

April Prayer Guide

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HOW TO USE **THIS PRAYER GUIDE**

These devotions with prayer prompts are intended to assist our church family as we seek Christ personally in our daily time with Him and corporately during our monthly family prayer service. It is vital that we pursue the Lord in prayer with a humble heart and depend on His guidance and leadership.

**DEFINED BY THE WORD
DEVOTED TO PRAYER
DEPENDANT ON THE SPIRIT**

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The Last Supper

Key Scripture: *Matthew 26:19* “And the disciples did as Jesus had directed them, and they prepared the Passover.”

(For a full account of the events for this day, see Matthew 26:17-75; Mark 14:12-72; Luke 22:7-71; and John 13:1-18:27)

The next four days we will focus on a few specific events leading up to Christ’s death, burial, and resurrection. Holy week starts on Palm Sunday when Jesus enters Jerusalem and ends on Easter Sunday with His resurrection. On Thursday of Holy week, the disciples did as Jesus had requested by preparing for the Passover meal. They acquired a room and the elements with which they would celebrate what God had done for the Jewish people by providing a way to be free from the Egyptians. Jesus started this evening with a humbling event for the disciples by washing their feet (John 13:1-20) and would then lead His disciples for the last time through the Passover meal.

“During this last supper, Jesus sets apart the Passover bread and cup and reassigns or better perfects their meaning. The bread is His body. The cup is His blood. This meal will no longer remind them of God’s deliverance primarily from the external tyranny of Pharaoh, but from the internal tyranny of their own guilt and sin against God.” (The Gospel Coalition)

While they were eating, Jesus gave a new commandment for His disciples to follow as stated in *John 13:34* “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; just as I have loved you, you are also to love one another.” After the meal, Jesus and His disciples would journey to the Garden at Gethsemane where Jesus agonized in prayer for what He knew would be the most difficult days of His earthly life. The Gospel Coalition describes it this way: “But He isn’t there only to pray. He is also there to wait. Soon a line of torches snake their way toward Him in the darkness. This is what He has been waiting for.” It would be on this night that He would be betrayed by one of His own disciples and where His trial would begin.

Questions to Consider:

How can you prepare your heart over the next few days as you recount the journey to the cross? What are ways you can grow to appreciate Christ’s sacrifice?

Prayer Prompt:

Pray the Scriptures of Psalm 51:1-12

The Crucifixion

Key Scripture: *Isaiah 53:5 “But He was pierced for our offenses, He was crushed for our wrongdoings; the punishment for our well-being was laid upon Him, and by His wounds we are healed.”*

(For a full account of the events for this day, see Matthew 27:1-61; Mark 15:1-47; Luke 23:1-56; and John 18:28-19:42)

As Thursday night turned into early Friday morning, Jesus is betrayed by one of His disciples, arrested by the chief priests and the Sanhedrin, and placed on trial falsely. During the early morning hours on Friday, many prophecies were fulfilled from the Old Testament. One of the prophecies is from *Isaiah 50:6* - “*I gave My back to those who strike Me, and My cheeks to those who pull out My beard; I did not hide My face from insults and spitting.*”

Within a short amount of time, Jesus would be condemned to death by the very people that praised Him just a few days before (Matthew 21:9). He would suffer much at the hands of wicked men. Paul states in *Acts 2:22-24* - “*Men of Israel, listen to these words: Jesus the Nazarene, a Man attested to you by God with miracles and wonders and signs which God performed through Him in your midst, just as you yourselves know—this Man, delivered over by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God, you nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men and put Him to death. But God raised Him from the dead, putting an end to the agony of death, since it was impossible for Him to be held in its power.*” Jesus Christ was the sacrificial lamb for our sins.

Christ embraces death with purpose and obedience to the Father. While on the cross, our Lord Jesus was hung between two prisoners; one mocked Him, but the other said, “*Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.*” Jesus answered him, “*Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in paradise*” (Luke 23:39-43). Amidst the most cruel and unjust death a human could endure, Jesus responds with compassion to the criminal beside Him.

Question to Consider:

How has the suffering of Christ changed your perspective on how to love others?

Prayer Prompts:

Jesus thank you for Your sacrificial love for me and Your payment for my sin. Meditate on and insert your name in John 3:16 “For God so loved (your name), that He gave His only Son, so that (your name) believes in Him will not perish, but (your name) have everlasting life.

The Tomb

Key Scripture: *Luke 23:55-56* “Now the women who had come with Him from Galilee followed, and they saw the tomb and how His body was laid. And then they returned and prepared spices and perfumes. And on the Sabbath, they rested according to the commandment.”

(For a full account of the events for this day, see Matthew 27:62-66)

According to Jewish burial custom Jesus' body would have been washed and wrapped in linen cloth (John 19:40). Due to the Saturday Sabbath quickly approaching it was crucial that they place the body in the tomb but would return later to complete the preparation process (Mark 16:1; Luke 23:56). The Sabbath was a sacred day to the Jewish people and was to be observed as a day of rest from all work according to their law. (Exodus 31:15) This meant that Jesus would need to be buried in a timely manner.

Matthew records the event: “*As evening approached, there came a rich man from Arimathea, named Joseph, who had himself become a disciple of Jesus. Going to Pilate, he asked for Jesus' body, and Pilate ordered that it be given to him. Joseph took the body, wrapped it in a clean linen cloth, and placed it in his own new tomb that he had cut out of the rock. He rolled a big stone in front of the entrance to the tomb and went away.*” (Matthew 27:57-60)

Notice in the text that they wrapped the body of Jesus, but did not use spices or oil perfumes. Under Jewish law they would have to return and complete the process of a proper burial. A few women who followed Christ planned to return to the tomb on Sunday morning after the Saturday Sabbath but only to find their Lord was not there!

Here is a sneak peak for tomorrow with a special hymn to meditate on. “*Up from the grave He arose, With a mighty triumph o'er His foes, He arose a Victor from the dark domain, And He lives forever with His saints to reign. He arose! (He arose), He arose! (He arose), Hallelujah! Christ arose!*” (Written by Daniel Thornton)

Questions to Consider:

Are you daily celebrating the Resurrection of your Savior?

Prayer Prompts:

Father, thank you for Your detailed and sovereign plan to provide for me hope in the death, burial, and resurrection of Your Son and my Savior. Father, give me renewed excitement and gladness in all that You accomplished on the cross.

The Resurrection

Key Scripture: *I Peter 1:3* “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.”

