

Monday

Read Matthew 5:1-12

Of the three postures we talked about on Sunday (being in need, serving, and being in need because you are serving), only one is even close to being something you ‘choose’ (many people I know who serve feel compelled – in a good way – to do what they do). You can choose to serve or not serve. Being in need or being in need because you serve are conceived by Jesus as things that happen to you – you do not choose to be in need in these ways.

The core message of the Beatitudes is that the people in need (for either reason) and the people who serve are receive the special blessing of God in Jesus by the Holy Spirit. What wonderful news! We don’t need to shoehorn ourselves into a need category to be blessed – we can serve God and be blessed. Neither should be pretend not to be in need to be blessed, but can exist in the reality we find ourselves and be blessed by God!

Where do you find yourself today? Do you feel like one of the beatitudes fits you? If nothing seems to stick, you are probably a candidate to explore how you can engage in the ministries of serving: mercy, purity, and peacemaking. Pray for the courage to take the next step!

Tuesday

Read Exodus 15:26 and Matthew 5:3-6

Jesus blesses broken people. The Sermon on the Mount contains the core of the moral and ethical teachings of Jesus, but he starts of the sermon with blessing broken people. How powerful! The grace of Jesus always arrives before the law of Jesus. The grace of Jesus always arrives before we can put our faith in Jesus. Grace reaches us before we reach for faith. If we don’t hear the beatitudes as

grace, we will not hear them correctly. And they provide a concrete grace and hope.

The word “concrete” comes from the Latin *concretus* which brings together the roots “con” for “together” and “crescere” which means “to grow.” Modern concrete (the building material) is basically made up of three ingredients: cement, water, and sand/gravel which grow together to form a strong building material that we can drive upon or build into the sky. The grace and hope that Jesus provide us give us concrete grace and hope that we can build upon and know. Our hope is not flimsy. Our hope is not a wish. Grace is not conditional. Our hope and grace in Christ are stronger than any concrete! We can look to the future with the assurance of God’s care and we can bask in and be humbled by God’s grace – God’s unmerited favor – toward us.

Be assured of God’s blessings today!

Wednesday

Read Matthew 5:8

How will I be pure in heart? The good news is that your purity before God does not rest on your shoulders, your purity rests on Jesus. Jesus is the only one truly pure in heart. The rest of us have been marred by sin. As the only one pure in heart, Jesus is the only one who fills the great commandments of loving God with all his heart, soul, mind, and strength, and of loving his fellow humans with that same love. Jesus never returned evil for evil but overcame evil with good. He trusted God in all his suffering and did not become bitter or resentful. He never deceived but only spoke the truth in love. He never took advantage of another person. He met every temptation and was not overcome by temptation into sin. Only Jesus did all these things and the whole will of God perfectly.

Only Jesus presented his whole life as a living sacrifice to God. Jesus offered up his perfection as a replacement for our sinful

imperfection. God accepted Jesus' sacrifice of himself and imputes the purity, holiness, and perfection of Jesus onto us as if we were Jesus. Because of your faith in the resurrected Jesus – your acceptance of his sacrifice on your behalf – when God looks at you, God does not see a hopeless sinner, God sees Jesus. You receive purity in heart by grace through faith in Jesus.

Thursday

Bible Study Bonus! Read below first.

The Sermon on the Mount is Jesus' first teaching or speech of significance in the Gospel of Matthew. Otherwise, he has barely spoken so far! But the Gospel of Matthew has a lot to say about who Jesus is before this big sermon. Read Matthew chapters 1-4 and keep an eye out for the titles of Jesus and mark them down, if you like:

Messiah:

Son of David:

Son of Abraham:

1:21 is where Jesus is named, what does the verse say after "Jesus"? This is another title:

Immanuel (which means...):

King:

Shepherd:

Nazarene:

Baptizer:

God's precious son:

Light of the nations:

If you knew all that about Jesus you would be excited what he had to say by the time you reached chapter 5!

Friday

Each week in 2022, we are praying for the most dangerous places to be a follower of Jesus. Please spend today in prayer for Nepal and the Christians in Nepal. You can get more info, and this info comes from, here: <https://www.opendoorsusa.org/christian-persecution/world-watch-list/>

What is life like for Christians in Nepal?

In Nepal, converts from Hinduism are put under the most pressure; they are viewed as deviating from the faith of the ancestors, and therefore breaking with their culture and their national identity. Converts—and members of Protestant churches—experience pressure from family, friends, community and local authorities. In some areas, Christians were also left out of government COVID-19 relief, re-emphasizing their status as second-class citizens.

Areas for prayer:

- Pray that Christians in Nepal will have the wisdom to know how to share their faith safely, and the boldness to continue sharing the gospel.
- Pray for Christian women in Nepal who face persecution from their family members. Many are beaten, threatened, not allowed to go to church, rejected and left alone.
- Pray for believers who live in very remote villages. It is difficult for our local partners to contact them.