpectedly” our needs being met and our prayers being answered.

Do you every get discouraged when your prayers are not answered immediately? Do you worry about the future, instead of trusting God to show up at the “last minute” with just what you need? Trust that God hears your prayers and trust in His timing. Ask God to help you with this.

Saturday, July 14, 2018

Read Luke 6:6-12.

Jesus heals a man’s hand and the scribes and the Pharisees are outraged that Jesus healed on the Sabbath. I am sure there was much more work to do. There were more people to be healed, for I am sure that hearing of the man’s hand being restored, many with sickness and pain flocked to find Jesus. There were people who had questions and were throwing accusations at Jesus which he could easily answer. But instead of healing and teaching, Jesus went up on a mountainside, by himself, to pray, to spend time with the Father.

Thomas Merton writes, “*We are faced with a choice between two concepts which... are regarded as opposed. One an active idea of prayer: it accompanies work, and sanctifies work. The other a contemplative concept in which prayer, in order to penetrate more deeply into the mystery of God, must ‘rest from exterior action and cleave only to the desire of the Maker.’*”

Merton goes on to write how both are commanded of us for we are told to love God and neighbor. When you look at your week, are you both actively praying with your life, serving others and thanking God as you work, and praying with your heart, spending time in quiet with God, diving deeper and deeper into your relationship with Him? Are you taking time to rest from “exterior action,” work to be done, even though there is a lot you could be doing, and simply rest in God’s arms, spending time with Him in prayer? Ask God for help in, not finding the time, but, like Jesus, making the time to simply sit with God in prayer.

Don’t forget to invite someone to church tomorrow!

Week 6
Sandcastles: *The Parable of the Rich Man*



Sunday, July 15, 2018

Read & Reflect on The Parable of the Rich Man - Luke 12:13-21.

Someone in the crowd said to him, “Teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me.”

Jesus replied, “Man, who appointed me a judge or an arbiter between you?” Then he said to them, “Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; life does not consist in an abundance of possessions.”

And he told them this parable: “The ground of a certain rich man yielded an abundant harvest. He thought to himself, ‘What shall I do? I have no place to store my crops.’

“Then he said, ‘This is what I’ll do. I will tear down my barns and build bigger ones, and there I will store my surplus grain. And I’ll say to myself, “You have plenty of grain laid up for many years. Take life easy; eat, drink and be merry.”’

“But God said to him, ‘You fool! This very night your life will be demanded from you. Then who will get what you have prepared for yourself?’

“This is how it will be with whoever stores up things for themselves but is not rich toward God.”

After reading the scripture, reflect on and answer the following questions:

- (1) What do I learn about God?**
- (2) What do I learn about people?**
- (3) What do I learn about relating to God?**
- (4) What do I learn about relating to others?**
- (5) What does God want me to understand? To think?**
- (6) What does God want me to believe? To desire?**
- (7) What does God want me to do? Stop doing?**

Monday, July 16, 2018

Read Matthew 7:21-29.

Jesus offers us and His disciples some strong words in these verses. In verses 21-23, Jesus says that simply saying, “*Lord, Lord*” will not lead to one entering the kingdom of heaven. Furthermore, those who simply do good works, “*prophesying in [God’s] name...and [doing] many mighty works in [God’s] name*” will not enter the kingdom of heaven. What is Jesus saying?

Jesus is speaking of the heart. Jesus is asking us and His disciples if we have truly internalized our faith; if we have truly given our hearts to Christ. Are we simply coming to church and shouting “Lord,” and praising God in the songs, because it is what is expected. Are we praising God on Sunday mornings with all our hearts, loving Him, giving all we are to Jesus? Are we doing good works, works of charity, serving in positions in the church, reaching out to our neighbors to be “good people,” because it is expected, to earn our reward, or are we reaching out and serving out of love for Jesus Christ? Where is our heart? What is our motivation? What is behind all that we do?

Jesus says, on the last day, He will not listen to our words or look solely at our works, but will look at our heart. And to some, He will say, “*I never knew you.*” Does Jesus know you? Have you given Him all of your heart? Is He the motivation for your “good” deeds? Have we truly given all to Him?

Recommit your life to Jesus in prayer tonight. Like a popular contemporary Christian song declares, tell Him, *“I want to know you...I want to know you...I want to know you more.”*

Tuesday, July 17, 2018

Read Matthew 7:21-29 again.

Focus on verses 24-27. Have you built your house on the rock or have you built your house on the sand? Jesus says that those *“who hear these words of Mine and acts upon them”* will be like one who has built his house on the rock. What words is Jesus speaking of? Jesus is speaking of the Sermon on the Mount. The Sermon on the Mount covers chapters 5, 6 & 7. In it Jesus gives many instructions, much guidance, and, as the people say, *“teaches [us] with authority.”* Jesus speaks in the Sermon on the Mount about putting our total trust in God, loving our neighbor and our enemy, and offering our hearts to God in prayer. Jesus gives us a model to work toward, a model that none of us will probably every live up to, but one to strive toward daily as we give our hearts to Him.

Throughout the rest of the week we will look at the Sermon on the Mount, but for today, what are you doing daily to strive to be more and more like Jesus Christ, to open your heart more deeply to Him, to trust, love and pray more? Pray to God to help you on your daily walk with the Lord.

Wednesday, July 18, 2018

Read Matthew 5:22-25.

Jesus understood that you could not give your whole heart to God and could not be living for Jesus Christ and *“harbor malice against”* another. If you have given your heart to Jesus, and Christ and His Spirit has come to live in you, then whenever you hold a grievance against another, it blocks you from Christ, and suddenly you are living on the sand instead of the rock.

Jesus says in verse 23-25, that before you are to give your offering, before coming to the altar in prayer, if you have any grievance against another, it must be dealt with. Jesus says, *“First make peace with your brother, and then come back and present your gift.”*

Are you holding any grudges against another? Have you made peace with those you have found yourself in opposition to? Have you allowed Christ's love to flow through you even for one you don't necessarily like? Is a grievance against another getting in the way of you and God? To build our house on the rock, we must go to those we have had a problem or grievance with and make things right.

Pray that God will give you the strength to go to someone who your relationship with has been strained and make amends in the name of Jesus Christ. Pray for those whom you have difficulty with.

Thursday, July 19, 2018

Read Matthew 5:27-30.

Jesus is not only talking about adultery but temptation when He says, "*If your right eye serves as a trap to ensnare you...pluck it out and throw it away.*" What are your temptations today? What is drawing you away from the presence of God, from sitting with Jesus? What is pulling your heart away from Jesus? Are you tempted to allow fear of the future to control your life? Are you tempted by alcohol, pornography, gambling, soap operas? Are you tempted by your neighbor's new car, clothes, home? Are you tempted to yell at your kids after a hard day's work?

We face many temptations...every day. And some of them we simply need to separate ourselves from? We need to push them away with God's help and not go near them. Pray for God to help you push away anything that is getting in the way of you and God, anything that is tempting you away from being the person God has created you to be, anything that is tempting you away from the Rock!

Friday, July 20, 2018

Read Matthew 7:1-5; 15-20.

Jesus says that before we are to criticize and judge others, we are to take a real hard look at ourselves. What kind of fruit is our life growing? Are we living a life that shines Jesus Christ? Is our life lifting others up? Are we holding grievances, being stubborn, hurting others, or are we loving "*even our enemies*" with the love of Jesus?

Pray that God will help you to be honest with yourself, and that God will show you your faults. Pray that God will help you with those faults and help you to not judge others, but to simply love them.

Saturday, July 21, 2018

Read Matthew 7:7-11.

Seek after God in prayer. Keep on asking Him for guidance and keep on opening your heart more and more fully to Jesus. God will answer the door if only you knock.

Read the lyrics to the hymn, “My Hope Is Built,” and reflect. Do these words ring true for you? Are you standing on the “*solid rock*” or are you standing on “*sinking sand*”? “*When all around [you] gives way,*” is God your “*hope and stay*”? Ask God to anchor you in Him. Give thanks this day! **Don’t forget to invite someone to church tomorrow!**

My Hope Is Built

*My Hope is built on nothing less
Than Jesus Blood and Righteousness
I dare not trust the Sweet Frame
But wholly lean on Jesus Name*

Chorus:

*On Christ the solid rock I Stand
All other ground is sinking sand
All other ground is sinking sand*

*When darkness veils his lovely face
I rest on his unchanging grace
In every high and stormy gale
My anchor holds within the veil*

Chorus:

*His oath, his covenant, his blood
Support me in the whelming flood
When all around my soul gives way
He then is my hope and stay.*

Chorus:

*When he shall come with trumpet sound
O may I then in him be found,
Dressed in his righteousness alone,
Faultless to stand before the throne*

Chorus:

Week 7
Beware The Undertow: *The Parable of the Great Feast*



Sunday, July 22, 2018

Read & Reflect on The Parable of the Great Feast - Luke 14:12-24.

Then Jesus said to his host, “When you give a luncheon or dinner, do not invite your friends, your brothers or sisters, your relatives, or your rich neighbors; if you do, they may invite you back and so you will be repaid. But when you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, and you will be blessed. Although they cannot repay you, you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous.”

When one of those at the table with him heard this, he said to Jesus, “Blessed is the one who will eat at the feast in the kingdom of God.”

Jesus replied: “A certain man was preparing a great banquet and invited many guests. At the time of the banquet he sent his servant to tell those who had been invited, ‘Come, for everything is now ready.’

“But they all alike began to make excuses. The first said, ‘I have just bought a field, and I must go and see it. Please excuse me.’

“Another said, ‘I have just bought five yoke of oxen, and I’m on my way to try them out. Please excuse me.’

