

Week 4. Sunday, February 25, 2024

Holy Father – Who do you say I am?

Matthew 16 (selections) ¹³ *When Jesus came to the region of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, “Who do people say the Son of Man is?”*

¹⁴ *They replied, “Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, Jeremiah or one of the prophets.”*

¹⁵ *“But what about you?” he asked. “Who do you say I am?”*

¹⁶ *Simon Peter answered, “You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God.”*

¹⁷ *Jesus replied, “Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by flesh and blood, but by my Father in heaven.”* ¹⁸ *And I tell you that you are Peter and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it....*

²⁰ *Then he ordered his disciples not to tell anyone that he was the Messiah.* ²¹ *From that time on Jesus began to explain to his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many ...and that he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life.* ²² *Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. “Never, Lord!” he said. “This shall never happen to you!”* ²³ *Jesus turned and said to Peter, “Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to me; you do not have in mind the concerns of God, but merely human concerns.”*

I like Peter. I understand him. I’ve been known to be a little quick to speak myself. But Peter was also quick to take action. Jesus saw and recognized the Rock inside Peter. He knew that, regardless of what he said and what improvident action he might take, Peter was the foundation of the Church that Christ would leave on earth. Peter would rise to be the person Christ needed him to be.

Today: Recognize that God uses imperfect people. Like us. If asked, how would you answer these questions: Who do you think Jesus is? Who is He in your life? Can Jesus depend on you?

Week 4. Monday, February 26, 2024

Holy Father – Who am I?

John 17:11 *I will remain in the world no longer, but they are still in the world, and I am coming to you. **Holy Father**, protect them by the power of your name, the name you gave me, so that they may be one as we are one.*

What’s in a name? What is your identity? That can be a trick question. Are you Superman or Clark Kent? Spiderman or Peter Parker?

In today’s world, it can be difficult to answer, even for those of us who are not superheroes. Who am I? I am a wife, a mom, a church member, a mission director, a friend, a writer, a baker, a singer ... the list goes on. Where do we start?

We should start with the basics. I am a child of God. I am a child of the Holy Father. The King of Glory. I am protected by the power of His Name. Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

As Caroline Maria Noel wrote in 1870 (put to music so beautifully by Ralph Vaughan Williams)

At the name of Jesus Every knee shall bow,
Every tongue confess him King of glory now;
‘Tis the Father’s pleasure We should call him Lord,
Who from the beginning Was the mighty Word. ⁵

Matthew 4:19-20 ¹⁹ *Jesus said to them [Andrew and Peter], “Follow Me. I will make you fish for men!”* ²⁰ *At once they left their nets and followed Him.*

Today: Think about who you are. What are the roles you fill? As a Child of God, are they the roles God wants you to fill? Or are they the roles you think God wants you to fill?

⁵From *Songs of Praise*, Enlarged Edition, used by permission of Oxford University Press. Published in *The Worshipbook* by The Westminster Press, 1970

Week 4. Tuesday, February 27, 2024

Holy Father – Who is God?

Exodus 15, selections. ¹*Then Moses and the people of Israel sang this song to the Lord, saying, “I will sing to the Lord, for He is praised for His greatness. ...* ²*The Lord is my strength and song. He is the One Who saves me. He is my God and I will praise Him. He is my father’s God and I will honor Him.* ³*The Lord is a fighter. The Lord is His name. ...* ⁶*O Lord, Your right hand is great in power. O Lord, Your right hand destroys those who hate You...* ¹¹*Who is like You among the gods, O Lord? Who is like You, great and holy, praised in fear, doing powerful works?*

¹²*You put out Your right hand, and the earth swallowed them.*

¹³*You have led with loving-kindness the people You have made free. You have led them in Your strength to Your holy place.*

We serve God. We love God. We read many scriptures that tell us who God is. But do we know God? I don’t mean know OF God. Do we KNOW him?

Think about the people you know – your family, your longtime friends. How have you gotten to know them? You spend time with them. You have conversations. Sometimes, very long, involved conversations. You have fun together. You’ve probably fought, then forgave and moved on. You have shared happy moments, and times of sorrow. You’ve laughed. You’ve cried. You have invested time, effort, yourself.

Have you done the same with God? Do you talk to Him? About your life. Your goals. Your praises. Your secrets. Your joys. Your sorrows. He is your Father. Your God. Your friend.