(For a full account of the events for this day, see *Matthew 28:1-20*;
Mark 16:1-8; *Luke 24:1-53*; *John 20:1-21:25*)

It is time to celebrate and rejoice that Christ has risen! Oh, what joy and gladness should fill our souls as we recount all that our Savior did for us to make way for our salvation. This our hope fulfilled, our life renewed and our future guaranteed.

Wayne Grudem states, “Christ’s resurrection was not a simple coming back from the dead as others had experienced (such as Lazarus in *John 11:1-44*). Rather, when Jesus rose from the dead, He began a new kind of human life in which He had a perfect body that was no longer subject to weakness, aging, death, or decay. When Jesus rose from the dead, He had a body that would live eternally, for Jesus had “put on the imperishable”; He had “put on immortality” (*I Corinthians 15:53*).”

As Paul describes in *I Corinthians 15:56-57*, “*The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.*” The resurrection is where our faith is solidified and victory achieved. Paul goes on to write about this in *I Corinthians 15:12-19*. In v. 17 he states, “*And if Christ is not risen, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins!*” It is through Christ’s resurrection power that we have the ability as His children to live a victorious life. It gives us power over our sinful flesh and enables us through His indwelling spirit to have confidence to do the work which Christ left us to do. Jesus’ mission for all of His Children is to be His witnesses. Read *Acts 1:8*. We are to take this message, the good news of Jesus Christ, the Gospel and share it with all the world.

Questions to Consider:

What about Jesus’ resurrection makes you change your perspective on how you live your life daily?

Prayer Prompts:

Father, thank you for “Worthy is the Lamb who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing!” (Revelation 5:12)

The Sermon On The Mount

Key Scripture: *Matthew 5:1-2* “Now when Jesus saw the crowds, He went up on the mountain; and after He sat down, His disciples came to Him. And He opened His mouth and began to teach them...”

According to the Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary, “The collection of Jesus’ teachings in Matthew 5-7... has been memorized, studied, taught, and preached more than any other single portion of the Bible.” Yet, since it is often presented without considering the context, the Sermon on the Mount is one of the most misunderstood passages of Scripture.

In presenting his account of the life, death, burial, and resurrection of Christ, the Apostle Matthew writes to emphasize the truth that Jesus of Nazareth is the long-awaited Messiah and Savior – the Seed of Eve who would crush the head of the Serpent (Genesis 3:15). Jesus is the son of David – the promised King of Kings who will forever rule in righteousness over the eternal kingdom of heaven. The One who “opened His mouth and began to teach” is the incarnate Word of God and Judge of the universe. He alone possesses the knowledge and authority to explain the spirit of the Law because it is He who came to fulfill it. In fact, Matthew bookended the Sermon on the Mount with passages that magnify His authority and power (see Matthew 3-4 and Matthew 8-9).

The person and work of Jesus Christ must be at the forefront of our minds as we read and interpret Matthew 5-7. Only then will we see, as David Platt writes, “What Jesus is demanding is not more righteous deeds by human effort, but more righteous hearts by divine grace.” Jesus taught the way of the kingdom – the way of true kingdom citizens who have life in Him and live for the glory of God alone.

Questions to Consider:

Matthew wrote to elicit a response to the person and work of Jesus Christ. What does Jesus say about Himself in Matthew 5:17 and 7:21? Are you relying on righteous deeds to make you right before God, or are you a true kingdom citizen?

Prayer Prompts:

Praise God for our Savior, Jesus Christ, the King of Kings who fulfilled the Law and the Prophets. Ask God to help you reflect the character of King Jesus by the power of His grace.

Jesus: The Prophet Like Moses

Key Scripture: *Matthew 5:1a, Seeing the crowds, he went up on the mountain,*

The similarities between Moses and Jesus are plentiful.

- Moses was transfigured on a mountain as God spoke from a cloud (Exodus 24, 34). Jesus was transfigured on a mountain as God spoke from a cloud (Luke 9:28-36).
- Moses led people out of slavery in the exodus from Egypt (Exodus 13-14). Jesus led people out of slavery in the exodus from sin and death (all four Gospels).
- Moses is sent to be a deliverer (Acts 7:35) Jesus is sent to be a deliverer (Luke 10:16; Romans 11:26; Galatians 5:1).
- Moses did many signs before Pharaoh (Deuteronomy 34:11). Jesus did many signs (John 20:30).
- Moses is a type (a kind of) of Christ.

Matthew especially paints Jesus as a figure like Moses. Here in verse 1 Jesus, “went up on the mountain.” Again, this is highly reminiscent of Moses ascending up Mount Sinai in Exodus 19:3; 24:18 and 34:4. Whereas Moses instructed the people about the ten commandments (the law), so Jesus will give us the new covenant.

Why is this similarity between Moses and Jesus worth mentioning? All of these parallels between Moses and Jesus identify Jesus as the prophet Moses spoke of in Deuteronomy 18:15, “The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your countrymen; to him you shall listen.”

Undoubtedly, Moses was a great prophet, sent by God to lead God’s chosen nation—out of slavery into the promised land. As a matter of fact, that is God’s big plan—God’s people living in God’s land under God’s rule. Well, Jesus, God the Son, is the greater prophet sent by His Father (God) to lead people out of slavery (from sin and death) in the new Eden where we will once again live with our God.

What were God’s words to Pharaoh through the prophet Moses? “Let my people go” (Exodus 5:1). Well, that is exactly what the greater Moses (Jesus) did (Luke 4:17-21).

Questions to Consider: Moses interceded for his people just like Jesus. What other connections can you make between Moses and Jesus?

Prayer Prompt:

Father, thank you for all the biblical figures you provide in the OT that serve as a clear sign pointing to our Savior Jesus Christ.

Christian Character & Privilege

Key Scripture: *Matthew 5:3-12. v. 3 poor in spirit; v. 4 those who mourn; v. 5 the meek; v. 6 those who hunger and thirst for righteousness; v. 7 the merciful; v. 8 the pure in heart; v. 9 the peacemakers; v. 10-12 those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake.*

In verses 3-12 we see eight defining marks of a Christian. In other words, the character and conduct described here are a description of those already in the kingdom. Notice v. 2 tells us Jesus has come to teach. He is teaching His followers. Thus, the traits described here are “pronouncements of salvation” (Quarles).