“Still another said, ‘I just got married, so I can’t come.’

“The servant came back and reported this to his master. Then the owner of the house became angry and ordered his servant, ‘Go out quickly into the streets and alleys of the town and bring in the poor, the crippled, the blind and the lame.’

“‘Sir,’ the servant said, ‘what you ordered has been done, but there is still room.’

“Then the master told his servant, ‘Go out to the roads and country lanes and compel them to come in, so that my house will be full. I tell you, not one of those who were invited will get a taste of my banquet.’”

After reading the scripture, reflect on and answer the following questions:

- (1) What do I learn about God?***
- (2) What do I learn about people?***
- (3) What do I learn about relating to God?***
- (4) What do I learn about relating to others?***
- (5) What does God want me to understand? To think?***
- (6) What does God want me to believe? To desire?***
- (7) What does God want me to do? Stop doing?***

Monday, July 23, 2018

Read Luke 14:12-24.

Jesus tells the parable of “The Great Feast.” Like the undertow at the beach that can pull even an able-bodied swimmer out and away from shore, there are many distractions and excuses that can pull us away from accepting the invitation God has given each of us to come to Him through Christ. God has offered us a great gift and has sent an invitation, in the form of His Son, Jesus Christ, to inform us of the banquet that has been prepared. The invitation is in front of us; an invitation that is not just to eternal life but to benefits in this life including clear conscience (Romans 8:1), purpose (Romans 8:28), power & strength (Philippians 4:13), life & peace (Romans 8:6), confidence (Romans 8:31), fulfillment (Philippians 4:19), help with weakness (Romans 8:26), security (Romans 8:39), and freedom (John 8:32, 36).

We have all been given a tremendous gift...an invitation to dine with the Creator, to live as one of His adopted sons and daughters; unfortunately, many of us are so distracted by the things of this world that we make excuse after excuse for not accepting the invitation. Like the three men in Jesus' parable, many times we decline the invitation to meet with and dine with the Master.

The greatest invitation God gives us is to be reconciled through His son, Jesus Christ. We are invited to be forgiven our sins and rest in Him, to have a relationship with God. This is a tremendous gift and opportunity that so many people, many in our own families, have not accepted. We must help others to see the gift, the invitation that stands in front of them and to understand that it is not just a supper that they will miss out on if they decline God's invitation.

Charles Spurgeon, in his sermon, "A Straight Talk," writes, "*It is not merely a supper that you will lose when you say, 'I cannot come.' To lose a supper would be little and might soon be set right when breakfast-time came round. But you lose eternal life, and that loss in time can never be found in eternity. You lose the pardon of sin, reconciliation to God, adoption into the family of love – these are heavy losses. You lose the joy of faith for life, and you lose comfort in death – who can estimate this damage? Lose not your immortal soul! Oh, lose not that! For, if you gain the whole world, it will not recompense you for such a loss. Lose what you will, but lose not your soul, I pray you!*"

Have you accepted the invitation God has given you through His son, Jesus Christ? Have you accepted the invitation to the banquet and trusted in Jesus? Will you now, instead of making excuses and letting the world distract you from coming, resolve to come at once? And if you have come, and have a relationship with God, having accepted His invitation, will you go out into the "*streets and lanes of the city,*" "*the highways and hedges,*" and "*compel them to come in, that [God's] house may be filled?*" Will you tell others? Will you tell them about the invitation God offers?

Pray that God will lay names on your heart...people you need to invite to church...need to tell about God's invitation for them.

Tuesday, July 24, 2018

Read Luke 14:12-24.

Excuses are deadly things. They poison the life of the Christian because they block the path to confession and forgiveness and rob faith of its vitality. They keep us from growing closer to God, opening our lives up to God's guidance...they keep us from the blessings God has for each of us.

One of the excuses many of us give for not accepting the invitation God gives us to go deeper, to be fed, to spend time with Him is "I Have No Time." We know that spending time each day with God in prayer, getting involved in a small group, being a servant through a particular ministry in the church, getting into a Bible study are all things that will help us grow in our relationship with God and go deeper in understanding His love for us; but we reply, "I Have No Time."

Spurgeon writes, *"Let me be plain with you and say that you could find time for thought about your soul if you had a mind to do so. To plead that you have no time for religion is a fraud. It is lying unto God to say that you have no time. When a man wants to do a thing, if he has no time, he makes time. 'Where there's a will there's a way.' Where there is a heart to religion there is plenty of time for it."*

Have you used this excuse? "I Have No Time." What does God want you to make time for? Bible study? A small group? A ministry? Pray that God will show you what He wants you to make time for and help you to go ahead and do it, that you might grow closer to Him. Accept His invitation...no excuses.

Wednesday, July 25, 2018

Read Luke 14:12-24.

Another excuse many of us give for not accepting the invitation God gives us to go deeper, to be fed, to spend time with Him is "I Have More Important Things To Do.." Spurgeon writes, *"Now, come! I shall contradict you flatly. You have nothing more important to do. That would be utterly impossible. Nothing under heaven can be of one-hundredth part of the importance of your being reconciled to God, and saved through Jesus Christ. What is that more important business? To make money? Where is the importance of that? You may get a pile of it,*

and the net result will be greater care, and the more to leave when you die. But you tell me you must have an opportunity for study. Well, that is better; but what are you going to study? Science? Art? Politics? Are these important compared with the saving of your soul? Your first duty is to be right with your God, who made you. Had Christ redeemed you? Rest not till you know the truth of that redemption by being reconciled to God.” God offers us daily to get to know Him better.

Pray that God will show you areas and things in your life you might be able to give up for the most important thing in life...a relationship with your Father in heaven.

Thursday, July 26, 2018

Read Romans 1:18-21.

Paul writes that we “*are without excuse,*” that “*For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen...*” When I coached soccer for Woodbridge High School years ago, our team had a shirt made and on the back of that shirt was the phrase “No Excuses.” God wants us to accept His invitation and to stop making excuses. Spurgeon writes, “*If you still intend to say, ‘I cannot come,’ will you speak the truth now? Will you alter a word, and get nearer the truth? Say, ‘I will not come.’ I wish you would say that rather than the other, because the recoil of saying, ‘I will not come: I will not believe in Jesus: I will not repent of sin: I will not turn from my wicked ways’ – the recoil, I say, from that might be blessed by God to you to make you see your desperate state. I wish you would then cry, ‘I cannot sit down, and make my own damnation sure by saying that I will not come to Christ.’ Will you now, instead of refusing to come, resolve to come at once? Say, ‘I will come to Jesus.’*”

In other words, there are no excuses. Will we come to Jesus? Will we grow closer through Bible study and prayer? Will we get involved in His church? Or won’t we? We have been given the freedom and power to choose just like the three men in the parable Jesus told. They were all given the invitation and all had the choice to accept it or turn away and do their own thing. We, too, have that choice.

Pray that God will help you to stop making excuses and to accept the invitation God is giving you to go deeper with Him through prayer, study and service.

Friday, July 27, 2018

Read John 6:22-40.

So often we “*labor for food that perishes*” instead of focusing our energies and lives on Jesus Christ, the bread of life. We must not allow the things of this world to distract us from feeding on Christ, on His Word, on His love, on His commands to serve one another.

God will give us, through Jesus Christ, “*food which endures to everlasting life.*” Read His Word...it will speak to you. Share in worship...it will reenergize you. Surround yourself with Christian friends...it will strengthen you. Pray...it will change you.

Don't allow that which cannot feed you and nourish you fully (money, success, possessions, power) to distract you from the living bread. Take time to simply pray and sit with God and His Word tonight.

Saturday, July 28, 2018

Read Luke 14:17; Psalm 119.

Just take in God's Word. Taste & See That the Lord is Good. Remember that Jesus in the Parable of the Great Feast tells of the Master of the House sending His servant to invite all He could find to the banquet. God calls us, the Church, to be His servants, going out and telling everyone that they are invited to a great feast...inviting them to come and “*taste and see that the Lord is good.*” Offer the invitation to church to someone. Call them tonight and tell them you will pick them up. Pray for those who haven't accepted God's invitation.

Don't forget to invite someone to church tomorrow!

Week 8
Under An Umbrella?: *The Parable of the Good Samaritan*



Sunday, July 29, 2018

Read and Reflect on the Parable of the Good Samaritan - Luke 10:25-37.

On one occasion an expert in the law stood up to test Jesus. “Teacher,” he asked, “what must I do to inherit eternal life?”

“What is written in the Law?” he replied. “How do you read it?”

He answered, “‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind’; and, ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’”

“You have answered correctly,” Jesus replied. “Do this and you will live.”

But he wanted to justify himself, so he asked Jesus, “And who is my neighbor?”

In reply Jesus said: “A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, when he was attacked by robbers. They stripped him of his clothes, beat him and went away, leaving him half dead. A priest happened to be going down the same road, and when he saw the man, he passed by on the other side. So too, a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. But a Samaritan, as he traveled, came where the man was; and when he saw him, he took pity on him. He went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he put the man on his own donkey, brought him to an inn and

took care of him. The next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper. 'Look after him,' he said, 'and when I return, I will reimburse you for any extra expense you may have.'

"Which of these three do you think was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?"

The expert in the law replied, "The one who had mercy on him." Jesus told him, "Go and do likewise."

After reading the scripture, reflect on and answer the following questions:

- (1) What do I learn about God?**
- (2) What do I learn about people?**
- (3) What do I learn about relating to God?**
- (4) What do I learn about relating to others?**
- (5) What does God want me to understand? To think?**
- (6) What does God want me to believe? To desire?**
- (7) What does God want me to do? Stop doing?**

Monday, July 30, 2018

Read Luke 10:25-37.