Proverbs 18:24

*One who has unreliable friends soon comes to ruin,
but there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother.*

Today: Have a conversation with your closest friend. God.

Week 4. Wednesday, February 28, 2024

Holy Father – God has spoken^{6, 7}

God has spoken by his prophets,
Spoken his unchanging Word;
Each from age to age proclaiming
God the one, the righteous Lord!
In the world’s despair and turmoil
One firm anchor still holds fast,
God is on his throne eternal,
He alone the first and last.

God has spoken by Christ Jesus,
Christ the everlasting Son,
Brightness of the Father’s glory,
With the Father, ever one:
Spoken by the Word incarnate,
God, before all time began,
Light of light, to Earth descending,
Man, revealing God to man.

God is speaking by his Spirit
Speaking to the hearts of men;
in the age-long Word declaring
God’s own message, now as then.
Through the rise and fall of nations
One sure faith is standing fast:
God abides, his Word unchanging,
God the first and God the last.

⁶Words by George Wallace Briggs, 1952 © 1953 by The Hymn Society of America; Altered from *Ten New Hymns on the Bible*, used by permission

⁷Music by Thomas John Williams, 1890. Music copyright by Gwenlyn Evans, Ltd; used by permission. (Note: These words have also been put to the tune *Hyfrydol*, but the tune by Williams is the one the author grew up singing.)

**Today: God has spoken by His prophets, by His Son, by His Spirit.
Take time to Listen.**

Week 4. Thursday, February 29, 2024

Holy Father – I’m Nobody

Proverbs 12:9 *Better to be a nobody and yet have a servant than pretend to be somebody and have no food.*

I’m Nobody by Emily Dickenson

I'm nobody! Who are you?

Are you nobody, too?

Then there's a pair of us — don't tell!

They'd banish us, you know.

How dreary to be somebody!

How public, like a frog

To tell your name the livelong day

To an admiring bog!

We live in a world that values fame. We follow the actions of celebrities. Some have accomplishments. Some are just famous for being famous! Their faces fill our online newsfeed and the TV screens. They sacrifice privacy for fame. Is it worth it? Emily Dickenson certainly didn't think so, and I think she might have it right. I love her phrase *“To an admiring bog!”* Isn't that what too much of our media has become? A bog that captures prisoners in the sinking sand of “here today, gone tomorrow.”

To the society he walked in, Jesus was a Nobody, but he didn't have the servant that Proverbs spoke of. He became a servant.

God doesn't see any of us as a Nobody. None of us need to pretend to be a Somebody. Each of us is important to God. Important enough that His Son died for us. For you. For me.

Romans 5:8 *But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, **Christ died for us.***

Today: Celebrate the fact that you are, and always will be, Somebody to God! His beloved child. His own.

Week 4. Friday, March 1, 2024

Holy Father – God Listens. Do I?

Gen 30:17, 22 *God listened to Leah, and she became pregnant and bore Jacob a fifth son... Then God remembered Rachel; he listened to her and enabled her to conceive.*

Deut. 30:19b-20a *Now choose life, so that you and your children may live²⁰ and that you may love the LORD your God, **listen** to his voice, and hold fast to him. For the LORD is your life*

James 1:19 *My dear brothers and sisters, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to **listen**, slow to speak and slow to become angry.*

God listens! Do we? In Bonhoeffer's book *Life Together*, he wrote a section *On Listening*.

The first service that one owes to others in the fellowship consists in listening to them. Just as love to God begins with listening to His Word, so the beginning of love for the brethren is learning to listen to them. It is God's love for us that He not only gives us His Word but also lends us His ear... Many people are looking for an ear that will listen. They do not find it among Christians, because these Christians are talking where they should be listening. But he who can no longer listen to his brother will soon be no longer listening to God either; he will be doing nothing but prattle in the presence of God too⁸

This quote really struck me. I am a talker. I share my thoughts and opinions whether people want to hear them or not. Some may have value, but if I'm honest, probably most of the time they do not. More importantly, while I am talking, I am missing what others want or need to share. Most importantly, I am missing what God wants to say to me through His people.

Today: Listen to what God is saying to you.