These character traits are not like spiritual gifts. *John Stott writes, “Unlike the gifts of the Spirit which he distributes to different members of Christ’s body in order to equip them for different kinds of service, the same Spirit is concerned to work all these Christian graces in us all.”* Did you catch that? All the marks belong in all the believers. This is who we are called to be as followers of Christ. Consequently, citizens of God’s kingdom should look very different from citizens of the world. In other words, those who follow Christ should reflect horizontally, what we enjoy vertically.

Each mark or trait is “blessed” (a word we will look at on day 9) by the latter part of each verse: v. 3 kingdom of heaven, v. 4 comfort, v. 5 inheriting the earth, v. 6 satisfied, v. 7 mercy, v. 8 see God, v. 9 called sons of God, v. 10-12 kingdom of heaven. Just as these character traits describe one who is in the kingdom, so do the blessings describe the privileges enjoyed by that citizen. We don’t earn these—they are graciously bestowed on us by our loving and kind God.

Questions to Consider:

Are you a member of God’s kingdom? Which character traits do you reflect well? Which traits are hard to see in your day to day life? Do you give God praise and thanksgiving daily for all the privileges you enjoy as God’s child?

Prayer Prompts:

Father, show me my sinful state that I may be ever poor in spirit and rich in gratefulness. Continue your sanctifying work in me that I may obey your commands, conform to your image, and relinquish my life to your every good desire.

What is a Beatitude?

Key Scripture: *Matthew 5:3-11* “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted. Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied. Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy. Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God. Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God. Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account.”

Jesus begins His longest recorded sermon, the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5-7, to His disciples with these famous beatitudes or “blessed sayings.” Simply put, the beatitudes are a series of blessings into the life of a believer as they walk in obedience, declared by Jesus.

The word beatitude comes from the Latin *beatitudo*, meaning “blessedness.” We see blessed sayings all throughout Scripture (read Psalm 1:1; Job 5:17; Proverbs 8:34; Luke 1:45.) The Greek word “blessed” translated means “supremely blest; fortunate, well off.”

What is important to point out, is how Jesus defines blessed. There is a sharp contrast in Jesus’ definition as compared to the world’s. Jesus was not communicating these blessed sayings in a way that meant by exhibiting these behaviors, they would achieve blessing or God’s favor. Rather, He is authoritatively proclaiming what true, genuine growth of a follower of Christ looks like. The beatitudes reorient our way of thinking toward God’s ways and give us a picture of the true disciple of God and what the heart condition of the citizens of God’s Kingdom should look like.

There is much to be learned from the beatitudes as each one has rich meaning and is worthy of deep study. We will see this in the days to come as we study them together.

Question to Consider:

Have you ever studied the beatitudes?

Prayer Prompt:

Thank you, Father, for giving us these blessed sayings to show us what the life of a believer should look like so we can look more like you, God.

Blessed defined

Key Scripture: *Matthew 5:2-3a- “And [Jesus] opened His mouth and began to teach them, saying, ‘Blessed are...’”*

Jesus opens the Sermon on the Mount with the Beatitudes. Each statement of divine blessing begins with the phrase, “Blessed are...” The Greek word translated “blessed” in Matthew 5:3-11 is *makarios*. This word means “supremely blest; fortunate, well off.”

Though some translations use the word “happy” instead of “blessed,” biblical scholars agree that this choice is misleading. Happiness, in the worldly sense, cannot compare to the blessedness the faithful experience in Christ. *John Stott writes, “For happiness is a subjective state, whereas Jesus is making an objective judgment about these people. He is declaring not what they may feel like (‘happy’), but what God thinks of them and what on that account they are: ‘blessed’.”*

Those whose hearts are genuinely changed by the grace and power of God are, as Charles L. Quarles writes, “... privileged recipients of God’s favor... Jesus was not referring to an emotion or feeling that is based on present circumstances... Rather ... it refers to the deep inner joy of those who have long awaited the salvation promised by God and who now begin to experience its fulfillment.”

Jesus Christ – God in the flesh – not only pronounces these blessings, but also purchased them by becoming a curse for us (Galatians 3:13). According to the text, this blessedness is a present reality, not something His disciples await in the future (though we do await the fullness of our reward).

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

Questions to Consider:

Read Matthew 5:3-11 and Ephesians 2. How are the faithful blessed in Christ? Are you living as if these blessings are a present reality?

Prayer Prompts:

Pray that your love for Christ will grow until the day He returns or calls you home.

Poor in Spirit

Key Scripture: *Matthew 5:3* “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.”

Being poor in spirit in this context is not talking about material things, but about our spiritual health. My first discipleship class at Richland Creek was in the book of Matthew. I was someone who knew the story of Jesus, but did not have a relationship with Jesus. In going through the beatitudes in Matthew's Gospel, I came to the realization that I truly was not saved. God used this verse to bring me to a point where I was poor in spirit, realizing my own spiritual poverty and my need of a Savior, Jesus Christ.

Being poor in spirit means humbling ourselves to a Holy God, being dependent on Him in all things, recognizing that He is God and we are not. *Philippians 2:3* tells us, “Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves.” *James 4:10* says, “Humble yourselves before the Lord, and He will exalt you.” Jesus humbled Himself to the point of death, even death on a cross (see *Phil 2:8*). Humility is not something we can think or work ourselves into, nor is it something we should take pride in; it is a discipline of transforming the way we live and think of ourselves. The way to transform our thinking is to study the Word of God. *Romans 12:2* proclaims, “Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind.”

Questions to Consider:

Have you truly humbled yourself before God? Are there parts of your life you do not want to give over to God? If so, why?

Prayer Prompts:

Father God, thank you for bringing me to a point in my life where I am poor in spirit, allowing me to realize my need for a Savior, your son Jesus. I pray that I will submit my will to Your will daily.

Theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven

Key Scripture: *Matthew 5:3* “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.”

Notice what Jesus says in this passage, “for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” This is present tense. We must be poor in spirit to gain the kingdom of heaven, which Jesus offers to us now. “Blessed” implies an inner satisfaction and sufficiency that does not depend on outward circumstances for happiness. This is what Jesus offers those who trust in Him. But, we must get to the end of ourselves, realizing that we are nothing without Jesus and can do nothing apart from Him. Dr. Sinclair B. Ferguson states that by nature we are too full of ourselves to be filled and the values of the world belittle the values of God, so we need to be emptied in order to be filled.