The story of "The Good Samaritan" is very familiar to many of us. I want to share this week with you a few thoughts from another of Charles Spurgeon's sermons that might open our eyes to some new insights concerning this story and its application to our personal lives.

Spurgeon first talks about the two men, the priest and Levite, who passed by the fallen man without helping him. He writes, *"They were brought to the spot by God's providence on purpose to do so. What better thing could the Lord himself do for the poor man half dead than to bring some man to help him?...God brought them to this position, but they willfully refused the sacred duty which providence and humanity demanded of them. Now, you that are wealthy are sent into our city on purpose that you may have compassion upon the sick, the wounded, the poor, and the needy. God's intent in endowing any person with more substance than he needs is that he may have the pleasurable office, or rather let me say, the delightful privilege, of relieving want and woe."*

You have been given gifts and resources in order to reach out to others, to lift them up, to help them in times of need. Spurgeon goes on to point out how sad it is that the wealth that has been put into many of our hands to help the needy is being spent on excessive luxuries for ourselves.

God calls us to reach out to those in need and God places us in people's lives at the time they need our help. We need to be on the lookout and aware of those around us and their needs. God may have placed us in that location, at that moment, like the priest and Levite, to help out. Pray that when God asks you to help someone that has fallen, you don't walk by. Pray that God will give you the insight, courage, and compassion to stop and help.

Tuesday, July 31, 2018

Read I John 3:16-23.

We are called to not only get near to God but to become like Him. We are called to be like Christ, to ask "What would Jesus do?" Julian of Norwich wrote, *"Every act of kindness and compassion done by any man for his fellow Christian is done by Christ working within him."* We must let God in and allow Christ to change us and move in our lives.

Spurgeon writes about how the priest and the Levite both were engaged in holy work in the temple of God, yet they both came away from it with a *"hard heart."* He writes, *"This is a sad fact. They had been near to God, but were not like him. You may spend Sabbath after Sabbath in the worship of God, or what you think to be so, and you may behold Christ Jesus set forth visibly crucified among you, and themes which ought to turn a heart of stone to flesh may pass before your minds, and nevertheless you may return into the world to be as miserly as ever, and to have as little feeling toward your fellow-men as before. It ought not to be so."*

We must not simply talk about God and go to church, but we must allow God to change our hearts...to move in our hearts and teach us to love like Him. We cannot be satisfied with simply sitting on the beach under an umbrella and watching the world walk by. If we are not helping more, reaching out more, caring more, thinking of others more, after

coming to Christ than before, perhaps we have not truly given our hearts to Him.

How are you showing love in “*deed and in truth?*” How are you living your faith? How are you becoming more like Christ in your life, your actions, your speech? Pray that God gives you even greater compassion for your fellow human beings and you will begin to see others as God sees them, as His children.

Wednesday, August 1, 2018

Read Romans 13:8-10 & John 15:9-17.

We are called by God to love our neighbor...to reach out and care for those around us who are hurting and in need. In fact, Jesus commands us to love one another just as He has loved us.

Look at the Samaritan in Jesus’ parable. Spurgeon writes, “*This man helped his poor neighbour with great tenderness and care. He was like a mother to him. Everything was done with loving thought and with whatever skill he possessed. He did the best he could. Let what we do for others always be done in the noblest style. Let us not treat the poor like dogs to whom we fling a bone, nor visit the sick like superior beings who feel that they are stooping down to inferiors when they enter their rooms; but in the sweet tenderness of real love, learned at Jesus’ feet, let us imitate the good Samaritan.*”

How are you showing love for your neighbor? How are you reaching out to the poor and hurting in your community? Are you loving others like Jesus loved you? How do you view the poor...how do you speak of them? Is it with love and compassion or is it with distaste? How would Jesus see them? Pray that you might be more like the model God gave us in His Son, Jesus Christ.

Thursday, August 2, 2018

Read Matthew 5:43-48.

Wow! This is one of the most difficult teachings Jesus has given to us...to love our enemies. Not only are we called to lift up the hurting and oppressed, the poor and the hungry, but we are also called to love our enemies, those who despise us, curse us, threaten us, and cause us

pain. Is such a love possible? It is only possible with the heart of Christ.

Jesus' parable of "The Good Samaritan" shows this kind of love. Spurgeon writes, *"Moreover, the Jews were great haters of the Samaritans, and no doubt this Samaritan might have thought, 'If I were in that man's case he would not help me. He would pass me by and say, 'It is a Samaritan dog, let him be accursed.' The Jews were accustomed to curse the Samaritans, but it did not occur to the good man to remember what the Jew would have said: he saw him bleeding and he bound up his wounds. Our Saviour has not given us for a golden rule, 'Do ye to others as others would do to you,' but 'as ye would they should do to you.' The Samaritan went by this rule, and though he knew of the enmity in the Jewish mind he felt he must heap coals of fire upon the wounded man by loving help; therefore he went straight away to his relief."*

Who in your life are you holding a grudge against? Who are your enemies? Who are you having trouble loving, trouble reaching out to, trouble forgiving, trouble helping? Ask God to help you see your enemy as a child of God, and therefore, a brother or sister. If they are in need, reach out to them this week; take the first step.

Friday, August 3, 2018

Read Luke 10: 25-37.

Read the story of "The Good Samaritan" again, but now take a look at the parable through the eyes of the Jew, beaten and bruised upon the path, in need of help. Have you been there? Have you been the one lost and hurting? Have you felt that you couldn't go on, beaten and bleeding? Most of us have been in the place of the Jew, left to die along the road.

Spurgeon writes, *"This story is but one among a thousand based upon an unhappy occurrence. 'A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves.' He went upon a short journey, and almost lost his life on the road. We are never secure from trouble; it meets us around the family hearth and causes us to suffer in our own persons or in those of the dearest relatives; it walks into our*

shops and counting-houses, and tries us; and when we leave home it becomes our fellow-traveler and communes with us on the road. 'Although affliction cometh not forth of the dust, neither doth trouble spring out of the ground; yet man is born unto trouble, as the sparks fly upward.'"

Life is full of hardship and everyone of us will at one time or another be the person on the road, beaten down, ready to give up, bleeding and lost. Will we accept the help that God sends to us? The Jew could have turned away from the Samaritan, pushing him aside. In his pride, the Jew could have said he could take care of himself. How often, do we, in need of help, try to care for the problem ourselves, allowing our pride to get in the way of the help God has sent us in the form of a Christian brother or sister?

Have you shared the difficulties you are facing right now with another Christian brother or sister? God has placed people in your life to help. Are you opening up to them about your needs, allowing them to help you, allowing them to reach out to you with God's love?

Saturday, August 4, 2018

Read Matthew 25:31-46.

When we serve another, we are actually loving Christ, reaching out to Him personally. There are so many ways to get involved. There are countless ministries in the church where you can serve others, reach out to newcomers, go into the community and serve those in need. Just ask. Seek how you might get involved...how you might serve Christ. Just imagine a day when we will stand before Christ and He will say to us, *"Well, done...my good and faithful servant...When I was thirsty you gave me something to drink."* Let us serve Him faithfully.

Pray about how you might serve the King of Kings. **Remember to invite someone to church tomorrow.**

Week 9

Locals Only: *The Parable of the Laborers In The Vineyard*



Sunday, August 5, 2018

Read and Reflect on The Parable of the Laborers in the Vineyard - Matthew 20:1-16.

“For the kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who went out early in the morning to hire workers for his vineyard. He agreed to pay them a denarius for the day and sent them into his vineyard.

“About nine in the morning he went out and saw others standing in the marketplace doing nothing. He told them, ‘You also go and work in my vineyard, and I will pay you whatever is right.’ So they went.

“He went out again about noon and about three in the afternoon and did the same thing. About five in the afternoon he went out and found still others standing around. He asked them, ‘Why have you been standing here all day long doing nothing?’

“‘Because no one has hired us,’ they answered.

“He said to them, ‘You also go and work in my vineyard.’

“When evening came, the owner of the vineyard said to his foreman, ‘Call the workers and pay them their wages, beginning with the last ones hired and going on to the first.’

“The workers who were hired about five in the afternoon came and each received a denarius. So when those came who were hired first, they expected to receive more. But each one of them also received a denarius. When they received it, they began to grumble against the landowner.

‘These who were hired last worked only one hour,’ they said, ‘and you

have made them equal to us who have borne the burden of the work and the heat of the day.'

"But he answered one of them, 'I am not being unfair to you, friend. Didn't you agree to work for a denarius? Take your pay and go. I want to give the one who was hired last the same as I gave you. Don't I have the right to do what I want with my own money? Or are you envious because I am generous?'

"So the last will be first, and the first will be last."

After reading the scripture, reflect on and answer the following questions:

- (1) What do I learn about God?**
- (2) What do I learn about people?**
- (3) What do I learn about relating to God?**
- (4) What do I learn about relating to others?**
- (5) What does God want me to understand? To think?**
- (6) What does God want me to believe? To desire?**
- (7) What does God want me to do? Stop doing?**

Monday, August 6, 2018

Read Matthew 20:1-16.

Jesus tells the parable of the workers in the vineyard, shocking His listeners, surprising them at the end of the parable with the landowner paying those who came during the last hour the same wage as those who worked all day in the fields. Jesus communicates through this parable that salvation is not any kind of achievement; it cannot be earned by our hard work or our devotion to the Lord. On human terms, entering the kingdom of God is not merely hard, but impossible. It is only by the grace of God that we can enter, that we can be in relationship with our Father in heaven.