⁸ <https://onbeing.org/blog/on-listening-dietrich-bonhoeffers-advice-to-christians>

Week 4. Saturday, March 2, 2024

Holy Father – Renew me

Romans 12:2 *Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the **renewing** of your **mind**. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.*

Psalms 51:10 *Create in me a pure heart, O God, and **renew** a steadfast spirit within me.*

Isaiah 40:31 *but those who hope in the LORD will **renew** their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint.*

Titus 3:5 *He saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and **renewal** by the Holy Spirit,*

Spring is a time of renewal. I love walking in the Spring. Since my retirement, I’ve tried to get out and walk every day, though sub-freezing temperatures make it difficult lately. But observing the world reawakening in the Spring is transformative. I love Bleeding Heart flowers. They are said to symbolize strong and unconditional love – like the love we receive from God.

If we allow Him to, God will transform us as He transforms our world in the Spring. He will melt the snow we hold in our hearts and allow our true selves to bloom! We can be renewed!

Today: Open your heart to God’s unconditional, renewing love.



Week 5. Sunday, March 3, 2024

Holy Curiosity – Search for the Truth

Numbers 13, 14, selections ¹ *The LORD said to Moses, ² “Send some men to explore the land of Canaan, which I am giving to the Israelites... ⁷ When Moses sent them to explore Canaan, he said... ¹⁸ “See what the land is like and whether the people who live there are strong or weak, few or many”... ²⁵ they returned from exploring the land... ²⁷ They gave Moses this account: “We went into the land to which you sent us, and it does flow with milk and honey! Here is its fruit. ²⁸ But the people who live there are powerful, and the cities are fortified and very large. We even saw descendants of Anak there... ³⁰ Then Caleb silenced the people before Moses and said, “We should go up and take possession of the land, for we can certainly do it.” ³¹ But the men who had gone up with him said, “We can’t attack those people; they are stronger than we are... The land we explored devours those living in it...”*

⁶ *Joshua son of Nun and Caleb son of Jephunneh... ⁷ and said to the entire Israelite assembly, “The land we passed through and explored is exceedingly good. ⁸ If the LORD is pleased with us, he will lead us into that land, a land flowing with milk and honey, and will give it to us. ⁹ Only do not rebel against the LORD. And do not be afraid of the people of the land, because we will devour them.”*

Albert Einstein. 1940 *Be a loner. That gives you time to wonder, to search for the truth. Have holy curiosity. Make your life worth living. (emphasis added by author)*

When the Israelites reached the Promised Land, they were curious. What kind of land is it? What are the people like? What has God given to us? Then went to explore, but were they searching for truth? The story told by the 10 was different than that told by Joshua and Caleb. They were filled with fear, not faith.

Today: As you seek to discover what the Lord has prepared for you, have a holy curiosity – filled with wonder as you search for truth.

Week 5. Monday, March 4, 2024

Holy Curiosity – Asking Questions

Matthew 18, 19 selections

¹ At that time the disciples came to Jesus and asked, “Who, then, is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?” ...²¹ Then Peter came to Jesus and asked, “Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother or sister who sins against me? Up to seven times?” ...³ Some Pharisees came to him to test him. They asked, “Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for any and every reason?” ...¹⁶ Just then a man came up to Jesus and asked, “Teacher, what good thing must I do to get eternal life?” ...²⁵ When the disciples heard this, they were greatly astonished and asked, “Who then can be saved?”

“The important thing is not to stop questioning. Curiosity has its own reason for existence. One cannot help but be in awe when he contemplates the mysteries of eternity, of life, of the marvelous structure of reality. It is enough if one tries merely to comprehend a little of this mystery each day.” **Albert Einstein, LIFE, 1955**

Jesus was asked many questions. Some people were seeking truth. Real answers. Others were trying to set a trap for Jesus. What they didn't realize was that Jesus knew what they meant. A simple, honest question received a simple, honest answer. But someone trying to trap Jesus received an answer to the unasked, hidden question found in their heart.

²⁶ *Jesus looked at them and said, “With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible.”*

We learn by asking questions. By being curious. God welcomes our questions. Asking does not indicate weakness, but a desire to grow. To be closer to God. Don't wait! Ask when the moment hits.

Seize the moment of excited curiosity on any subject to solve your doubts; for if you let it pass, the desire may never return, and you may remain in ignorance. **William Wirt**

Today: Seize the moment of excited curiosity. Learn from God!