Jesus offers rest to all who have ears to hear. *Matthew 11:28-30* states, “Come to Me all who are weary and heavy laden and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.” This is the free gift of salvation that Jesus paid in full through His shed blood on the Cross. The gift is available to all who realize they cannot earn their salvation, but humble themselves and cry out to God for forgiveness of sins. *Ephesians 2:8-9* declares, “For by Grace you have been saved through faith and that not of yourselves, it is a gift of God, not as a result of works, so that no one may boast.”

Questions to Consider:

Have you given your burdens to God or are you still trying to fix them yourself? How is that working for you?

Prayer Prompts:

Father God, thank you for humbling me to the point of knowing that I was dead in my sins, and that I needed a Savior; your Son Jesus, who took the penalty for my sins. Thank you for giving me the Kingdom of Heaven.

Those who Mourn

Matthew 5:4 “Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.”

This beatitude can be hard for us to understand because we often think blessed is synonymous with happy. However, Jesus points out that sadness can be a blessing. When we realize the depths of our own sin against God, it brings us to mourning. When we take a moment to search our hearts and find the hidden and dark places of our hearts we should mourn over the fact that we have sinned against a holy and loving God. It is during these moments that we understand the seriousness of our sinful choices and can fully grasp the mercy of God's gift to us.

Through this mourning we understand more clearly that we live in a fallen world that is not the ideal situation. We live in a world that is a result of sinful choices and therefore we have times that we will mourn. We see things in the news that bring sadness. We often look at our own hard circumstances of this life and are very saddened. But Jesus points out that we are blessed. Even though we mourn over the depths of our own sin, Jesus promises we will be comforted.

Finally, we mourn when we lose loved ones. We have been given the opportunity to love deeply which inevitably brings deep mourning. During these times, Jesus is not saying, “Don't grieve.” It is right and natural to grieve the death of others. Cry, pray and talk with the Lord. Be honest with him. He loves you and wants to help you with that pain.

Questions to Consider:

Have you searched yourself lately to uncover the hidden sins in order to mourn over them? Do you consider yourself blessed when you mourn? What circumstances are you looking at as a burden instead of a blessing?

Prayer Prompts:

Pray that God will help you understand the depths of our fallen world in order to mourn over sin. Pray that you would deal with mourning by leaning on the Lord.

They Shall Be Comforted

Key Scripture: *Matthew 5:4* “Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.”

Jesus shows us that when we mourn, we will be comforted. When we are mourning over the depths of our own sin, God provides mercy and comfort to His children. God convicts people of sin by bringing mourning while also providing mercy and comfort. Guilt dwells on the sin but conviction orients you to God. It is because of Him when we feel lost, sad, or hurt due to sin, we can have hope!

When we mourn over circumstances, we should remember that we are not without comfort. We should not grieve like others who have no hope. If we are grieving a fellow believer we can be comforted by the hope and promise of seeing them again. We need not grieve like unbelievers who have no assurance after death. We have the hope, and comfort from that hope, found in Christ our Savior.

It is difficult to always remember amidst the realization of our sins and the hard circumstances of life that God cares enough to be our Comforter. It is while we are rooted in Him during these times that God comforts us most. We can mourn while fully depending on Christ. He is our all-sufficient Comforter and Provider in this world.

Questions to Consider:

Have I rested into the comfort offered from Jesus as a result of mourning in my life? Am I feeling guilty over my sins or letting God convict, change and comfort me? Do I grieve like I have hope?

Prayer Prompts:

Pray that we would experience the comfort of God when we mourn as we rest in the truth of His Word.

Pray for those mourning their loved ones or circumstances in life that they would rest in the comfort Jesus provides for them.

Pray that we look toward the Comforter and not the hard circumstances of life.

The Meek

Key Scripture: *Matthew 5:5* “Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.”

Meekness is a beautiful virtue that Christ desires to develop in each one of His children. “Meekness” is described as a humble attitude that conveys the character of patient endurance in the midst of insults. Another biblical translation is “gentleness.” Both of these words imply an attitude of self-restraint. Webster’s dictionary defines meekness as “enduring injury with patience and without resentment.” A meek person is self-less and remains so in the midst of wrongful accusations does not exercise malice or a condescending spirit.

From the original language meekness is used to describe a horse being controlled by a bit and bridle or better yet “power under constraint.” The world leads us to believe that meekness is weakness. However, Jesus calls those who are meek blessed. Proverbs 16:32 and Proverbs 25:28 give examples of meekness/gentleness and warn us if there is no self-control or restraint, we become vulnerable.

Jesus explained how Moses exemplified meekness in (Matthew 11:29). In Numbers 12:1-4, God gives us an example, “*the man Moses was very meek, more than all men that were on the face of the earth.*” Moses committed his hardship to the Lord and did not pursue a defense for himself but entrusted the outcome to God. He waited patiently while resisting anger and did not fret over the judgmental words that were spoken. He is not quick to be defensive but trusts God to defend his character. *John Piper states, “Meekness is the power to absorb adversity and criticism without lashing back.”*

For further study on this topic of meekness visit:
www.desiringgod.org/messages/blessed-are-the-meek

Questions to Consider:

In what areas of your life are you lacking restraint and need to practice meekness? How can you apply the lesson of having a humble attitude of meekness at your work, in your relationships, or as you serve at church?

Prayer Prompts: Meditate and pray through Psalms 37:5-11.

Father, I admit that in my flesh I do not have the ability to handle the pressures and insults of this life but as I trust in Your capable hands You will sustain me with strength and guide me all the challenges I face.

Father, help me to apply James 1:19-21 to my life where I am to be “quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to wrath.”

They Shall Inherit the Earth

Key Scripture: *Matthew 5:5 “Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.”*

Yesterday, we studied what it means to be meek and what meekness look like in your everyday life. Today we will learn about what Jesus promised to those who are meek. In society it is the powerful, the successful and the famous that seem to be the ones that will “inherit the earth,” but according to Jesus, that is not true.

When Christ said, “they will inherit the earth,” “they” is emphatic – meaning “they alone.” He is speaking of a particular group of people. Only those who are meek will receive the promise. The promise to possess the “earth or land” comes with a more significant meaning than just possessing but a “sense of place, security, an inheritance from God.” (bible.org)

To better understand this promise of inheritance, we need to look at the context and the people Jesus was addressing.