The workers hired at 5:00 p.m., only one hour before the work day ended, were paid the same as those hired at 6:00 a.m. that morning. Like the vineyard workers, whether we come to Christ, whether we accept His offer, His invitation, very early in our lives as children, or late in our lives, near death, we will be given the same gift of eternal life, heaven, citizenship in the family of God.

According to the world, to society, this is unfair. Society teaches that those who work more, get more; but, God's grace goes in opposition to that which society teaches. Grace or the unmerited love of God is offered without price. Grace is not about getting what you deserve it is about getting what you do not deserve. Like the workers hired at the eleventh hour were paid a full-days wage, that which they did not deserve, by the grace of God, we too, are given a free invitation to walk with God in this life and the next, regardless of where we have been or what age we are now.

“Amazing Grace, how sweet the sound...that saved a wretch like me...I once was lost, but now am found...was blind but now I see.”

Amazing. Eugene Peterson once wrote, *“All the persons of faith I know are sinners, doubters, uneven performers. We are secure not because we are sure of ourselves but because we trust that God is sure of us.”* Its not about our abilities; it is about God's mercy.

It is not about how hard or how long we have worked or been a Christian; it is all about God's amazing love and grace. We have done nothing to deserve such love. Take time tonight to simply thank God in prayer for the many gifts you have been blessed with, and especially to thank God for the gift of grace...for the gift of love...for the invitation to have a relationship with our Father in heaven.

Tuesday, August 7, 2018

Read Matthew 20:1-16.

Note in the parable that Jesus uses the word, “hire.” Jesus says, *“For the kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who went out early in the morning to **hire** laborers for his vineyard.”* What does it mean to be hired? Why did Jesus choose this word?

Charles Spurgeon, in his sermon, “Early and Late,” writes, *“I think we may say that there is this likeness between hiring a servant and the engagement of a soul to Christ, that henceforth a man hired has no right to serve another, he serves the master who has hired him. When a soul is called by grace into the service of the Lord Jesus Christ, he cries, ‘O Lord, other lords have had dominion over me, but now thee only will I serve.’ He plucks off the yoke of sin, its pleasure, its custom, and he puts upon him that yoke of which the Master says it is easy, and he bears that*

burden which Jesus tells us is light. A hired servant must not work for another, he is not his own master; and 'ye are not your own, ye are bought with a price' (I Corinthians 6: 19-20)."

I believe Jesus chose His words carefully and the word “*hired*” here is very important. Jesus often spoke of how we could not choose to serve “*two masters*,” but we must choose one over the other. When we accept Jesus as Master, allow the master to hire us, to have control of our lives, we cannot serve another. We must “pluck off” those things that would pull us away from Christ, away from the work He is ready to give us; we must “pluck off” those things that will pull our attention away from God.

Are there others in your life that are “pulling” you away from your relationship with God? Are you trying to work for two masters? Are the things of this world causing you to not show up for the commitment you have made with God or perhaps even causing you to be found “idle” in the marketplace? Pray that God will show you those areas of your life, people in your life, things in your life that you are attempting to serve alongside serving God? Is God first?

Wednesday, August 8, 2018

Read Matthew 20:1-16.

The workers that were hired early in the morning and worked a full-day, only to receive the same wages as those who worked an hour, were furious. Upset, they say to the landowner, “*These last men have worked only one hour, and you made them equal to us who have borne the burden and the heat of the day.*” Jesus says that the ones hired early in the day, when they saw what the eleventh-hour hires were paid, assumed they would be paid more than the “*denarius*” promised. They weren’t upset about what they were paid; it is what they had agreed upon. They are upset because someone else got paid as much for less work. They are upset that others were blessed when they were not.

The workers hired early in the morning had entered their job, the vineyard, with a “legal spirit” about them. “Equal pay for equal work.” “You get what you work for.” “The harder you work the more you get.” These phrases ran through their persons. This is what they believed and

how they saw the world working. The landowner, on the other hand, saw things differently.

As Christians, we often make the same mistake. We believe in the church that those who work the hardest, serve on the most committees, volunteer the most time, are not only the most reverent and faithful, but will also be the most blessed. They are most deserving of God's many blessings and love. When someone new walks in the door, accepts Christ for the first time late in life, and begins to reach out in small ways...we simply look at them as less-deserving, less-faithful than we are. We cry, "Locals Only!"

Or as Christians we make the mistake of judging ourselves harshly, not "good enough." So we work harder and harder in ministry, trying to make up for past mistakes, trying to earn God's love, forever under a shackle of guilt.

We cannot enter the vineyard with a "legal spirit." So many Christians serving on committees and in ministries because they feel they have to...they must earn their way. So many Christians looking down on others because they feel they have earned their way, working years in ministry and volunteering thousands of hours. Both focusing on themselves instead of the God that shows the mercy and grace, and gifts each of us with salvation.

How do you see yourself? Deserving of more? One of the faithful? Or do you see yourself as not good enough, having so much to make up for...to work for? Or do you simply see yourself as a recipient of God's mighty grace and amazing love and therefore, give Him thanks.

Thursday, August 9, 2018

Read Matthew 20:1-16.

If the workers hired at the end of the day are paid the same as those at the beginning...if those who accept Christ at the end of their lives are given the same gift of eternal life as those who come to Christ early in their life...then why worry about it now...why not enjoy life to the fullest, "*drink and be merry*," and then come to Christ later in life.

Spurgeon writes, *“To give those first days to Jesus will spare us many sad regrets, prevent us acquiring many evil habits, and enable us to achieve good success through the Holy Spirit’s blessing.”* Spurgeon goes on to talk about someone who comes to Christ late in life. He writes, *“The fact is terribly appalling – sixty, seventy years spent in the service of Satan! Oh what good the man may have done! Had he but served his God as he served the world, what good he might have done! He has made a fortune, has he! How rich he might have been in faith by this time. He has built a house! Yes, but how he might have helped to build the Church. The tabernacle is beginning to crumble about the man, and the warning is loud which reminds him that he must soon be gone and leave his wealth and his house; and so if this be all, in the end it will turn out that he has done nothing; he has piled up shadows, heaped together thick clay, and that is all he has done; when he might, if he had believed in Jesus, have done so much for God and for the souls of men.”*

For some of us who haven’t come to Christ yet, it is late...but it is not “too late.” The sooner we come, the more blessed we will be. We have years left, many of us, to serve and reach out...to touch a hurting world. Let us pray that our friends and neighbors come to Christ quickly...that they do not waste a life that could be spent serving the Lord. And let us promise God to allow Him to have the years we have left, to serve Him faithfully.

Friday, August 10, 2018

Read Luke 23:26-43.

Spurgeon writes, *“God, however, in his abundant mercy can do as he wills to the praise of the glory of his grace, and at the eleventh hour he can call his chosen. It is very late, it is very very, very late, it is sorrowfully late, it is dolefully late, but it is not too late, and if the Master call thee, come – though a hundred years of sin should make thy feet heavy to thee, so that thy steps are painfully limping. This is what God did for the thief. Here in his last moments, dying on a cross, a life spent in crime, the thief cried out to Jesus, ‘Lord, remember me when You come into Your kingdom.’”*

Michael Yaconelli, in his book, Messy Spirituality, writes, “*God’s grace is unfair. How unfair! Shouldn’t the thief have been asked to repent, to make amends, to at least declare he was sorry? No lectures, no sermons, no teaching or demands for repentance, Jesus just ushers the man into the kingdom of God.*”

The thief cries out and Jesus answers, “*Assuredly, I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise.*”

This is grace. In the civilized world it doesn’t make any sense, but in the kingdom of God there are countless examples of God’s “unfair love” including the prodigal son, Zaccheus the tax collector, and the woman caught in adultery.

Let us give thanks that God’s grace, God’s “unfair love,” God’s amazing love, extends to you and me. May we accept this great gift and live a life giving back, telling others of God’s love. And may we celebrate and not complain like the workers hired early in the morning, when God’s grace extends to someone we might consider less-deserving.

Saturday, August 11, 2018

Read I Corinthians 13:12, Romans 6:23, and Matthew 25:21.

Spurgeon writes, “*One does not serve God for nought, they shall not work without a reward. ‘The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life.’ We shall have our reward for what we do for the Master, and though it be not wages in the sense of debt, yet verily I say unto you, there shall not be a single true-hearted worker for God who shall not receive of his Master most blessed wages of grace in the day when he comes to take account of his servants.*”

Take time tonight to sit with God and just imagine heaven, being with Jesus, hearing the words “*well done, my good and faithful servant.*” Give God thanks for such a promise. **Remember to invite someone to church tomorrow!**

Week 10
Are We There Yet?: *The Parable of the Persistent Widow*



Sunday, August 12, 2018

**Read & Reflect on The Parable of the Persistent Widow -
 Matthew 18:1-8.**

Then Jesus told his disciples a parable to show them that they should always pray and not give up. He said: “In a certain town there was a judge who neither feared God nor cared what people thought. And there was a widow in that town who kept coming to him with the plea, ‘Grant me justice against my adversary.’

“For some time he refused. But finally he said to himself, ‘Even though I don’t fear God or care what people think, yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will see that she gets justice, so that she won’t eventually come and attack me!’”

And the Lord said, “Listen to what the unjust judge says. And will not God bring about justice for his chosen ones, who cry out to him day and night? Will he keep putting them off? I tell you, he will see that they get justice, and quickly. However, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on the earth?”

After reading the scripture, reflect on and answer the following questions:

- (1) What do I learn about God?**
- (2) What do I learn about people?**
- (3) What do I learn about relating to God?**
- (4) What do I learn about relating to others?**
- (5) What does God want me to understand? To think?**
- (6) What does God want me to believe? To desire?**
- (7) What does God want me to do? Stop doing?**

Monday, August 13, 2018

Read Luke 18:1-8.

