



# GPS GUIDE: JULY 4, 2021

## Grow. Pray. Study

**Sixth Sunday after Pentecost**

**Sermon: Pride**

### **Matthew 6: 1-8**

“Be careful that you don’t practice your religion in front of people to draw their attention. If you do, you will have no reward from your Father who is in heaven. “Whenever you give to the poor, don’t blow your trumpet as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets so that they may get praise from people. I assure you, that’s the only reward they’ll get. But when you give to the poor, don’t let your left hand know what your right hand is doing so that you may give to the poor in secret. Your Father who sees what you do in secret will reward you. “When you pray, don’t be like hypocrites. They love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners so that people will see them. I assure you, that’s the only reward they’ll get. But when you pray, go to your room, shut the door, and pray to your Father who is present in that secret place. Your Father who sees what you do in secret will reward you. “When you pray, don’t pour out a flood of empty words, as the Gentiles do. They think that by saying many words they’ll be heard. Don’t be like them, because your Father knows what you need before you ask.

### **Monday: Read Romans 7:14-25**

Paul told the Romans, with plainspoken honesty, about how he experienced the line between good and evil cutting through his own heart. Gritting his teeth and resolving to do better, he said, didn’t produce the good results he sought. It was only as he put his trust in Jesus’ grace and power that he found, day by day, God’s grace freeing him from evil’s power in his life. Paul’s statement that evil comes from “sin that lives in me” (verse 17) was a vivid way of describing a nearly universal human experience: the sense of a war within our self, of two contending principles of action. When have you found yourself determined to change a hurtful pattern, and yet powerfully drawn back to it again? Paul’s picture of our inner struggles was not unique. The Roman philosopher Seneca wrote of “our helplessness in necessary things.” But Paul’s discussion did not end with despair. “Who will deliver me from this dead corpse? Thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord!” (verses 24-25) When have you experienced

Christ's power, not wiping out the struggle, but empowering you to more and more come out on the right side of it?

*Prayer: O God, I identify with Paul's words: "When I want to do what is good, evil is right there with me." Thank you for your presence and power through Jesus Christ, which guides my resolve to choose your way more and more. Amen.*

### **Tuesday: Read James 1:9-18**

Some Scripture stories show temptations coming from outside us (Jesus' temptation in Matthew 4:1-11). But James knew that often our own inner wishes and wants lead us away from God's path. This is why so many great Christians through the centuries have practiced and taught disciplines (meditation, journaling, spiritual direction, counseling) that help us to know ourselves clearly and honestly. One of the ways to resist temptation is to remember who you are—you are a child of God and a follower of Jesus Christ! In what ways can inner "cravings" you don't even know are there (for power, popularity, wealth, etc.) keep you from remembering your identity as a child of God? What disciplines have you chosen to help you know yourself better, so that you can increasingly live into your identity as a follower of Christ? James did not only talk about the bad results of temptation, he also pointed to the good results of staying on God's path: "Every good gift, every perfect gift, comes from above ... from the Father, the creator of the heavenly lights" (verse 17). What good gifts have you experienced when you've lived out God's principles for human life?

*Prayer: Generous God, thank you for the good and perfect gifts you've sent into my life. Draw my heart and walk with me as I grow more aware of the cravings that tempt me away from you. Amen.*

### **Wednesday: Read Hebrews 2:14-18**

In the end, all any temptation can do, whether from inside our self or outside, is to suggest. It cannot force us to act. One important way to resist temptation is to rededicate yourself to God through prayer - stop, in the midst of the temptation, and pray, asking for God's help and strength. Jesus faced temptation and won and is always eager to help us choose well. How would you compare the kind and intensity of the temptations Christ faced with the ones you face? Have there been times when another person has been able to help you because you share a common experience? In what ways has Christ already helped you to erode ways of thinking about yourself that create inner urges leading you away from God? What obstacles are you facing now that Christ's strength and grace could help you surmount, clearing space in which you can live into a freer, healthier, more loving way of being?