This Jewish audience was always faced with a threat of their land being invaded which left them fearful, longing for their Messiah to come and set up His kingdom, one that was secure and could not be taken. Christ is referring to the “earth/land” in the eternal sense. It is also implied that it is not your position, title, or accomplishments that will grant you this inheritance but through meekness alone. A genuine understanding of your position under Christ’s headship as Savior leads to meekness which is a true sign of someone inheriting the kingdom of God. Isaiah 11 gives a glimpse of this eternal kingdom where sin no longer dwells and peace reigns among all God’s children.

There will be a day where those who have placed their faith in Christ the Messiah will be gathered to an eternal land that will never be taken from them. This promise will be fulfilled beyond imagination and more glorious than anything on this earth

Questions to Consider:

Are you ready to receive the inheritance which Christ died for you to have? If you have received His inheritance through faith, in what are you most challenged to grow?

Prayer Prompts:

Father, forgive me of how I have allowed the world to influence me. Help to turn from being controlled by the world's enticements and be focused on the Kingdom's purpose. I praise You for allowing me to receive Your Son and to be joint heir with Him (Romans 8:17). Help me to live to glorify Your name.

Those who Hunger and Thirst

Key Scripture: *Matthew 5:6* “Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.”

We are not very far into Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount when He makes this statement. The notion here is that those who deeply long for righteousness are blessed. This is not a desire that is fleeting, or passes by quickly. This is a deep yearning, a never-ending hunger for Christlike righteousness, which springs from the depths of our soul. It is not a hunger or thirst that comes and goes; this type of hunger is only satisfied by Christ Himself. This is the hunger of the soul that longs to be like Jesus and to obtain the righteousness of Christ in every way.

Hunger and thirst are gifts from God, for it is by these desires we remember to eat and drink. Without eating and drinking we would not survive. To hunger and thirst for righteousness is to desire the living bread and the living water, (John 6:35 - Christ Himself) so that one may truly live. The word used for righteousness in the passage carries with it the notion of being godly. In other words, blessed is the one who hungers and thirsts for godliness. The idea of thirsting is longing from the place of being utterly parched. To thirst for Jesus is to say that He is the only thing that would satisfy.

The Psalmist says it this way in *Psalms 42:1-2*, “As the deer pants for the water brooks, So my soul pants for You, God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God; When shall I come and appear before God?” The Psalmist shows this deep desire for satisfaction that can only be granted by God Himself. This hunger drives us to pursue Jesus so that we may be satisfied in Him alone.

Questions to Consider:

Do you hunger and thirst for the Lord from the depths of your soul? Do you have an active pursuit of the Lord? Has your hunger for the Lord changed over the years?

Prayer Prompts:

Pray that the Lord would grow your hunger for Him. Pray that the Lord would be sought after in every area of your life.

For They Shall Be Satisfied

Key Scripture: *Matthew 5:6* “Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.”

It is the one who hungers and thirsts for righteousness that is satisfied. The one who is satisfied is the one who is blessed. The pursuit of Jesus produces the satisfaction of the soul. There is a cause-and-effect nature to this verse, such that when we pursue the righteousness of Christ, we find Him and obtain His righteousness. We start from a place of emptiness and end being filled up; we go from hungry and thirsty to being completely satisfied. This satisfaction is an eternal satisfaction. Jesus teaches in John 6:35, 51 that He is the bread of life and that whoever comes to Him will not hunger- they will have eternal life. The beauty of this verse is that we go from being desperate to live to being made alive. We do not just find a temporary solution to fulfill our desires. We find the eternal solution for our hunger and thirst. We will be wholly and completely satisfied in Jesus forever.

He is enough to satisfy our every need and our every hunger. He is the all-sufficient satisfying Savior of the world who does not need food or drink to satisfy us because He is sufficient to satisfy us in and of Himself. Jesus is all anyone actually needs, and it is only in Him that we can truly be satisfied. Blessed are they who hunger for Jesus because He is all they need for satisfaction. There is simply no other way we may obtain eternal satisfaction except through Christ. We cannot become godly without being in pursuit of godliness. Jesus teaches that those who pursue godliness are satisfied by becoming godly.

Questions to Consider:

Have you pursued righteousness with your life? Have the eternal longings of your soul been satisfied? Do you long for something more than Jesus? What can you name that is more satisfying than Jesus?

Prayer Prompts:

Lord reveal to me what I hunger and thirst for more than You. Father, help me to find my satisfaction from seeking You more than the things of this world.

The Merciful

Key Scripture: *Matthew 5:7* “Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy.”

Look at the first half of Matthew 5:7. Mercy is more than sparing someone from deserved punishment. Mercy is an inward attitude of compassion, concern, charity, grace, and steadfast love shown in outward action.

Religious leaders of Jesus’ day rewarded outward appearances while neglecting right motives and true obedience (Matthew 23:23). In contrast, our Messiah’s kingdom is marked by mercy, and its citizens are enabled and expected to be merciful.

Jesus, our perfect example of mercy, demonstrated His steadfast love on the cross to meet our spiritual needs. He also saw the physical needs of the crowds, was moved with compassion, and fed and healed them (Matthew 14:13-21). Christians display God’s mercy when they serve, witness, forgive, correct, and encourage out of worship to God. Being genuinely merciful is placing God’s character on display so He is glorified.

The merciful understand the mercy received in Christ and generously gift it to others. Christians depend on the Spirit and desire to follow Jesus in obedience. Matthew 5:7 identifies an aspect of obedience from a transformed heart – mercy. This merciful obedience brings real joy.

Questions to Consider:

When do my actions look compassionate, yet my motivations are wrong? With whom do I struggle to show mercy? How may I love others through generous mercy today?

Prayer Prompts:

Father, I confess I’m selfish, vengeful, uncompassionate, and unforgiving. Father, grow my love of You so I may mercifully love others. May we be dependent on the Spirit and full of mercy (James 3:17). May we do justice, love mercy, and walk humbly with You, God (Micah 6:8).

They Shall Receive Mercy

Key Scripture: *Matthew 5:7* “Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy.”

Today, we focus on the second half of Matthew 5:7. As Christ followers are merciful, different Bible translations say they will be shown mercy, obtain mercy, or receive mercy. The opposite is also true. We will not be shown mercy if we don't gift mercy (James 2:13; Matthew 7:2 and 18:21-35).

In *The Sermon on the Mount: Restoring Christ's Message to the Modern Church*, Charles Quarles clarifies,

“Showing mercy does not earn mercy from God, but it does express the humble repentance that is essential to receiving divine mercy.”