Jesus tells His disciples the story of the persistent widow, who “badgers” the unjust judge day in and day out with her plea, “*Avenge me of mine adversary.*” What is it that Jesus is trying to teach us through this parable?

First, there is the importance of prayer. Jesus not only taught us about prayer, Jesus modeled prayer. He lived it and asked us to follow in His steps. Charles Spurgeon, in his sermon, “The Importunate Widow,” writes, “*If any one of all the members of the mystical body might have been supposed to need no prayer, it would certainly have been our Covenant Head, but if our Head abounded in supplication, much more ought we, the inferior members. He was never defiled with the sins which have debased and weakened us spiritually; he had no inbred lusts to struggle with. But if the perfectly pure drew near so often unto God, how much more incessant in supplication ought we to be!*”

We are called to pray; in fact, it is very natural for us to pray. Humankind has been looking to the heavens since creation began. There is a “*tendency to pray – the reflexive crying out in the face of pain or trouble; the spontaneous shout of joy in the presence of beauty, accomplishment, fulfillment,*” according to Maxie Dunnam. Dunnam goes on to write, “*Natural it is; easy it isn’t! To live a life of prayer is something else. To pray consistently is not easy. It requires commitment and discipline. Don’t condemn yourself if you find praying difficult. Most of us do. Even the disciples didn’t find it easy.*”

Nevertheless, we are called to pray and Jesus shares this parable with us for many reasons, one of which is to tell us to persevere in our prayer life, to not give up, regardless of how we feel or how many times we forget to pray. Keep at it.

Ask God tonight to help you learn to pray...to pray deeply and to connect to God throughout the day...to build the habit of prayer. This is a prayer God will always answer. Even if you've struggled with prayer in the past, don't give up. Like the persistent widow, keep at it, asking God for help, asking God to take you deeper and more consistent in your prayer life with Him.

Tuesday, August 14, 2018

Read Luke 18:1-8.

Like the widow, Jesus tells us that we are to persevere in prayer. Spurgeon writes, *“When we ask God for a mercy once, we are not to consider that now we are not further to trouble him with it, but we are to come to him again and again.”* He goes on to say, *“Men ought always to pray. Week by week, month by month, year by year; the conversion of a dear child is to be the father’s main plea. The bringing in of that unconverted husband is to lie upon the wife’s heart night and day till she gets it; she is not to take even ten or twenty years of unsuccessful prayer as a reason why she should cease; she is to set God no times nor seasons, but so long as there is life in her and life in the dear object of her solicitude, she is to continue still to plead with the mighty God of Jacob.”*

Brian Stiller writes, *“Be careful, as [this story] can be upsetting for those who think they have mastered prayer. Jesus puts a new spin on prayer: Absent is the gentle, acquiescing type of petition. Instead, he tells of a tough, no-nonsense woman who refuses to cave in. Prayer to her is not just a matter of keeping on but a refusing to give in ‘to the sin of despair.’”*

May each of us refuse to give in to our loved ones, our neighbors, our friends not knowing, not having a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. May we pray night and day for our children, our spouses, our friends. Like our children badgering us on those long summer road trips from the backseat, screaming “are we there yet,” let us be persistent in

our prayers for one another. Take time tonight to pray for those you know who do not know Jesus Christ.

Wednesday, August 15, 2018

Read Luke 18:1-8.

Perhaps Jesus is letting us know through this parable that many of us “have not” because we leave too quick. We seek God out, but only briefly. We throw a prayer up to heaven and when that is not immediately answered we begin to plan and figure out how to solve the problem ourselves, or we simply give up.

Spurgeon writes, *“But how many times we ask of God and have not because we do not wait long enough at the door! We knock a time or two at the gate of mercy, and as no friendly messenger opens the door, we go our ways. Too many prayers are like boys’ runaway knocks, given, and then the giver is away before the door can be opened. O for grace to stand foot to foot with the angel of God, and never, never, never relax our hold; feeling that the cause we plead is one in which we must be successful, for souls depend on it, the glory of God is connected with it, the state of our fellow-men is in jeopardy....we must urge and plead again and again until we obtain the answer.”*

Is there an area in your life that you have lifted up in prayer for quite a while and feel ready to give up because the prayers have gone unanswered? Is there a person you’ve been praying for for many years and they still have not come to know Jesus Christ? Is there something going on in your life that you are not praying for everyday; yet, it is only God’s intervention that will help you deal with it? Pray now...and pray everyday for those things in your life in which you need God’s help and guidance, for those people in your life that need Jesus. Go to the door and not only knock once, but many times.

Thursday, August 16, 2018

Read I Thessalonians & Matthew 6:5-15.

We are told in God’s Word that we are to “*pray without ceasing.*” We are to learn how to praise God throughout the day while we work, while we play, while we live our lives. But Jesus also teaches us that we

are to have time away from the world, set apart, each day with Him. “*Give us this day our daily bread,*” we are to pray.

Spurgeon writes, “*Every Christian will find it exceedingly useful to have his regular times for retirement, and I doubt whether any eminent piety can be maintained without these seasons being very carefully and scrupulously observed...O that our intervals of prayer were not so distant one from the other; would God that on the pilgrimage of life the wells at which we drink were more frequent. In this way we should continue in prayer.*”

Ask God to help you develop a daily prayer time if you have not built the habit already. Pray that God will show you not only how to keep your mind centered on Him throughout the day and the day’s duties, but also to take time away from the world each day to just sit with Him. Be persistent, unwavering in building a prayer habit. You will be blessed.

Friday, August 17, 2018

Read Romans 8:12-17.

The Bible teaches us that we are children of God, that we can cry out to God, “*Abba, Father.*” Jesus taught us to pray, “*Our Father, who art in heaven.*” God is our loving Father, waiting to hear from His children.

Now look at the parable Jesus told about the unjust judge. This judge took bribes. The scripture says “*he did not fear God or man.*” He was unjust. If the widow, with no advocate, could prevail over this unjust man, this unjust, crooked, uncaring judge...how much more will we, children of the living God, with an advocate in Jesus Christ, be able to prevail, to communicate with, to petition our loving Father in heaven?

Spurgeon writes, “*If this poor woman prevailed with a judge whose office is stern, unbending, untender, how much more ought you and I to be instant in prayer and hopeful of success when we have to supplicate a Father! Far other is a father than a judge. The judge must necessarily be impartial, stern, but he father is necessarily partial to his child, compassionate and tender to his own offspring. Doth she prevail over a judge; and shall now we prevail without Father who is in heaven..*”

Let us pray tonight, giving thanks to God for a friend, in Jesus Christ, who makes intercession for us...for the Holy Spirit who speaks words that we cannot...for a God who is a loving Father, ready to hear and answer our petitions. Give God thanks and cry out tonight with all that is on your heart to your Father in heaven.

Saturday, August 18, 2018

Read I John 5:14-15.

We can have confidence that God is always ready to listen and we are able to come before Him with boldness in our prayers. We are called to submit to God's will for our lives and if we pray in His will, knowing what God expects of us and teaches us through Jesus Christ, our prayers will be heard.

It all begins with asking forgiveness for where we have done wrong, and then thanking God for the gift of forgiveness through His Son, Jesus Christ. Prayer is also a time to praise and adore the God who loves us so much He sent His Son to die for each of us. Lastly, it is a time to seek God's guidance for our lives and ask that God's plan take root in our futures, not our own plans.

Read and reflect on the lyrics to the hymn, "*Sweet Hour of Prayer*."

*Sweet hour of prayer
Sweet hour of prayer
That calls me from a world of care
And bids me at my Father's throne
Make all my wants and wishes known*

*In seasons of distress and grief
My soul has often found relief
And oft escaped the tempter's snare
By Thy return, sweet hour of prayer
Sweet hour of prayer
Sweet hour of prayer
The joys I feel, the bliss I share
Of those whose anxious spirits burn*

*With strong desires for Thy return
With such I hasten to the place
Where God my Savior shows His face
And gladly take my station there
And wait for Thee, sweet hour of prayer
Sweet hour of prayer
Sweet hour of prayer
And wait for Thee
Sweet hour of prayer*

Seek God in prayer each day. Be persistent. **Remember to invite someone to church tomorrow!**

Week 11
Sea Glass: *The Parable of the Hidden Treasure*



Sunday, August 19, 2018

Read & Reflect on The Parable of the Hidden Treasure and the Pearl of Great Price - Matthew 13:44-52.

“The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field. When a man found it, he hid it again, and then in his joy went and sold all he had and bought that field.

“Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant looking for fine pearls. When he found one of great value, he went away and sold everything he had and bought it.

“Once again, the kingdom of heaven is like a net that was let down into the lake and caught all kinds of fish. When it was full, the fishermen pulled it up on the shore. Then they sat down and collected the good fish in baskets, but threw the bad away. This is how it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come and separate the wicked from the righteous and throw them into the blazing furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

“Have you understood all these things?” Jesus asked.

“Yes,” they replied.

He said to them, “Therefore every teacher of the law who has become a disciple in the kingdom of heaven is like the owner of a house who brings out of his storeroom new treasures as well as old.”

After reading the scripture, reflect on and answer the following questions:

- (1) What do I learn about God?**
- (2) What do I learn about people?**
- (3) What do I learn about relating to God?**
- (4) What do I learn about relating to others?**
- (5) What does God want me to understand? To think?**
- (6) What does God want me to believe? To desire?**
- (7) What does God want me to do? Stop doing?**

Monday, August 20, 2018

Read Matthew 13:44-52.