Week 5. Tuesday, March 5, 2024

Holy Curiosity – The Soul of Man

Genesis 1:27 *So God **created** mankind in his own image, in the image of God he **created** them; male and female he **created** them.*

*Practice listening to your intuition, your inner voice; ask questions; be curious; see what you see; hear what you hear; and then act upon what you know to be true. These intuitive powers were **given to your soul at birth.***

Clarissa Pinkola Estés, Women Who Run With the Wolves

You were created in the image of God. Take a minute to think about that. The Image Of God! Your soul contains the image of God. In your soul are the seeds of love, kindness, creativity, justice, peace, righteousness, intelligence ... and I could go on and on. You have the seeds of all of the characteristics of God in you right now. Including Curiosity.

*Curiosity is **natural to the soul of man** and interesting objects have a powerful influence on our affections.* **Daniel Boone**

God created a universe full of mysteries. I could be wrong about this (I've been wrong about many things), but I think one of the reasons God filled the world with so much variety, so many mysteries, is so we would be curious and have things to explore!

*The **imagination** of man is made in the image of the **imagination** of God. Everything of man must have been of God first; and it will help much towards our understanding of the **imagination** and its functions in man if we first succeed in regarding aright the **imagination** of God, in which the **imagination** of man lives and moves and has its being.* **George MacDonald, The Imagination: Its Functions and Its Culture**

Today: Reach into your soul and celebrate the curiosity, the imagination, that God planted there.

Week 5. Wednesday, March 6, 2024

Holy Curiosity – Let go of your ignorance

Psalm 73:21-24

²¹ When my heart was grieved
and my spirit embittered,

²² I was senseless and **ignorant**;
I was a brute beast before you.

²³ Yet I am always with you;
you hold me by my right hand.

²⁴ You guide me with your counsel,
and afterward you will take me into glory.

Hebrews 5:2 *He (our high priest) is able to deal gently with those who are **ignorant** and are going astray, since he himself is subject to weakness.*

*A burning itch to know is higher than a solemn vow to pursue truth. To feel the burning itch of curiosity requires both that you be **ignorant**, and that you desire to relinquish your **ignorance**. **Eliezer Yudkowsky***

Do you know God? Do you want to know God? Do you want to know more about God?

Matthew 7:7 *“Ask, and it will be given you.”*

It can be hard to ask. Asking means admitting that we don't know everything. We are not in control. In asking, we learn humility, interdependence, and how much God and others care for us.

Asking reminds us how much we need God's grace. And how much we need other people. As **John Donne** wrote 400 years ago

*No man is an island,
Entire of itself,
Every man is a piece of the continent,
A part of the main.*

Today: Recognize what you don't know. Reach out to God and He will help you learn.

Week 5. Thursday, March 7, 2024

Holy Curiosity – Be like a child

Psalm 127:3 *Children are a heritage from the LORD, offspring a reward from him.*

I John 3:1a *See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called **children** of God! And that is what we are!*

*I have known plenty of people who, in their later years, had the energy of **children** and the kind of curiosity and fascination with things like little **children**. I think we can keep that, and I think it's important to keep that part of staying young. **Johnny Depp***

Children love to ask questions! They have a hunger for knowledge. For information. God put that eagerness in them at birth.

*No one asks how to motivate a baby. A baby naturally explores everything it can get at... **B.F. Skinner***

As a parent, there were times I didn't think I could answer one more question! But I did, because I knew that questions lead to learning. And I wanted Eric to learn!

*Curiosity is the wick in the candle of learning. **William Arthur Ward**.*

When we are troubled, when we have questions, do we ask God? Or do we look for worldly answers? As children, we should ask our Father.

Psalm 121:1-2

¹ *I lift up my eyes to the mountains—
where does my help come from?*

² *My help comes from the LORD,
the Maker of heaven and earth.*

Today: Commit to being a Child of God. When you are curious, when you are looking for answers, look to your Father. He has the answers you need.

Week 5. Friday, March 8, 2024

Holy Curiosity – Look Up!

Genesis 15:5 He took him outside and said, “**Look up** at the sky and count the stars—if indeed you can count them.” Then he said to him, “So shall your offspring be.”

Acts 7:55 Stephen, full of the Holy Spirit, **looked up** to heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God.

Exodus 14:10 As Pharaoh approached, the Israelites **looked up**, and there were the Egyptians, marching after them. They were terrified and **cried out to the LORD**.

Abraham looked up and saw the future. Stephen looked up and saw the Glory of God. The Israelites look up and saw danger. Then, they cried out to the Lord. When we look, He will answer.

