



# GPS GUIDE: NOVEMBER 21, 2021

## Grow. Pray. Study

**Twenty-sixth Sunday after Pentecost**

**Sermon: Table Talk**

**Luke 22: 24-27 (NRSV)**

A dispute also arose among them as to which of them was considered to be greatest. Jesus said to them, “The kings of the Gentiles lord it over them; and those who exercise authority over them call themselves Benefactors. But you are not to be like that. Instead, the greatest among you should be like the youngest, and the one who rules like the one who serves. For who is greater, the one who is at the table or the one who serves? Is it not the one who is at the table? But I am among you as one who serves.

**Monday: Read Matthew 25:31-40**

Scholar William Barclay told this story: Martin of Tours was a Roman soldier, and a Christian. One winter day, Martin met a beggar who was blue and shivering with cold. Martin took his worn and frayed soldier’s coat, cut it in two, and gave half of it to the beggar. That night he had a dream. In it he saw Jesus amid the angels. Jesus was wearing half of a Roman soldier’s cloak. An angel asked, “Master, why are you wearing that battered old cloak?” And Jesus answered softly, “My servant Martin gave it to me.” In Jesus’ story, those he said had helped him were surprised: “When did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you a drink?” They saw need, not a chance for reward. What can help you learn to see in the faces of the people you meet, especially those who are outcast or hurting, the face of Jesus? When have you found the freedom and joy that comes from blessing others because you know God cares about them? Being kind to the people around us, especially those who are suffering, helps us to feel connected to them rather than separate from them.

*Prayer: O God, keep my eyes and my heart open to see your face in the faces of hurting people around me who need your touch through me. Amen.*

**Tuesday: Read 1 Peter 4:8-11**

Too often, we have a “one size fits all” idea of what it means to serve. In fact, there are as many unique forms of service as there are people. Peter’s letter called Christians to “use whatever gift you have received to serve others.” As Paul wrote elsewhere, “If our bodies were only an eye, we couldn’t hear a thing” (1

Corinthians 12:17). The call is to be yourself - as long as “being yourself” includes being a servant to God and others.’

In 1 Corinthians 13:1-3, Paul said that using our gifts without love renders them useless to God (and, most often, to anyone else). In today’s reading, Peter, in a shorter, less-poetic form, made the same point. What makes love so vital as the environment in which we use our widely varying gifts? Who do you know who is finding joy by using their gifts in love?

*Prayer: Loving Lord, help me not just to act loving on the outside, but to show “sincere love” to all your human children. Keep making my heart more like yours. Amen.*

### **Wednesday: Read Galatians 5:13-16**

The Apostle Paul planted new churches in the Roman province of Galatia (modern-day Turkey). But after Paul left, “false teachers” came to Galatia and began convincing people they still had to follow certain rules and laws for God to accept them. Paul, in his letter, strongly resisted the false teachers. He urged his readers to claim their spiritual freedom in Christ, a freedom defined by the words Jesus identified as one of the great commandments - *love your neighbor as yourself*. In verse 13 Paul bluntly stated a truth we may struggle to admit. We all have selfish impulses, especially if given the ability to choose freely. He pointed his readers to the one who can give us the ability to live in love - the Holy Spirit - “Be guided by the Spirit and you won’t carry out your selfish desires” (v. 16). In what parts of your life do you want to invite the Spirit to empower you to more fully love your neighbor as yourself?

*Prayer: Lord Jesus, loving sounds so simple, but in real life it gets harder to apply. As I draw nearer to you, through your empowering Spirit, teach me more and more what it means to love as you love. Equip me to do that. Amen.*

### **Thanksgiving Day: Read Philippians 4:4-7**

The apostle Paul wrote Philippians from prison. He didn’t have a Thanksgiving holiday for which to prepare, of course. But it seems likely he would have loved this holiday! “Be glad in the Lord always! Again I say, be glad!...bring up all of your requests to God in your prayers and petitions, along with giving thanks,” he wrote (from a dank Roman cell). Philippians is known for its emphasis on joy. This joy or gladness isn’t just happiness of the moment. It’s a confident disposition rooted in hope. Believers have this gladness because they know that having problems doesn’t mean God has deserted them. This gladness is a steady and hopeful disposition that shapes believers’ lives as they rely on God’s love for their salvation.

Paul was either hopelessly naïve or filled with divine wisdom. He had learned his approach to life from Israel’s psalms and prophets (for example, Psalm 32:11, 35:9, 64:10, 97:12, Isaiah 41:16, 61:10). Why not try out that approach to life, or build it more fully into your way of life? As you celebrate Thanksgiving today

(whether elaborately or minimally), “be glad in the Lord,” and “bring up all of your requests to God in your prayers and petitions, along with giving thanks.” See how doing that consistently shapes your thoughts and feelings, and your interactions with others. See if you don’t find greater gratitude and peace.

*Prayer: Loving God, build in my heart and mind that confident disposition rooted in hope. Help me to offer you deeply heartfelt thanks today and every day. Amen.*

### **Friday: Read Isaiah 58:5-8**

When Jesus said to love your neighbor, many in his day wanted to limit that to their Israelite neighbors—and even then, it was a hard ideal to live up to. Isaiah 58 spoke to Israelites who did many “religious” things, including fasting, but did so from self-serving motives (the prophet Micah made the same point in Micah 6:6-8). Why, they asked, didn’t God honor their feasts and fasts? The prophet said their piety was only skin-deep. They didn’t need showy, external fasts. They needed to *fast* - to refrain - from mistreating other people. Jesus echoed Isaiah and Micah when he said, “Go and learn what this means: I want mercy and not sacrifice” (Matthew 9:13). How have you seen your spiritual practices change your heart and lead you to a life of greater service? How are you growing in your ability to show mercy to others? To whom can you extend mercy today?

*Prayer: Illuminating God, thank you for opening my eyes and heart to care for and show mercy to your children in need. Use me and whatever good things I have so that through me “your light will shine in the darkness.” Amen.*

### **Saturday: Read Acts 9:36-42**

There are many ways of serving others. There’s no record of a church building in the city of Joppa, but the church was there. Exhibit A was a marvelous seamstress named Tabitha. There’s no evidence that she ever preached a sermon, but God equipped her to sew, and gave her a heart for the poor. The “show and tell” time in verse 39 is a deeply touching scene. Tabitha lived her faith in such beautiful ways that God used Peter as a channel to allow her to keep living it longer. God used both Peter, the apostle, preacher and healer, and Tabitha, the seamstress with a compassionate heart, to lead many to believe in Jesus. What role(s) has God equipped you to play in serving others? How committed are you to doing your part in helping others to “put their faith in the Lord”? Think about the things that you love to do. What brings you joy, and how might you be able to share that joy with someone else. Love kids – offer babysitting to a neighbor or friend. Love to knit – make a shawl and bring it to the hospital. Love to fix things – connect with a neighbor and ask if there is something around the house that you could fix. Gifted in an academic area – tutor a student who needs help.

*Prayer: Lord Jesus, help me never to think, “All I can do is \_\_\_\_\_, and that doesn’t matter.” Make my life, and whatever abilities I have, count as much for you as Tabitha’s life of service did in her community. Amen.*