The Sea of Galilee was full of fish and surrounded by small towns filled with people who made their living on the water. Jesus would walk along the beach and finding people at work, sit among them and teach them about God. On this occasion, there were so many people who had come to hear Jesus speak, that He got in a boat and pushed off from shore a few yards. Using the boat as a floating pulpit, Jesus spoke and taught on the kingdom of God.

He taught that the Kingdom of God was like a “*treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and hid; and for joy over it he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field.*” He goes on to make another comparison, stating that the Kingdom of God is like a “*merchant seeking beautiful pearls, who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had and bought it.*”

Jesus makes it clear that the Kingdom of God is worth more than any earthly possession, is worth leaving your livelihood and profession to obtain, and will bring joy unavailable anywhere else. Jesus goes further by lifting up in verses 47-50 a solemn warning for anyone who misses the opportunity to grab hold of the Kingdom of God, to dig up the hidden treasure or capture the pearl of great price. Jesus is saying,

“Don’t miss out on the Kingdom, this treasure. Grab hold of it. Sacrifice for it. What I’m telling you is of ETERNAL consequence.”

As Matthew Henry writes, “...*all who search the Scriptures, so as in them to find Christ and eternal life, will discover such treasure in this field as makes it unspeakably valuable; they make it their own upon any terms. Though nothing can be given as a price for this salvation, yet much must be given up for the sake of it. All the children of men are busy; one would be rich, another would be honorable; another would be learned; but most are deceived, and take up with counterfeits for pearls. Jesus Christ is a Pearl of great price; in having him, we have enough to make us happy here and forever. A man may buy gold too dear, but not this Pearl of great price. When the convinced sinner sees Christ as the gracious Savior, all things else become worthless to his thoughts.*”

I get excited when, combing the beach, I find sea glass. It is like finding buried treasure, but it is nothing compared to the ultimate treasure? Forgiveness, grace, mercy, salvation as “*pearls of great price*”? What are you willing to sacrifice for Christ, for the Kingdom of God? Are you uncovering the treasure found in the scriptures, looking to Christ rather than the “pearls” of the world for happiness and peace? Do worldly treasures have a hold on you or do you, like Paul, consider “*everything else...worthless when compared with the infinite value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord*”?

Pray and ask God to help you recognize fully the “treasure” made available to you through faith in Jesus Christ. Ask God to help you recognize where you are focused on treasures of the world rather than the ultimate treasure, the Kingdom of God. Give God thanks for His great gift, for His pearl of great price, Jesus Christ.

Tuesday, August 21, 2018

Read John 3:16-17; Romans 10:9-13; Colossians 2:13-14; Ephesians 2:1-10.

What exactly is the treasure, the pearl, the Kingdom, Jesus speaks about?

First, forgiveness, grace, salvation. Sin has been conquered. Christ died for us...took our place...allowed the sin we carry to be placed on Him and the punishment...separation from God...to be His punishment

(Jesus cried out with a loud voice, ‘*My God, My God, Why hast thou forsaken me?*’). For that moment, Jesus felt our punishment, felt what it was to be separated from the Father.

Max Lucado puts it so beautifully, “*What if a miracle worker had done something comparable with the Black Plague? Imagine a man born with bubonic resistance. The bacterium can’t penetrate his system unless he allows it to do so. And incredibly, he does. He pursues the infected and makes this offer: ‘Touch my hand. Give me your disease, and receive my health.’ The boil-and-fever-ridden have nothing to lose. They look at his extended hand and reach to touch it. True to the man’s word, bacteria pass from their system into his. But their relief spells his anguish. His skin erupts and his body heaves. And as the healed man stands in awe, the disease bearer hobbles away. Our history books tell no such story. But our Bible does.*”

Isaiah 53: 5-6 states, “*He was wounded and crushed for our sins. He was beaten that we might have peace. He was whipped and we were healed. All of us have strayed away like sheep. We have left God’s paths to follow our own. Yet the Lord laid on Him the guilt and sins of us all.*” Through Christ our sins are forgiven and we are cleansed and able to stand before a Holy and Perfect God.

Take time tonight to pray and confess before God any sin that lays covered in your heart, in your life. Lift it up to God and seek His forgiveness. Know that Christ died that those sins you are lifting up in prayer might be forgiven, erased. Give God thanks for this tremendous gift of grace and for His Son, Jesus Christ. Show Him how grateful you are by making changes in your life, in your actions, living out God’s teachings and commands in your day-to-day life.

Wednesday, August 22, 2018

Read Philippians 4:6-7; Hebrews 4:14-16; 2 Timothy 1:7; 2 Corinthians 5:17; John 10:10; Psalm 16:11.

Secondly, this treasure, this pearl of great price, is new life and life abundant. Through Christ, we not only find forgiveness and grace, but we also find new life. We experience God’s many gifts in our lives, as God’s Holy Spirit comes to live in us as we open our hearts to Him. God’s Spirit brings strength, joy, peace, guidance, purpose,

understanding, and a heart to love like Christ. Throughout our lives, the Spirit helps us grow more and more into the image of Jesus Christ, leading us to leave old habits behind, to forgive those who hurt us, to experience peace in the midst of chaos, to gain perspective on the difficulties we are facing and how God might be teaching us through those valleys we traverse.

When we have allowed God's Spirit to invade our lives, our hearts, the results are "*love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.*" Opening our eyes to God's Kingdom, receiving this hidden treasure, brings many things into our lives including clear conscience (Romans 8:1); life and peace (Romans 8:6); help with weakness (Romans 8: 26); purpose (Romans 8: 28); confidence (Romans 8:31); security (Romans 8:39); power and strength (Philippians 4:13); fulfillment (Philippians 4:19); and freedom (John 8: 32, 36).

Take time tonight to give God thanks for the new life He offers each of us who believe, who accept His Son. Lift up to God those aspects of your life that you need God to change...those areas of your life you need to leave behind so that you can move on to become more like Jesus. Ask God to give you "life abundant," His peace and joy...a peace and joy not found in the world.

Thursday, August 23, 2018

Read John 1:12; John 14:1-3; Revelation 21:1-7; Ephesians 1:3-8;

Philippians 3:20-21; Romans 8:14-17; Galatians 4:4-7.

Thirdly, this hidden treasure, the Kingdom of God, is adoption, adoption into the family of God. And with that adoption, a home...a home eternal. Eternal life. Death has been defeated. As it says in I Peter 3:18, "*Christ...never sinned, but he died for sinners that he might bring us safely home to God.*"

In Max Lucado's book, Come Thirsty, he talks about a little girl, Carinette, who lives at the Cape Haitian orphanage. Lucado talks about how Carinette, though she may appear similar to the other kids in the orphanage on the outside, is very different. She lives in a world called

“home-to- be.” She has been adopted and will soon be picked up to go to her new home.

Lucado writes, *“Carinette’s situation mirrors ours. Our Father paid us a visit too. Have we not been claimed? Adopted? ‘So you should not be like cowering, fearful slaves. You should behave instead like God’s very own children, adopted into his family – calling him ‘Father, dear Father’” (Romans 8:15).*

Lucado goes on to explain that, like Carinette, we are adopted but not transported. We are caught between what is and what will be. No longer orphans but also not yet home and every day brings us closer to that home, that completed adoption. This is where our joy comes from, joy in the midst of trials and hardship. This is our treasure...a treasure we bury deep within our hearts.

Lucado writes, *“I’ve been known to let a day, even two, pass without a glance to the eastern sky. Let’s do better. Let heaven fill your thoughts. Do not think only about things down here on earth” (Colossians 3:2). Don’t you know Carinette’s home-to-be dominates her thoughts.”*

May our “home-to-be” dominate our thoughts. Reflect on whose you are...your adoption as a child of God...on the “home-to-be” that awaits. Give God thanks.

Friday, August 24, 2018

Read Matthew 13:44-52.

After Jesus shares the Parable of the Hidden Treasure & Great Pearl, and emphasizes the eternal importance of grabbing on to the Kingdom of God, He asks His disciples, *“Have you understood all these things?”* They reply, *“Yes, Lord.”* And then Jesus says, *“Therefore... every teacher...who becomes a disciple in the Kingdom of Heaven...is like a homeowner who brings from his storeroom new gems of truth as well as old.”*

“Therefore...” Jesus is saying, “Now that you have understood these things, let me tell you what you are to do with this knowledge.” *“Therefore...every teacher...who becomes a disciple...”* Jesus tells His disciples, that if they have grabbed hold of the truths He has shared...if they have grabbed hold of the Kingdom of God...they now have “gems

of truth” to bring out of the “*storeroom*” and share. If one finds the Kingdom of God, and grabs hold of it, they will carry this truth, this treasure, like precious gems, into the world...sharing with others what they have found. One cannot be a disciple, find this treasure, understand what they have found, and not go forth and share it.

Who are you telling? Who are you sharing the Kingdom of God with? Who have you helped find the precious treasure God offers us in Christ? Pray that God will lay names on your hearts of those whom you can share these “*gems of truth*.”

Saturday, August 25, 2018

Read the lyrics to the hymn, “*O The Beautiful Treasures*,” and reflect. **Don’t forget to invite someone to church tomorrow.**

*O the beautiful treasures laid up for the wise,
How precious the value, ow glorious the prize!
Far brighter than diamonds on princes' brow
And richer than royalty can bestow.
O the beautiful treasures laid up for the wise.*

*O the beautiful treasures provided by God,
And promised good people who follow the Word.
And streams of sweet mercy shall bring them home,
To rest from the sorrowful paths they roam.
O the beautiful treasures provided by God.*

Week 12
Metal Detectors: *The Parable of the Sheep & the Goats*



Sunday, August 26, 2018

Read and Reflect on The Parable of the Sheep & the Goats - Matthew 25:31-46.