*Prayer: In the midst of temptation, Lord, may I turn to you for help. Amen.*

### **Thursday: Read Philippians 2: 5-11**

Paul writes on the theme of unity of mind and spirit, urging the Philippians to "be of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind" (2:2). In encouraging the community to be "of one mind," it is unlikely that Paul expects no differences of opinion within the community. Rather, he implores them to be united in a spirit of love and concern for the common good. He urges them to "do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility regard others as better than yourselves," and further exhorts them: "Let each of you look not to your own interests, but to the interests of others" (2:3-4). Paul then instructs, "Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus" (2:5). The phrase "in you" is plural (*en humin*), and perhaps better translated "among you." Paul envisions the life of the community being formed by the mind of Christ — by a spirit of humility and loving service to one another rather than competition and grasping for power and control. What do you think it means to bear Christ's name above all other names? Does our life together reflect "the same mind that was in Christ Jesus"? Are we looking to the interests of others rather than our own interests? Are humility and servanthood evident among us?

*Prayer: As we live together in community may we embody the humility and gentleness of Christ, in whose name we live and serve. Amen.*

### **Friday: Read Galatians 5: 13-25**

Paul describes the stark contrast between life according to the flesh and life according to the Spirit. When he describes how the desires of the flesh and the desires of the Spirit are diametrically opposed he is not describing a dualistic split between body and spirit. Rather, "flesh" refers to the whole self under the power of sin, with all its self-seeking desires and self-serving ways. We tend to think of "desires of the flesh" in terms of indulging bodily desires, and certainly some of the "works of the flesh" listed in 5:19-21 fit this category. But the other "works of the flesh" Paul lists are more about matters of heart, mind, and speech as these affect our relationships with God and one another. Eight of them have to do with divisiveness within the community: enmities, strife, jealousy, anger, quarrels, dissensions, factions, and envy. These less tangible "works of the flesh" can be every bit as destructive as the more salacious ones. By contrast, the "fruit of the Spirit" is love with all the qualities that flow from it: "joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. There is no law against such things," Paul adds (5:22-23). The Spirit, not the law, produces this fruit, which more than fulfills what the law requires. "Those who belong to Christ have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires," Paul continues (5:24; cf. 2:19-20). Christ has freed us from slavery to sin and self-indulgence and has given us his Spirit. Verse 25 is a condition of fact: "If we live by the Spirit (and we do), let us also be guided by the Spirit." The verb *stoichomen* has military connotations of standing in formation or marching in line. In other words, "since the Spirit leads us, let us keep in step with the Spirit." What among the "works of the flesh" do you struggle with? Where in your life do you feel most in step with

the Spirit? What qualities of the fruit of the spirit do you need to work toward making more fruitful in your own life?

*Prayer: May the fruit of the Spirit be made evident in my life as I walk with you, O Christ. Amen.*

**Saturday: Read Deuteronomy 8: 1-20**

In a long discourse / commentary on the Law, Moses used the language of parent and child to symbolize the Exodus experience. God cared for God's people, as a parent cared for dependent children. In wisdom, God provided everything the people needed for the long journey, including food. Yet even this dependent relationship had a point: life required not only food but the Word of God. (8:2-3) However, dependence was a two-edged sword. It could encourage trust. Or it could spawn pride, resentment, and rebellion. Even in dependence, the people had a choice. So, Moses gave a brief history of God's initiative. "Remember," Moses said to the people, "remember how God cared for you!" In the end, the water from the rock and the manna from heaven were signs of God's compassion. But even they were a means to an end: a relationship with God. [8:14b-16] Communion is a sign of God's compassion. It reminds us of what God has done and will do for us. As the sign of the full presence of the risen Lord, it can bring us into a deep relationship with God. Does communion make you more humble as you realize that God supplies your needs? When you receive communion this Sunday, reflect on what God has done in your life.

*Prayer: Create in me a desire to depend on you even more deeply, O God. Amen.*



**FIRST CHRISTIAN CHURCH BIRMINGHAM**  
(Disciples of Christ)