We look up to the Lord for many different reasons. We look for answers. We look for guidance. We look for help. But don't forget to look up to look for God's glory. His Love. His Son.

Psalm 8:3-4

³ When I consider your heavens,
the work of your fingers,
the moon and the stars,
which you have set in place,

⁴ what is mankind that you are mindful of them,
human beings that you care for them?

“Remember to look up at the stars and not down at your feet. Try to make sense of what you see and wonder about what makes the universe exist. Be curious. And however difficult life may seem, there is always something you can do and succeed at. It matters that you don't just give up.” **Stephen Hawking**

Today: Look up! Look at the wonders God created. Look at the aid He offers. The Love he sent through his Son Jesus. For you.

Week 5. Saturday, March 9, 2024

Holy Curiosity – Be a Pilgrim

Verse: Psalm 84:5 Blessed are those whose strength is in you,
whose hearts are set on pilgrimage.

Curiosity does, no less than devotion, pilgrims make. Abraham Cowley

As a child, I learned about Pilgrims in school. They wore black clothes. Large hats. And didn't have any fun.

As an adult, I realize that anyone who is traveling to a Holy place is a pilgrim. It can be a physical journey or an internal one. Most of us will not be able to travel abroad to visit holy sites, but we are all able to be a pilgrim, traveling ever closer to God.

Christian, the main character in John Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress*, is on a pilgrimage to the Celestial City. Christian's goal – salvation – is so strong in him that the rest of life shrinks away.

*This book it chalketh out before thine eyes
The man that **seeks** the everlasting prize;
It shews you whence he comes, whither he goes;
What he leaves undone, also what he does;
It also shows you how he runs and runs,
Till he unto the gate of glory comes.*

The Pilgrim's Progress by John Bunyan

Most of us do not live a life in which we can focus on only one goal, as wonderful as that goal is. We have family and friends to care for. Jobs to do. Hobbies and gifts from God to explore and share. We have responsibilities. But, as important as those things are, we cannot put God on the back burner.

We are all Pilgrims, and we should use our natural curiosity to seek to learn more about God, our world, and our place in it.

*A pilgrim is a wanderer with a purpose. **Peace Pilgrim***

What is your purpose? What does God want you to do?

Today: Rouse your Holy Curiosity. Step out on your Pilgrim's journey to discover where God wants you to go.

Week 6. Sunday, March 10, 2024

Wholly His – You shall have no other gods

Exodus 20:1-6 *And God spoke all these words:*

² *"I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery.*

³ *"You shall have no other gods before me.*

⁴ *"You shall not make for yourself an image in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below. ⁵ You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, punishing the children for the sin of the parents to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me, ⁶ but showing love to a thousand generations of those who love me and keep my commandments.*

Most of us learned about the Ten Commandments when we were pretty young. Our Sunday School classroom might have had them on the wall. We might have cut them out of construction paper and pasted the list on them. Ten commandments. Basic. Straightforward. Easy to understand, even in elementary school.

And yet ... while Moses was receiving the commandments on top of Mt. Sinai... **Exodus 32:4** *He (Aaron) took what they handed him and made it into an idol cast in the shape of a calf, fashioning it with a tool. Then they said, "These are your gods, Israel, who brought you up out of Egypt."*

From the 21st Century, we can't imagine making a god out of gold. "A golden calf? Who would do that?" We feel so superior.

And yet ... what is a god? The definition is simple. A thing accorded supreme importance. In our world, many people create their own gods. Money. Power. Career. People. Influence. Self.

No one else holds or has held the place in the heart of the world which Jesus holds. Other gods have been as devoutly worshipped; no other man has been so devoutly loved. John Knox

Today: Look at your priorities. Do false gods hinder your life? Or is the triune God the only one you devoutly love and worship?

Week 6. Monday, March 11, 2024

Wholly His – I deserve these idols

Genesis 31:19 ¹⁹ *When Laban had gone to shear his sheep, Rachel stole her father's household gods.*

Do you remember the story of Jacob, Leah and Rachel? Jacob served Laban for 7 years to earn Rachel as his wife. But ... Laban pulled a switch and Jacob ended up with Leah. So, Jacob worked another 7 years for Rachel. And another 6 years for his own flock (created by separating the streaked and speckled flock from the plain.) If you haven't read it in a while, it's a good story to go back to. After 20 years, God instructed Jacob to take his wives and family and go home. So he did, without telling Laban. On top of that, Rachel stole the household gods, without telling Jacob. So, when Laban came after them, Jacob said (**Gen 31:32**) *But if you find anyone who has your gods, that person shall not live. In the presence of our relatives, see for yourself whether there is anything of yours here with me; and if so, take it."* Now Jacob did not know that Rachel had stolen the gods.