“When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his glorious throne. All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left.

“Then the King will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.’

“Then the righteous will answer him, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?’

“The King will reply, ‘Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.’

“Then he will say to those on his left, ‘Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. For I was hungry and you gave me nothing to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, I was a stranger and you did not invite me in, I needed clothes and you did not clothe me, I was sick and in prison and you did not look after me.’

“They also will answer, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or needing clothes or sick or in prison, and did not help you?’

“He will reply, ‘Truly I tell you, whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for me.’

“Then they will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life.”

After reading the scripture, reflect on and answer the following questions:

- (1) What do I learn about God?**
- (2) What do I learn about people?**
- (3) What do I learn about relating to God?**
- (4) What do I learn about relating to others?**
- (5) What does God want me to understand? To think?**
- (6) What does God want me to believe? To desire?**
- (7) What does God want me to do? Stop doing?**

Monday, August 27, 2018

Read Matthew 25:31-46.

Jesus makes it clear that there is a direct correlation between how we have lived our lives and our relationship with God. If we truly have a relationship, if we truly have opened our hearts to Christ, to our Father in heaven, it will be reflected in our actions. Once we recognize our own sinfulness, the fact that we are a mess, and realize what Jesus Christ did for us on the cross two thousand years ago...if we wrap our minds around the depth of love Christ has shown us...we cannot help but to be changed and to want to serve God out of gratitude for all He has given us. This acceptance of Christ, this gratitude for what God has done for us, is seen in our daily actions and love of others. If God is love...when

we accept Him into our hearts through Jesus Christ...our hearts are filled to overflowing, and our lives begin to grow beyond ourselves.

We know “actions speak louder than words.” In the last judgment, God will separate those who have talked about their love of God, who have “voiced” a relationship, *from* those who truly have a relationship with God expressed through their lives, their actions, their works of mercy and compassion. As it is written in James 1:22, we must “*be doers of the word, and not hearers only.*” I John 2:6, says, “*He who says he abides in Him ought himself also to walk just as He walked.*” In fact Spurgeon goes as far to say, “*If Christ does not work such things in you, you have not part in him; if you have not produced such works as these you have not believed in Jesus.*”

I have often heard the question, “*If it was against the law to be a Christian, would there be enough evidence to convict you?*” Are you living your faith? Does your life, your actions, show your love for God? Are you reaching out to others, the hungry, the imprisoned, the poor, with mercy and compassion? Is the love in you for God so much that it simply overflows into the real world, touching the lives of others? Is your faith more than Sunday, more than words...is it flowing out of a love and gratitude for God, for all He has done for you?

Tuesday, August 28, 2018

Read Matthew 25:31-46.

God will also show those who have done “good works” simply for the benefit of their neighbor’s praise or to earn God’s love & reward for what they are. Our works must come out of a relationship, a love for God.

Read Matthew 7:21-23.

Jesus is clear that not everyone who says “*Lord, Lord...*” will enter heaven. In fact, many will tell of the many “good works” they have done in the name of Jesus, but Jesus says that He will tell them, “*I never knew you; depart from Me.*”

Our works must be an outward expression of an inward relationship, an inward love for God. Spurgeon writes, “*If you perform deeds of charity out of the idea of getting to heaven by them, why it is yourself that you are feeding, it is yourself that you are clothing; all your*

virtue is not virtue, it is rank selfishness, it smells strong of selfhood, and Christ will never accept it; you will never hear him say, 'Thank you' for it. You served yourself, and no reward is due. You must first come to the Lord Jesus Christ, and look to him to save you; you will for ever abjure all idea of doing anything to save yourself, and being saved, you will be able to give to the poor and so on without selfishness mixing with your motive, and you will get a reward of grace for the love-token which you have given. It is necessary to trust Jesus, and to be yourself fully saved, before there is any value in your feeding the hungry or clothing the naked."

Our acts of charity and compassion must come out of a love for Jesus Christ, a love of God, and a love for what God loves. Are you serving God, reaching out through acts of love and compassion, due to your love and relationship with Christ? When you see someone in need, do you see Christ...and remember what Christ has done for you? Do you reach out to others and sacrifice your time, energy, and money because you simply love God so much? Have you opened your heart to God and are you nurturing that relationship? The more you nurture your relationship with God, the more you will want to serve Him by serving and reaching out to others in the church and the world.

Wednesday, August 29, 2018

Read Matthew 25: 31-46.

Note that in the last judgment when the "righteous," the faithful, receive their reward. Notice the time of the reward, when Christ says, "*Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.*" We will talk more about this reward tomorrow, but for now notice the timing. The reward, entrance into the kingdom of God, only comes after the separation of the sheep from the goats, the faithful from the unfaithful.

Spurgeon writes, "*My reward, if I be a child of God, cannot come to me while I am in union with the wicked. Even on earth you will have the most enjoyment of Christ when you are most separated from this world; rest assured although the separated path does not seem an easy one, and it will certainly entail upon you persecution and the loss of many friends, yet it is the happiest walking in the world. You*

conforming Christians, who can enter into the world's mirth to a certain degree, you cannot – you never can – know as you now are the inward joys of those who live in lonely but lovely fellowship with Jesus. The nearer you get to the world the further you must be from Christ, and I believe the more thoroughly a bill of divorce is given by your spirit to every earthly object upon which your soul can set itself, the more close will be your communion with your Lord.”

How much does the world have hold of you? How much do you allow yourself to be surrounded by and influenced by the world? Are you allowing yourself time to be “set apart” from the world, and to sit with God each day? Are you making your decisions based on others’ opinions or are you going to God for guidance? Are you spending more time worrying about money, watching television, or being a sports fan then spending time with God? How much does the world have hold of you?

Thursday, August 30, 2018

Read Matthew 25:31-46 and Revelation 21 & 22.

Jesus says, in Matthew 25: 34, *“Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.”* Notice in Revelation 22:17, Jesus says, *“Come...let Him who thirsts come.”* Come. Jesus beckons the faithful to come and receive their reward and the reward is a place that has been prepared, since the creation of the world, just for us. Wow! Spurgeon writes, *“It is a kingdom prepared, and it has been so long a time prepared, and he who prepares it is so wondrously rich in resources, that we cannot possibly conceive how excellent it must be.”*

Too often, as Christians, we look for reward for our labors now... but our reward awaits us...and what an awesome day it will be when we receive our reward from the King Himself.

Just reflect for a while on the picture of heaven in Revelation 21 & 22. Reflect on a *“place prepared for you.”* We are children of God, who will “inherit” all that has been prepared, not because of what we have done, but because of God’s grace, His love, His gift...

Friday, August 31, 2018

Read I Corinthians 4:1-5, Matthew 25:31-46.

The last judgment. The moment Christ returns and all is revealed. Charles Spurgeon, in his sermon, "The Reward of the Righteous," writes, "...*your state and glory shall be revealed before the sons of men.*" *In those last moments, the King, God will separate the sheep from the goats, the truth from the lie, the sin...are we ready to allow Him to come in and help us bring our faults to the light that we might be rid of them...that we might be cleansed and made ready for His return?"*

Just as a metal detector separates coins and medal from sand, Jesus will separate those who love Him from those who do not. One day, Jesus will bring to light the hidden things in the hearts of men and women. We will stand before Him and those who have opened their hearts will enter into a place that has been prepared especially for them.

Others will see us as we truly are...not as they have seen us on Sunday mornings for the last decade but how we are in secret...our hearts...what our eyes have watched, what our ears have heard, what our hands have done, where our feet have gone. All will be known.

Does that thought make you cringe or are you ready, prepared like the bridesmaids who had enough oil in their lamps?

We must constantly take inventory of our lives...What are our eyes watching? What are our ears listening to? What are our hands doing? Where are our feet going? No one knows the complete history of our eyes, ears, hands and feet than us. We know what our bodies do in secret. God also knows and one day will reveal all. In those last moments, God will separate us from the mask that we wear.

If God were to shine light into our closets and secret places right now, what would He find? Are we ready to remove the mask, face up to our shortcomings, our addictions, our problems, our sin...are we ready to allow Him to come in and help us bring our faults to the light that we might be rid of them...that we might be cleansed and made ready for His return?

Read Psalm 51 and allow God to help you look closely at your life, "purging" you of that which is not of Him. Jesus is ready to come into our lives now and begin to prepare us for our true home. He is ready to bring to light the things in our lives that need to change and to

fill us with His love so we can touch a hurting world. Take time in prayer. Open your heart and lay everything in your life, every thought and action, before Him.

Saturday, September 1, 2018

Read the lyrics to the hymn, “*Lo! He Comes With Clouds Descending*,” and reflect. **Don’t forget to invite someone to church tomorrow!**

*Lo! He comes, with clouds descending, once for our salvation slain;
thousand thousand saints attending swell the triumph of His train.
Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia! God appears on earth to reign.*

*Ev'ry eye shall now behold Him, robed in dreadful majesty;
those who set at naught and sold Him, pierced, and nailed Him to the
tree,
deeply wailing, deeply wailing, shall the true Messiah see.*

*Every island, sea, and mountain, heav'n and earth, shall flee away;
all who hate Him must, confounded, hear the trump proclaim the day:
Come to judgment! Come to judgment! Come to judgment, come away!*

*Now redemption, long expected, see in solemn pomp appear!
And His saints, by men rejected, coming with Him in the air.
Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia! See the day of God appear!*

*Yea, amen! Let all adore Thee, high on Thine eternal throne;
Savior, take the pow'r and glory, claim the kingdom for Thine own:
O come quickly, O come quickly, Alleluia! Come, Lord, come!*

Week 13
Lifeguard on Duty: *The Parable of the Good Shepherd*



Sunday, September 2, 2018

Read and Reflect on The Parable of the Good Shepherd - John 10:1-16.

