

Monday

Read Matthew 5:4 (or all the Beatitudes!)

What is your attention alcohol? What is that thing, or those things, that you might turn to initially for comfort or some other good purpose, but then can easily turn into you avoiding pain, numbing yourself, or finding an excuse to get angry and go into a rage to share the pain you feel? It could be any number of things... take some time to think about what you turn to and how often you turn to it.

Some try to avoid and numb by losing themselves and others can't or don't want to be numbed so they inflict the pain they feel on others. Which are you more prone to doing? Are there times or situations where you are more likely to do one than the other? Take some time to identify these.

Spend some time in prayer today asking the Holy Spirit to help you answer these questions and then asking what you should do about it.

Tuesday

Read Psalm 13

This is a psalm of lament. As we said in the sermon, psalms of lament give voice to grief, mourning, and loss. They are cries to God against experiences of suffering and they see God as the one who should have prevented the suffering while also holding tightly onto God as the one who can rescue from suffering. They have a structure that doesn't stop with the pain but extends towards hope.

Do you ever lament? Are you even willing to lament? And if so, do you direct your laments to God – the one who can really do something about them – or do you lament at just about anyone but

God? What would it mean for you to lament to God the next time you are in pain or mourning?

Wednesday

Read Psalm 32:2-5

An aspect we didn't talk about in the sermon is being in mourning and lament for the pain we cause to God and others through our sin. Acknowledging (confessing) our sins is something we do every week in worship, and sometimes (most of the time?) it is hard to not just go through the motions. But don't take confessing your sins for granted, how much worse would it be if God wasn't interested in your confession? It is a blessing to be able to confess.

Truly confessing our sins is hard but it is not as hard as not confessing them at all. When we confess, we give up the burden of our sin and give it to Jesus (see Matthew 11:25-30). And the glory is that though we may be comforted in our pain and grief in this life, Jesus completely takes away the stain of our sin. May we then work to repair the damage our sin does to others and this world!

Thursday

Read 2 Corinthians 1:3-4

You can be the presence of Jesus when you are present and listening to someone in their pain, grief, or lament. You can be a comfort to someone with any affliction – scripture says so! You don't need brilliant words, but a listening ear. You don't need a grand presence, but a genuine, caring presence.

Who needs you to listen and be present this week so that they have a measure of the presence of Jesus?

Friday

In preparation for Sunday worship, please read and reflect on Matthew 5:5 and Isaiah 53:7.

