



GPS GUIDE: OCTOBER 2, 2022 G r o w . P r a y . S t u d y .

Series: Inside Out

S ermon: Love

Matthew 5:1-10

When Jesus saw the crowds, he went up on the mountainside, and after he sat down and the disciples had gathered around, Jesus began to teach them: “Blessed are those who are poor in spirit: the kingdom of heaven is theirs. Blessed are those who are mourning: they will be consoled. Blessed are those who are gentle: they will inherit the land. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for justice: they will have their fill. Blessed are those who show mercy to others: they will be shown mercy. Blessed are those whose hearts are clean: they will see God. Blessed are those who work for peace: they will be called children of God. Blessed are those who are persecuted because of their struggle for justice: the kingdom of heaven is theirs.

Daily Prayer – At the conclusion of each day’s meditation offer this as your prayer:

I breathe in God’s grace.

May it transform my insecurities

So that I breathe out God’s love

I breathe in God’s love

May it transform my fears

So that I breathe out God’s hope

I breathe in God’s hope

May it transform my doubts

So that I breathe out God’s faithfulness

I breathe in God’s faithfulness

May it transform my heart

So that I breathe out the Good News of Christ Jesus I breathe in the Good News of Christ Jesus

May it transform me

So that I breathe out God’s grace...

Monday: Read Ruth 1:1-18

Hesed is a powerful word in the Bible and the most important word in the book of Ruth. It shows up three times, but the concept runs through the whole story and ultimately drives the action. Naomi says it first when she attempts to part from her daughters-in-law. “May the Lord show *hesed* to you, as you have shown to your dead and to me?” (1:8). She says it again when Ruth brings home her gleanings. “He has not stopped showing his *hesed* to the living and the dead?” (2:20). Boaz uses *hesed* to describe Ruth’s actions when she proposes marriage to him. “This *hesed* is greater than that which you showed earlier” (3:10). It is born from a root word that means to bow one’s head toward another and is rooted in covenantal relationship. English doesn’t have an equivalent word for it, so in the search for an appropriate substitute, they offer readers a smorgasbord of words like “kindness,” “mercy,” “loyalty,” “loving-kindness,” “loyal, steadfast, unfailing (or just plain) love” words that certainly touch on what *hesed* means but by themselves don’t begin to do justice to this powerful, richly laden word. As a result, we easily skim over references to *hesed* without realizing we have just stumbled over one of the most potent words in the Old Testament. *Hesed*, a word that indicates action more than feeling, is the way God intended for human beings to live together from the beginning the “love-your-neighbor-as-yourself” brand of living, an active, selfless, sacrificial caring-for-one-another, a costly brand of love that involves going above and beyond what anyone has a right to ask or expect. The relationships revealed in the book of Ruth offer a glimpse of this deep commitment to love as God loves. With which character in the book of Ruth do you identify? How does that individual demonstrate *hesed*? How might you offer that sacrificial love to someone you know? to someone you don’t know?

Tuesday: Read 1 Kings 3 16-27

In what might be the best-known court case in the Hebrew Bible, two women come to King Solomon, the wise, wealthy, and powerful king with the following quandary: One of their children died in his sleep, while the other remains alive. There are no witnesses, and each mother claims that the living child is hers. Solomon requests a sword to cut the baby in half; but the real mother, “overcome with compassion for her son,” the Bible tells us, relinquishes custody in order to save the baby’s life. This woman, Solomon concludes, is the true mother. Solomon is praised for his wisdom, the people awestruck by his just decision. But what about the mother? What kind of love would relinquish claim in order to give life? Our text this week reminds us that the ultimate example of love is “to lay down one’s life for one’s friends,” or as the mother in this story showed us: to give up what we desire most in this world so that someone else might have life. Where else in scripture do we see that sort of sacrificial love? How is that love manifest in your life? Consider one way you might give up your own needs so someone else might be loved today?