“Very truly I tell you Pharisees, anyone who does not enter the sheep pen by the gate, but climbs in by some other way, is a thief and a robber. The one who enters by the gate is the shepherd of the sheep. The gatekeeper opens the gate for him, and the sheep listen to his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. When he has brought out all his own, he goes on ahead of them, and his sheep follow him because they know his voice. But they will never follow a stranger; in fact, they will run away from him because they do not recognize a stranger’s voice.” Jesus used this figure of speech, but the Pharisees did not understand what he was telling them.

Therefore Jesus said again, “Very truly I tell you, I am the gate for the sheep. All who have come before me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep have not listened to them. I am the gate; whoever enters through me will be saved. They will come in and go out, and find pasture. The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.

“I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. The hired hand is not the shepherd and does not own the sheep. So when he sees the wolf coming, he abandons the sheep and runs

away. Then the wolf attacks the flock and scatters it. The man runs away because he is a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep.

“I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me —just as the Father knows me and I know the Father—and I lay down my life for the sheep. I have other sheep that are not of this sheep pen. I must bring them also. They too will listen to my voice, and there shall be one flock and one shepherd.”

After reading the scripture, reflect on and answer the following questions:

- (1) What do I learn about God?**
- (2) What do I learn about people?**
- (3) What do I learn about relating to God?**
- (4) What do I learn about relating to others?**
- (5) What does God want me to understand? To think?**
- (6) What does God want me to believe? To desire?**
- (7) What does God want me to do? Stop doing?**

Monday, September 3, 2018

Read John 10:1-16.

Jesus explains His relationship to us through this parable of the good shepherd and His sheep. The shepherd, Jesus, knows each one of us by name...each one of us intimately. And He is ready to watch over us, to lead us to “greener” pastures, and to protect us from the “wolves” of this world, from death itself. Most importantly, He lets the disciples know that He will give His life for the sheep, He will “*lay down [His] life*” voluntarily for the sheep; His love for them is that strong.

There are many truths about our relationship with Christ that we glean from this passage. The first truth is that like a shepherd knows the names of his sheep, Jesus knows our names; Jesus knows each of us intimately. In biblical times the shepherd knew each of his sheep by name and would call to them. The sheep would recognize the shepherd’s voice and come.

Elmer L. Towns, in his book, Praying The 23rd Psalm, writes, “*What kind of shepherd would you choose if the choice were yours to make? Before you answer, let me tell you what kind of shepherd most*

*sheep would want to avoid. Your shepherd would not be like a businessman, because he would want to make a profit off of you. Your shepherd would not have the manner of an army sergeant, as he would want to lead you into battle. Your shepherd would not be like a coach, as he would want you to win the big game. And you would not want a king, because he would want to rule you. You would want none of these. You would want a personal shepherd who loved you, not one who make money off you. You would want a shepherd who would protect you, not one who would get you killed in battle. You would choose a shepherd who knew what you like to eat and where you liked to go. You would seek someone who knew how to care for you when you were sick. He should know how to protect you from parasites, predators, and poison weeds. You would choose a shepherd who would find comfortable places for you to sleep. If you became lost, you would want an unselfish and brave shepherd who would come looking for you.. Isn't it good to know that you do not have to worry about choosing the right shepherd because **the** Shepherd has chosen you?"*

Jesus knows you intimately. Jesus knows what you like, what you desire, what you need. Jesus knows the troubles and darkness that you're are dealing with in your life. Jesus is watching over you, walking with you, and has shown that He is willing to die for you. He loves you with an everlasting love. You are a sheep of His fold.

Read Psalm 23. Repeat verse one over and over a few times emphasizing the word "my." "The Lord is **MY** shepherd." "**MY** shepherd." God condescended to be concerned about your little world, to care about your troubles, to love you. "The Lord is **YOUR** shepherd." He wants to lead you, to call you by name. He wants to be your protector and guide. He is always on duty.

Take time tonight just to thank Him for being there for you...for loving you and caring for you like a shepherd loves and cares for his sheep. Ask Him to be **YOUR** shepherd. Let Him know you want to know Him intimately and personally. Thank Jesus for offering His life for you, for the relationship and love He has offered you.

Tuesday, September 4, 2018

Read John 10:1-16.

A second truth we can glean from this passage is that we are sheep in need of a shepherd. This is not a terribly flattering statement about us considering that sheep are not among God's most intelligent creatures. Sheep get lost and cannot find their way back. They will graze in the same spot until food is scarce or runs out and then they will starve not finding new pasture. Sheep cannot find their own way to water. They must be led to survive.

Isn't this true of us? We get lost so easily...pulled astray by the temptations of this world...pulled away from Christ by the voices of society. Many times we cannot find our way to new and greener pastures, stuck in the past, stuck in our ways. We must be led to deeper understandings of God's love and greater blessings down the road. We must be led away from the things of the world and toward the things of God. We need God like sheep need a shepherd. We need guidance.

Towns writes, *"Sheep have no sense of direction. They can't find their own way, and they need a guide to lead them to water. You are like that. You have no sense of spiritual direction on your own. Yes, you may realize when you are lost, and you know when God is far off, but you will never find Him on your own. God has given you a conscience to tell you when you are in danger, and He gives you correction to scare you and unsettle you when danger is nearby. You are lost, you are miserable and you ask, 'What now?' That's when the Shepherd comes to you and leads you to green pastures and cool, still waters. Will you follow? Or will you stand there in the wilderness, confused and scared?"*

Isaiah 58:11 reads, *"The Lord will guide you always; he will satisfy your needs in a sun-scorched land and will strengthen your frame."* **Psalms 25:9**, *"He guides the humble in what is right and teaches them his way."* **Isaiah 48:17**, *"This is what the Lord says – your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel: 'I am the Lord your God, who teaches you what is best for you, who directs you in the way you should go.'"*

Jesus is ready to guide you through whatever maze of problems or difficulties you are dealing with. Jesus is ready to guide you to a greater intimacy with Him, a greater knowledge of God's grace and love for you. Jesus is ready to guide you toward a greater purpose. Take time

tonight to ask Christ to lead you, to help you discern what you need to do...in your work, your marriage, with your children...to guide you to “greener” pastures where your life will glorify Him. Ask Him for guidance for your problems.

Wednesday, September 5, 2018

Read John 10:1-16.

A third truth we can glean from this passage is like sheep who are helpless to care for themselves, there are many matters in life over which we have no control, evils against which we cannot defend ourselves. Jesus does not promise an absence of the darkness, but he promises to lead us through it.

Towns writes, *“Why must the shepherd give you personal attention? Because serpents slithering through the grass will poison sheep, wolves watching in nearby caves will attack sheep, rushing water will drown sheep and high places will cause sheep to fall to their death. And sheep walk through dark, threatening valleys where shadows stalk them. You need a Shepherd; so remember, the Lord is your shepherd and protector. He is not just any type of shepherd; He is your personal Shepherd who cares for you and will protect you.”*

Jesus will lead you away from many of the decisions many of us make as human beings that lead us instead into great danger, regret, and heartache. The closer we cling to Jesus the easier it is to notice when it is Satan tempting us, when the voice we hear directing us toward a decision is not God. Jesus is ready to protect us from the things that would pull us away from God in the world and in ourselves.

What are you struggling with? What dangers surround you? What decisions are you facing? Have you prayed about these things? Have you sought Jesus’ guidance and protection? Take time tonight to lift your problems up to Jesus, asking Him to walk with you and help you through them.

Thursday, September 6, 2018

Read John 10:1-16.

Focus on verses 11-13. **Also read John 10:17-18.** Towns writes, *“Your shepherd made the most incredible sacrifice in history. He was*

sinless, but He gave His life for sinful people like you and me. He did not like the idea of dying any more than you do. He prayed, 'O my Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as You will' (Matthew 26:39). Then He allowed soldiers to slap Him, beat Him with a leather whip and crown Him with needle-sharp thorns. They finally nailed His hands and feet to a cross and lifted Him up for all to see, and a mob ridiculed Him. His strength was drained as He hung six hours in the blistering sun. Even then they did not kill Him. Jesus said, 'It is finished!' (John 19:30). And bowing His head, He gave up His spirit and His life. Your Shepherd voluntarily gave up His life for you. He said, 'I lay down my life that I may take it again. No one takes it from Me.' (John 10: 17,18)."

Take a few moments tonight just to reflect on Christ dying for you...**your** shepherd laying down His life for you. Thank Him for such an act of love, amazing love.

Friday, September 7, 2018

Read I Peter 2:25 and Psalm 23.

Once we were lost but now we have turned to the shepherd. Newton sang, *"I once was lost, but now am found..."* We must cultivate a faithful attitude of walking with our Shepherd every minute of every day...He is with you all the time so talk with Him often. Get your head out of the grass and focus on Him.

There was once a story of a young boy whose father ran alongside him as he swam in competition. The boy would keep his eyes on his dad and won every race. One day, before a huge competition, the boy was nervous and talked to his dad. His dad told him he would run alongside him as before, but during the race the boy focused on his opponents, taking his eyes off his father. He lost.

Are you keeping your eyes on the shepherd? Are you walking with Him daily?

Saturday, September 8, 2018

Read Hebrews 13:20-21.

God is ready to produce in you great works and to touch the lives of many other people through you. You have been redeemed by the

“great Shepherd of the sheep,” “signed with His blood.” You have been adopted into the family of God; now, go and tell others of the great Shepherd ready to love them, guide them, protect them, and who died for them. **Don’t forget to invite someone to church tomorrow!**