Rachel continued her deception and hid the gods in her saddlebag, claiming she was on her period. Laban found nothing. He and Jacob made a covenant and his family left in peace.

Why did Rachel steal the gods? In ancient societies, the household idols would go to the eldest natural son. Some scholars believe Rachel wanted those for her son. As she and Leah said to Jacob, (**Gen 31:16a**) *Surely all the wealth that God took away from our father belongs to us and our children.*

Whatever the reason, there was a price to pay for putting a value on manmade gods. In Gen. 35, Jacob finally buries the household idols to destroy them, but it was too late. **Gen 35:16-18** tell of Rachel's death during the birth of Benjamin.

Today: Look at the priorities in your life. Are you holding on to manmade gods? Even if you have what you think of as a "good reason", what are the consequences?

Week 6. Tuesday, March 12, 2024

Wholly His – Is it time to clean house?

2 Kings 23, selections ¹Then the king (Josiah) called together all the elders of Judah and Jerusalem. ²He went up to the temple of the LORD with the people of Judah, the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the priests and the prophets—all the people from the least to the greatest. He read in their hearing all the words of the Book of the Covenant, which had been found in the temple of the LORD... ⁴The king ordered Hilkiah the high priest... to remove from the temple of the LORD all the articles made for Baal and Asherah and all the starry hosts. He burned them outside Jerusalem ... ⁵He did away with the idolatrous priests appointed by the kings of Judah ... ⁶He took the Asherah pole from the temple of the LORD to the Kidron Valley outside Jerusalem and burned it there.

Josiah was 8 when he became King. The kings that preceded him did evil in the sight of the Lord. The Book of the Law had been lost. When he was 18, the Book was found. It was read to the people. King Josiah realized how far the nation had traveled from what God desired. He went to work. The covenant was renewed. Workmen were hired to cleanse and repair the Temple. Public and private idols were destroyed. Everything that separated the people from God, internal or external, was removed.

²¹ *The king gave this order to all the people: “Celebrate the Passover to the LORD your God, as it is written in this Book of the Covenant.”* ²² *Neither in the days of the judges who led Israel nor in the days of the kings of Israel and the kings of Judah had any such Passover been observed.*

Josiah knew that cleansing evil from the land of Israel couldn't be done halfway. The Temple was cleansed. The land was cleansed. The people heard the Word of the Lord so their hearts could be cleansed. We can do no less. Search your heart, your calendar, your home. What in your life is separating you from God?

Today: Cleans your heart, your home. Recommit yourself to being Wholly His.

Week 6. Wednesday, March 13, 2024

Wholly His – Where your heart is

Matthew 6:19-21, 24

¹⁹ *“Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moths and vermin destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. ²⁰ But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moths and vermin do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. ²¹ For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also... ²⁴ “No one can serve two masters. Either you will hate the one and love the other, or you will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money.*

Looking around my house, I have too much stuff. Too many clothes. Too many shoes. Too many books. Too many craft supplies. Too many Christmas decorations. Too many boxes of photos. Too many ...

At my age, I need to think seriously about this. How did I get here? While I like my stuff, if I am honest with myself, it is a burden. Physical and emotional. Someone will have to clean this out. I don't want to leave it to my son. I need to do it.

But first, I need to cleanse my heart. Remove the desire for stuff and replace it with the desire for God. Spend more time in the Word and less time on Amazon. Look at my stuff and realize that some of it can be used for God if I give it away.

I am fortunate that I am no longer spending my days at work. I am in my home, which I love. I have more time to spend with God, but am I doing enough? Am I wholly His? Or do I still belong too much to earthly things.

I need to start. Every day, something goes into a box to head to the Library book sale, Salvation Army Store, or garbage. I need to lighten the load that these earthly “treasures” have put on me.

Today: Look around your home. Do you have possessions that are in danger of possessing you? Where are your treasures?