Wednesday: Read Mark 10 32-44

It’s so easy for us to read this passage and rebuke James and John, some of those first disciples who followed Jesus so closely. This is the third time they’ve heard Jesus foretelling his own death. How could they be so blind? Why don’t they get it? Haven’t they been paying attention, after all, they’ve seen the miracles with their own eyes, they’ve heard the teachings with their own ears. And we might even be tempted to think “I’d be different” but I wonder if we don’t miss what Mark really wants us to

hear in this story. We too have seen Jesus heal and heard Jesus teach, and yet we struggle “to drink the cup that that [Jesus] drink(s)” (v. 38). Jesus names the struggle between what the world values and what God values. You know how among the Gentiles those who exercise authority are domineering and arrogant; those ‘great ones’ know how to make their own importance felt. But it can’t be like that with you. It can’t be like that with you—because you are different. You are God’s beloved and that means anyone among you who aspires to greatness must serve the rest; whoever wants to rank first among you must serve the needs of all. This is what it means to be baptized with the baptism of Jesus. Can you do this? Do you? Will you?

Thursday: Read 1 Peter 2:3-10

For centuries, the Temple of Jerusalem formed the center of the religion of ancient Israel. An impressive building set on Mount Zion, it was seen as the site of God’s presence, where priests of the lineage of Aaron brought offerings to God in the name of the people. These animal and vegetal offerings expressed believers’ desire to enter into fellowship with their Lord, expressing their gratefulness by giving back to him something of what he had given them in his generosity. Taking up words spoken by the prophet Hosea centuries earlier to express God’s forgiveness of his unfaithful people (Hosea 1–2), the writer affirms that his hearers are now part of the people that God chose to be the primary witness to his love in the world. This is true not because of their merits, but solely on account of God’s compassion, revealed in Christ. For Christians, divine presence is not found in a geographical location or a building but human beings. Christ is the “cornerstone” and his disciples are the living stones and this is the house of God — the church. In other words, it is by the life of the Christian community, when it remains faithful to Jesus that the world will discover the true identity of God. That is why it is so important for us to live in such a way that we reveal an authentic image of the invisible God. And how do we do this? How do we reveal an authentic image of the invisible God? What does it mean for us to “come to Christ,” since he no longer lives among us on earth? By what way of life can we be signs of the presence of the invisible God?

Friday: Read 1 John 4:7-21

The language of being and abiding in God and love comes to the fore in these verses as the author of this letter demands the presence of God in all our relationships. Our love in action in the world is simply the culmination of our believing and living in the love of God. This is what sustains us (v. 13-16). The paradox is that it is in this humility that we find our boldness. We love because God first loved us and there is no fear there (v. 17-20). The commandment we have from him is this: those who love God must love their family also (v. 21). And our family extends far beyond our kin to every human being in God’s good creation. We must, therefore, challenge ourselves to push beyond our comfort zones to do new things. This, indeed, is how we love as Christ loved, and as God loves us. Every time we step beyond where we’d rather be, what we’d rather do, into what might embarrass or negatively impact us in order to share God’s love, we answer this call. This is our summons. God is love. Be bold. Don’t fear. Share yourself. Do love. This is what will sustain us in unity, strength, and the abiding love of God. How will you do love today?

Saturday: Read Deuteronomy 6:4-9 & Leviticus 19:18

Together these two passages comprise what Jesus called the greatest commandment in Luke 10:27. He then proceeds to share a story about neighbors, putting legs to these confessions of faith, reminding us that love is action, that faith requires response. Rev. Daniel Brereton says it this way:

Jesus said that loving your neighbor IS loving God.

He did not however say that loving God accomplishes love of neighbor.

Christians who ignore "social justice" have no use for the Gospel.

It isn't God who needs the good news.

As we are formed from the inside out, as we are pruned and shaped by God's love and grace, we are called to share that love and grace with others. We are compelled to love in ways that reveal the good news to all the neighbors we can.