People are in desperate need of God's mercy. But, we must come to Him in repentant submission and trust. Scripture describes God's mercy as compassionate action demonstrated on the cross through Christ our Savior (Titus 3:3-7). God, who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up, graciously offers to spare us (Romans 8:32). Jesus was the merciful and faithful high priest who was the atoning sacrifice on our behalf (Hebrews 2:17). *Ephesians 2:4* says, “But, God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ – by grace you have been saved.”

God's kingdom citizens are recipients and ambassadors of His lavish mercy. Christians are called to be merciful imitators of Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit. As disciples, we are compassionate, and are thankful our eternal King and good Father gives abundant mercy to His merciful children.

Questions to Consider:

How have I minimized God's mercy? How have I been selfish with compassion? If I don't show mercy, what could that tell me about my relationship with God?

Prayer Prompts:

Thank you for offering salvation according to your mercy, justice, and grace. I confess I don't understand or appreciate the depths of your mercy. Within our church, spur us on to compassionate action toward one another and while on mission in our community. Grow our witness of your grace.

Pure in Heart

Key Scripture: *Matthew 5:8* “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.”

To fully understand this verse, we must understand the biblical meaning of the word “heart.” The heart is the center of the human spirit, from which springs our thoughts, passions, desires, appetites, and affections. What does it mean to be “pure in heart”? It means having a heart that is not divided between God and the world. A heart fully devoted to the Lord will not be devoted to the world and its trappings.

Our thoughts, passions, desires, appetites, and affections were created to be in full submission and obedience to God.

John Piper writes, “Jesus did not come into the world simply because we have some bad habits that need to be broken. He came into the world because we have such dirty hearts that need to be purified.”

Matthew 12:34 says, “For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks.” If you want to know if your heart is pure, listen to your speech.

The last part of the verse says, “for they shall see God.” The word “see” is defined as to see with the mind, to perceive, to become acquainted with by experience. We become acquainted with God the moment we place our faith in Him. When our hearts are not divided and we are devoted to Him, we begin to worship and fear God more. As we grow in our relationship with the Lord, He reveals more of Himself to us and our hearts desire to know Him more intimately until the day we see Him face to face in glory. “For now we see only a reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known” (1 Cor 13:12).

We can enjoy a fulfilling relationship with God, seeing Him through His Word, growing in knowledge of Him so that His mind becomes our mind, His thoughts our thoughts, His will our will.

Questions to Consider:

What does your speech say about your heart? Are you seeing God daily through Bible study, prayer, and worship?

Prayer Prompts:

Meditate on Psalm 51:10, “Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me.” Ask God to show you areas in your heart that are not fully devoted to Him.

Peacemakers

Key Scripture: *Matthew 5:9 “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.”*

Peacemaker is a term we hear often in our society these days. A quick google search will give you a list of peacemaking strategies, historical people who are considered peacemakers, quotes about peacemaking, etc. Websters defines peacemaker as “one who makes peace especially by reconciling parties at variance.”

To understand what this term means biblically, however, we must first understand the One who brings peace. Jesus lived the sinless life that we could not. He laid down His life as our substitute, dying an atoning death and rose again victorious three days later proving that He is the One, true living God. Jesus made peace between God and sinners- to reconcile us back to a relationship with God. For those who place their faith and trust in the finished work of Jesus, Romans 5:1 tells us- *Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.* Because of who we are in Christ, as believers, we have peace with God and therefore are called to share that peace with others being peacemakers.

2 Corinthians 5:18-20 says “*All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; 19 that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. 20 Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.*” God’s Word tells us that Christ not only gave us the ministry of reconciliation but He also trusts His children to carry that message to the world as we reflect Him. What a blessing this is for believers that we get to experience this peace and then share it with others!

Questions to Consider:

Hebrews 12:14 says to “Strive for peace with everyone...” Are you seeking to be a peacemaker in all areas of your life?

Prayer Prompt:

Father, You are the Prince of Peace. It is because of Your finished work on the cross that we can experience this peace that only comes from You. Thank you for giving me the ministry of reconciliation. Help me to be the peacemaker You have called me to be.

Peacemakers are Called the Sons of God

Key Scripture: *Matthew 5:9 “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.”*

Yesterday we learned that in order to understand the calling for believers to be peacemakers, we must first rightly understand the One who brings peace. Jesus is our peace and in turn, we steward that peace outwardly and obediently as we reflect Him.

As we unpack the second part of this verse, we see there is an eternal promise from God found for those who are peacemakers- they will be called the sons of God. This is the result of our peacemaking.

D.A. Carson says “The peacemakers are called children of God or sons of God, because of their eternal reward in following Jesus. The verse is saying that those who inherit the kingdom of God, through faith and trust in Jesus Christ, will receive the eternal reward of being a child of God. Their reward is what makes them blessed or happy, and their peacemaking simply reveals and proves their trust and faith in Jesus.”

Galatians 3:26 - For in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith. Our adoption into the Kingdom is because of our faith in Christ. Because of our faith in Christ, we have been made new and we have been adopted into God’s family, forever. *Romans 8:14-17 tells us, For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, “Abba! Father!” The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him.* As co-heirs with Christ, He has adopted us into His family and with that comes great privilege and also great responsibility. As God’s children, we are made in the image and likeness of our Father, the One who brings peace- therefore, we are peacemakers and obtain the blessing of being called the children of God.

Questions to Consider:

Do you see the promise of a loving God for those who are peacemakers? Read 1 John 3:1- See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are.

Prayer Prompt:

Father, thank you for adopting me into your family through your Son Jesus. Help me to have a right understanding of what it means to be called a child of God and that I will reflect You, the Prince of Peace, outwardly in my life.

Persecution for Righteousness

Key Scriptures: *Matthew 5:10a “Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake...”*

John 15:20 “Remember what I told you: ‘A servant is not greater than his master.’ If they persecuted me, they will persecute you also...”

Philippians 3:9-10 “... and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith—that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death...”

1 Peter 2:4 “As you come to Him, the living Stone, rejected by humans but chosen by God and precious to Him.”

Being persecuted for righteousness’ sake indicates a life that is submitted to Jesus through faith. We cannot attain righteousness on our own, but only through faith in Christ (Philippians 3:9-10).