Week 6. Thursday, March 14, 2024

Wholly His – With all your heart

Matthew 22:36-38 ³⁶ “Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?” ³⁷ Jesus replied: “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.” ³⁸ This is the first and greatest commandment.”

What would our lives be like if we truly loved God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength? We say we do it, but let's be honest. It is hard. We are so easily distracted. By family. By work. By friends. By cooking. By cleaning. By entertainment. By sports ...

Matthew 19:16, 21, 22 ¹⁶ Just then a man came up to Jesus and asked, “Teacher, what good thing must I do to get eternal life?” ... ²¹ Jesus answered, “If you want to be perfect, go, sell your possessions and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me.” ²² When the young man heard this, he went away sad, because he had great wealth.

Too often, we go away sad, because we have a great wealth of things, commitments, priorities, that we place before God. We do not love God with all our heart and soul and mind because we are filled with other things.

Some are good things – the love of family, service to our friends and community, the responsibilities that allow us to take care of our friends and family.

But some of the distractions that keep us from God are not good. You know what your distractions are. They are strong. They are habits. But they do not have to be permanent.

It will be a fight to clear your heart, soul, and mind to make room for God. We've all started the process, and it won't be finished until we are in Heaven. But whatever progress we make will be worth it.

Today: Take steps toward Loving the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.

Week 6. Friday, March 15, 2024

Wholly His – Coins and Idols

Mark 12:14-17 ¹⁴ They came to him and said, “Teacher, we know that you are a man of integrity. You aren't swayed by others, because you pay no attention to who they are; but you teach the way of God in accordance with the truth. Is it right to pay the imperial tax to Caesar or not?” ¹⁵ Should we pay or shouldn't we?”

But Jesus knew their hypocrisy. “Why are you trying to trap me?” he asked. “Bring me a denarius and let me look at it.” ¹⁶ They brought the coin, and he asked them, “Whose image is this? And whose inscription?”

“Caesar's,” they replied.

¹⁷ Then Jesus said to them, “Give back to Caesar what is Caesar's and to God what is God's.”

One of the Lenten devotional books I have, *Lent in Plain Sight* by Jill J. Duffield, goes through the weeks of Lent by focusing on one simple object each week. One object is Coins. She uses this passage to focus on the question – Do we love God with all our heart, soul, and mind? To her, the question is not whether we pay taxes, but where our loyalties lie. Is our commitment to our nation, our politics, stronger than our commitment to God?

John 2:15 So he made a whip out of cords, and drove all from the temple courts, both sheep and cattle; he scattered the coins of the money changers and overturned their tables.

Another day, she used this passage to consider how we spend our money. She believes that Jesus was not angered by the fact that services were being provided, but how they were being provided. Exorbitant exchange rates, gouging the unfortunate who came to worship. She compared it to merchants who exploit the poor, and children, using them for poorly paid dangerous labor. And how she spends her money.

Today: If we are wholly God's, then our money is His, too. Consider how will you spend in ways that honor God.

Week 6. Saturday, March 16, 2024

Wholly His – Offer your body

Romans 12:1 *Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship.*

Your body belongs to God. My body belongs to God. Ok. What does that mean? Is it important?

Yes. My body is a gift from God. I should take care of it. After a life of overeating and under exercising, I have recently started to take better care of myself. It's hard. Our society makes it easy to feed my body with junk. But God has filled the world with good things. We should thank Him and enjoy them!

The human body was created by God. We experience all of life in our bodies. Jesus came to earth in a human body, to share the experiences of life with us. He laughed. He ate. He worked. He wept. He walked. He was tired. He slept. He felt joy. He felt sorrow. He was bruised. He was beaten. He died.

In *Pauses for Lent by Trevor Hudson*, he offers 40 words for the 40 days of Lent. One of the words is Body. He writes "Today, through his Spirit, the Lord Jesus wants to dwell within our bodies. But he can only do so when we offer them as living sacrifices to God. This total yielding of every part of ourselves to God renews our minds and transforms our spirits."

Jesus wants to dwell in your body. He wants to be with you, part of you, every minute of every day. But although He is all powerful, He won't come in unless you invite Him. You have the choice to accept Him or reject Him.

Trevor Hudson suggests that we physically offer our body to God. "Lie on the floor facedown or faceup. Explicitly and intentionally surrender your body to God. Take time to go over each part of your body, offering everything to God."¹⁰

Today: Offer your body to God. It is your true worship.