When we live our life for His righteousness’ sake, we can expect persecution. And since living for Jesus is in opposition to living for the world, the world will reject us. Jesus was rejected because He personified righteousness, claimed to be God’s Son, and claimed He was the “way, truth and life” -- the ONLY way, truth and life (Luke 22:66-71); yet, God called Him chosen and precious because of it (1 Peter 2:4). When we deny Christ, we identify with the world—persecution for our faith is avoided. However, this means we forfeit the blessing of identifying with our Savior in His suffering (John 15:20). Therefore, if by faith we receive His righteousness and live by it, we will be blessed by the opportunity to identify with Him in His suffering.

Other verses to reflect on: Matthew 5-7; Matthew 10:16-24; Luke 6:22-23; 1 Peter 3:13-18.

Questions to Consider:

Have you submitted your life to Jesus for His righteousness’ sake? Are you living for Jesus in such a way that you can expect persecution to come?

Prayer Prompts:

Thank you, Lord, for Jesus’ example of suffering persecution for righteousness’ sake. Lord, please forgive me for the times I have not lived for your righteousness’ sake to avoid being persecuted. Lord, please remind me of Jesus’ example in suffering and give me the courage to live for His righteousness’ sake.

The Kingdom of Heaven

Key Scriptures: *Matthew 5:10b- "...for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."*

Matthew 10:7 "And proclaim as you go, saying, 'The kingdom of heaven is at hand.'"

Matthew 10:22 "... and you will be hated by all for my name's sake. But the one who endures to the end will be saved."

Galatians 3:11 "The righteous shall live by faith."

Philippians 3:20 "But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ..."

Revelation 12:10 "...the kingdom of our God and the authority of his Christ have come, for the accuser of our brothers has been thrown down, who accuses them day and night before our God."

Jesus' final words of Matthew 5:10 clarify that the blessing of the kingdom of heaven belongs to those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake. This should give us great hope and courage to endure and persevere in persecution (Matt 10:22).

Jesus declared, "The kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matt 10:7). He ushered it in. He brought it with Him. Through faith, He makes us citizens of the kingdom of heaven here and now (Phil 3:20). And our king is the Lord God Almighty! Therefore, we can have confidence that when we have suffered persecution for righteousness' sake, that we have not suffered alone or in vain, but as strangers in the world (Eph 2:19).

The time will come when all persecution will come to an end, and the kingdom of God will reign alone and supremely. He will not only vindicate us against our human persecutors, but also against our spiritual ones (Rev 12:10). Therefore, we can rest in the hope that ours "is the kingdom of heaven!" Other verses to reflect on: Daniel 2:44; Matthew 13; Ephesians 2:19.

Questions to Consider:

In what ways does the promise of the kingdom of heaven give you hope when you think about being persecuted for your faith? Are you living as a citizen of the kingdom of heaven, or the kingdom of the world?

Prayer Prompts:

I trust you, Lord, for the promise of the kingdom of heaven. Lord, forgive me when I have not fully appreciated the hope of sharing in your kingdom. Lord, help me have courage to persevere for righteousness' sake with hope for the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are the Reviled and Persecuted

Key Scripture: *Matthew 5:11* “Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on My account”

As we begin verse 11, we must keep in mind what Jesus has just said in v. 10. Namely, the kingdom of heaven belongs to those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake. Jesus then shifts from the third person (those) to second person (you--plural) in v. 11. This shift emphasizes the force of the previous beatitude to Jesus's disciples (Expositor's Bible Commentary). Jesus had just reminded them that the righteous are those who are persecuted, then he states to the disciples that they now receive persecution because of Him. The disciples of Jesus should expect to receive slander and even persecution all because of who Jesus was and because His life was a righteous one. Implied here is that the disciples also will live a life that seeks to be like Jesus, a life of righteousness.

“If you are insulted for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you.” 1 Peter 4:14

Brothers and Sisters, we should not be surprised when the world treats us differently because of our identity, allegiance and commitment to Christ. John highlights this truth in *1 John 3:13*, “Do not be surprised, brothers, that the world hates you.” The more that your life imitates Christ, the more those around you will not agree with you and even potentially speak harmful things to you. Never forget what Peter said in our verse above: you are fortunate, happy, blessed when this happens because the Spirit is with you.

Questions to Consider:

Does my life seek to imitate Christ? Am I pursuing righteousness in all areas of my life? Am I praying for those who may insult me because of my faith in Christ?

Prayer Prompts:

Father, help me be unwaveringly confident of my identity and hope in Christ, such that I am willing to encounter any opposition that may come my way for pursuing a righteous Christ-filled life. Father, ground me in your Word that I may be obedient to what You ask me to do, regardless of what others around me might say.

Great is Your Reward

Key Scripture: *Matthew 5:12* “Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.”

Throughout much of Christian History there are instances of people being ridiculed, beaten, and even killed for their faith in God. Here in Matthew 5, Jesus continues expounding on v. 10-11 by telling His disciples that they can rejoice and be glad, even in the midst of persecution. But how could one choose to have joy in the midst of great difficulty? Jesus gives the solution when He says, “*Great is your reward in heaven.*” He challenges the disciples to take their focus off of what is seen and fix it upon what is unseen, what is yet to come, that which is eternal.

“But he said to me, ‘My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness’. Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me. For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities. For when I am weak, then I am strong.”
2 Corinthians 12:9-10

Jesus reminds the disciples that just like they will suffer at the hands of those who oppose the gospel and stand against the things of God, so too did the prophets before them suffer. Those heroes of the faith we read about in Hebrews 11 also encountered great difficulty, but they persevered by looking to their reward.

Fellow Christian, we must remember the words of Dietrich Bonhoeffer when he said, “Discipleship means allegiance to the suffering Christ, and it is therefore not at all surprising that Christians should be called upon to suffer. In fact it is a joy and a token of his grace.”

Questions to Consider:

When the difficulties of this life are heavy upon me, where do I look for help? To whom does my heart gravitate? Do I truly value the reality of spending eternity with Christ? Does that reality empower me to stand in the face of opposition to my faith?

Prayer Prompts:

God, help me remain faithful to you regardless of how others around me feel about you. Father, show your strength in me when I am too weak to take another step.

“You are a hiding place for me; you preserve me from trouble; you surround me with shouts of deliverance. Selah” Psalm 32:7

In Good Company

Key Scripture: *Matthew 5:11-12* “Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.”

Scripture Reading: *Matthew 5:11-12; Hebrews 11:32-38*

Jesus has spent time going through various ways that life is different in the Kingdom of God than in the world. As you have read over the past two days, His last promise is that we are blessed when others persecute us. Today we meditate on why we should rejoice in persecution. Jesus says that when we are persecuted we are placed in the category of people who all have suffered for the glory of God Almighty. This is a small and privileged community. When we suffer abuse for the name of Jesus we join the ranks of people like Jeremiah who was put in the bottom of a pit, or Stephen the first martyr for Jesus.

The author of Hebrews recounts other occurrences like these in chapter 11. In v. 38, he makes a small yet powerful side comment saying, “*The world was not worthy of them.*” Those who endured mistreatment for the gospel were far too precious to be treated so scornfully. The world didn’t know what a jewel they had in those prophets and apostles. Likewise, Jesus says we join in this community when we bear the same reproach. So stay humble, but take joy knowing that you are walking the same road and will receive the same reward as these other faithful servants. Hebrews says later in chapter 13, “*Therefore let us go to him outside the camp and bear the reproach he endured. For here we have no lasting city, but we seek the city that is to come.*”

Questions to Consider:

What price have you had to pay for your faith? Have you ever avoided paying a price for your faith? Does it help you stand strong knowing about those who have gone before you?

Prayer Prompts:

Pray that the Holy Spirit would give you the courage to be strong when faced with opposition to the gospel. Pray that you can release any attachments to the things of this world so that there are no obstacles to your obedience to God.

A Christian's Influence

Key Scripture: *Matthew 5:13-16* “*You are the salt of the earth.... You are the light of the world...*”

Have you ever thought, “I want to make a difference?” As a disciple of Christ, you are an influence in the world. It’s not you, but the Holy Spirit in you.

Through the indwelling Holy Spirit, followers of Christ already possess influence. Disciples are salt and light, and are to live distinctly and differently than those in the world.

Salt, if used at the right time in the right quantity, activates taste, enhances flavor, and preserves. The lost world has no taste for holiness or righteousness, and walks with reckless abandon in death and decay. We are to walk in wisdom toward them, make the best use of the time, and declare the mystery of Christ (Col 4:3). In doing so, we influence through the life-giving news of the gospel.

However, Jesus warns us. Un-salty salt isn’t salt and is only useful for an icy walkway. If we allow unrepentant sin, earthly passions, or desires of the flesh to rule our lives, we do not enhance the lives of those around us (Ephesians 5; Col 3:5-10; Gal 5:16-26). We have no positive influence (Matt 5:13).

Additionally, *you are the light of the world*. As a reflection of the true Light of life, which is Christ in you (John 1:4; John 8:12; 1 John 1:5), your life must reflect the true knowledge of God. As you put to death the flesh, walk in the Spirit and speak the gospel; your life influences others. However, just as an un-salty life has no influence, neither does a covered light. Your life should illuminate Christ who is in you.

What’s the point of our influence? “*That they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven*” (Matt 5:16). As salt preserves, and light illuminates, our lives have influence as we point to the One who gives abundant life (John 10:10) and is the Light in the darkness (John 8:12). Live as an influencer for the Kingdom of God. Live brilliantly salty.

Question to Consider:

Do I realize the influence that I have on the lost world around me?

Prayer Prompt:

Father God, I pray that I would obey and live my life as a gospel influence.

Salt of the Earth

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

Empty shelves, long lines, or tapping refresh for the 1000th time in search of disinfectant wipes described early pandemic life. Essential to our combat strategy in the war on the virus were disinfectant wipes. Every surface needed to be disinfected with a germ-killing solution in the mission of war on germs.

As Kingdom citizens, we too have a mission. It’s not on germs but is in the Kingdom of Heaven. Contrasting a germ-killing solution, Jesus’ disciples have a purifying effect in the midst of death and decay.

As salt of the earth, Kingdom citizens are to act as purifying agents for earthly citizens.

Salt prevents spoilage, creates an inhospitable environment for germs, and promotes desirable microorganisms growth. While disinfectant kills and destroys, salt purifies and preserves. Disciples are to live in such a way that purifies and preserves.

In Matthew 5, Jesus described the characteristics of authentic godliness. In the midst of decay and death, Christians have a preserving effect as salt. Counter-culture or opposite of the norm, Christ followers bring preserving qualities of salt to the kitchen of life. A life of meekness, mercy, purity of heart, and peacemaking models Christ-likeness and demonstrates life in the Kingdom of Heaven (Matt 5:3-11). Instead of the desire to get ahead in this world, those in the Kingdom of God “hunger and thirst for righteousness” of God (Matt 5:6). The life mission of those in the Kingdom of God contrasts with the mission of those in the world.

A purifying influence comes not only from what we do but also through proclamation. We must “proclaim the excellencies of Him who called us out of darkness into His marvelous light” (1 Peter 2:9). As we speak the gospel and live a life of righteousness, we influence the world as purifying agents towards earthly citizens.

Question to Consider:

Do I realize my role as a purifying agent in the Kingdom of God?

Prayer Prompt:

Father God, help me live my life as a purifying agent in the midst of a lost and dying world.

Light of the World

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

In this day and time, it is pure instinct that when we walk into a dark room we immediately turn the light on. Why? So we can see! Light is necessary for many reasons – one being so we can see the things around us. Without light, we simply would not be able to see in darkness. Just as physical light is necessary, in these verses, Jesus describes an even greater type of light that is necessary – spiritual light.

In John 8:12 Jesus says, “I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.” Jesus declared in this promise that He is the light of the world and, for those who follow Him, their spiritual darkness will be replaced with the light of truth and eternal life.

In the same way that Jesus says He is the light, He commands His followers to also be the light of the world as we reflect Him. Believers are set apart, to stand out in humble obedience, as we differ from the darkness of the world. This reflection of Christ is so others can see the true Light of life in us as we are witnesses of Him. This light is not to be covered or hidden but rather to be on display to show God’s love, mercy, and kindness. And why do we do this? So that glory is given to the Father!

Question to Consider:

Think on the command God has given you to be the light of the world, thanking Him that He allows us to participate in His plan.

Prayer Prompt:

Father, help me to humbly reflect You in all areas of my life so that others will see You in me.

Thank You

We praise the Lord for all those who contributed to make this prayer guide possible. We are so grateful for the faithful servants who have dedicated their time and talents to writing this prayer guide.

To God Be the Glory!

1 Thessalonians 5:12-13

But we ask you, brothers and sisters, to recognize those who diligently labor among you and are in leadership over you in the Lord, and give you instruction, and that you regard them very highly in love because of their work. Live in peace with one another.