



LENT
The Road Less Travelled



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INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the Lent Journey. On this journey, you are invited to work the beatitudes of Jesus into your life. During Lent, we are invited to identify with Jesus' suffering. The beatitudes invite us to live in a new way, with Jesus, in a world of anxiety, fear, uncertainty and suffering. It is a road chosen by few, but Jesus did. And so, we follow Him, through suffering, to bliss.

To help you along these movements, each day and week has a specific rhythm in which you can partake, as you are able.



USE OF THIS GUIDE

The guide commences with a week of preparation, starting on Ash Wednesday, to help orientate you for the next 40 days. Each week begins on a Sunday, named Day 1. At the beginning of each week, there are four elements: i) a picture, ii) a poem, iii) a Scripture-reference and orientation for the week, and iv) a practice of faith for the week. Daily, there are four elements: i) a piece of Scripture, ii) a devotional, iii) an exercise, and iv) a repetition prayer.

Each day's message can be read in the morning, so that you can end the evening with reflective prayer. At the end of the week, you are invited to do a repetition of one of the days in the past week. On the Saturday evening, you can do a revisional prayer and reflect on your experience. The danger in practices of faith, is that they can become a heavy burden that takes life out of us. It is important not to see these practices as laws that we must abide by, but rather as a means of grace by which He comes to us. An attitude of experimentation and adventure would be much more fruitful.

The aim of this journey is not to induce feelings of guilt when you are not able to get to all the suggested elements and steps of each day. If you do skip a day, simply continue on the following day.

Sister Death,
who walk with me
in the silence of my bones,



The Road Less Travelled
A S H W E D N E S D A Y

WEEK OF PREPARATION



in the harmony of a beat
due to cease one day.
Dear heart, my heart,
carrying within you
life's rhythm:
one day you will go silent.
Dear heart, my heart,
to stay mute forever?
to be dust, no more?
To be dust, no doubt,
a sap feeding into
the desert flowers . . .
But to stay quiet, no.
What is for sure: Dust
you will be, enamoured dust.
Dust you will be, enamoured dust.

Enamoured Dust by Luis Carlos Herrera



ASH WEDNESDAY

“For dust you are, and to dust you will return.” (Gen. 3:19) AOV

The first day of Lent is called Ash Wednesday. On this day, we come into contact with our own mortality. On Ash Wednesday, it is the practice of many churches to draw a cross of ash on their foreheads. This ash usually comes from the burning of the previous year's Palm Sunday's palm leaves.

Something inside of each one of us knows exactly why we receive this ash: “For dust you are, and to dust you will return!” No doctor of Metaphysics need explain this. Ash is dust and dust is dirt: life comes it. Life also returns to dirt.

Lent is a season for each of us to sit in ash. To lament in our brokenness. To let go of what keeps us from a life with God. To choose not to continue with life as usual. To wait while growth takes place in us. And to be still, so that God can do His work within us.

Exercise:

Take some time with God to decide how you'd like to prepare yourself for Lent:

- What would you like to do less of, perhaps fast from during this time?
- What would you like to do more of, perhaps take up a spiritual practice that is life-giving to you?
- What would you like to ask the Lord for in this coming season?

Repetition Prayer:

Lord, give me the grace to accept my own mortality.



toe ek vanoggend in u lig kom sit toe ek stamelend by u voete bid
toe ek soekend deur u boek kom blaai en donkerwinde in my waai
toe ek dors en honger brood kom vra en my kla en sonde na die bidplek dra
kon ek ooit vermoed dat hier alleen deurboorde hande my sou seën
dat hier in my gebrokenheid ek deel sou word van heiligheid?
ek wil weer in u lig kom sit en by deurboorde voete bid
en soekend deur u boek kom blaai waar hemelwinde oor my waai

bidplek deur Koos van der Merwe

Paem



THURSDAY | PLACE OF PRAYER

“Here’s what I want you to do: Find a quiet, secluded place so you won’t be tempted to role-play before God. Just be there as simply and honestly as you can manage. The focus will shift from you to God, and you will begin to sense his grace.” Matt 6:6 MSG

During Lent, you are invited to put some time aside each day. In your week of preparation, find a private place to practice your daily seclusion and prayer.

Jesus says: “Here’s what I want you to do. Find a quiet, secluded place.” He invites us to find a place for prayer. It can be a corner or room in your house. It can be any place. Find a place, a physical place.

But what’s important here is that when you go to this place, you need to go to your “innermost chamber” (Matt 6:6 TPT). This is metaphorical language. Nowhere in archeology could researchers find a place with an innermost chamber. The innermost chamber is a metaphor, meaning that you should close yourself off. You need break with your daily rhythms completely, in order to be fully present.

An old church father stated that your attitude is of the utmost importance when going into that place with Scripture. It should be an attitude of: God is waiting for me. God is there for me. God longs for this moment where we can be together.

Exercise:

Find your place of prayer. What do you need to put in place so that you can become fully present each day? When you go to this place, stand before it a while, looking at it, before you enter. Thank God: “Thank you for this moment. Thank you for this opportunity. I believe You are here. I believe You want to meet me and want to work with me. I invite You: Come. Work with me and speak to me.”

Repetition Prayer:

Lord, give me the grace to be fully present with you.



Enough.
These few words are enough.
If not these words, this breath.
If not this breath, this sitting here.
This opening to life
We have refused
Again and again
Until now.

Enough by David Whyte

Poem



FRIDAY | THE WORD

Until I come, devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture... 1 Tim 4:13 NIV

Blessed is the one who does not walk in step with the wicked or stand in the way that sinners take or sit in the company of mockers, but whose delight is in the law of the LORD, and who meditates on his law, day and night. That person is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither— whatever they do prospers. Psalms 1:1-3 NIV

There is something special about the Bible. The Bible is called the holy Scripture. Holy means “set apart”. It is different to any other book you will ever come across. Through the ages, the Bible has been the source of nourishment for believers, that stimulates them, keeps them intact, leads them and helps them grow.

During this journey, you are invited to live each week with a beatitude and a story from Scripture. It is important that you do not only use your logical and rational mind when engaging with the Word. We read the Scripture repeatedly. By reading it in this way, we begin to meditate on it. You rethink it. You go to your inner functions – your intuition – a way of reading from the early church that helps take scripture from our heads to our hearts.

Exercise:

Read the Scripture for the day. What do you feel? What happens inside of you as you read it? What is God inviting you to through these words?

Repetition Prayer:

Lord, give me the grace to receive your Word.



Above all, trust in the slow work of God.
We are quite naturally impatient in everything to reach the end without delay.
We should like to skip the intermediate stages.
We are impatient of being on the way to something unknown, something new.
And yet it is the law of all progress
that it is made by passing through some stages of instability—
and that it may take a very long time.
And so I think it is with you;
your ideas mature gradually—let them grow,
let them shape themselves, without undue haste.
Don't try to force them on,
as though you could be today what time
(that is to say, grace and circumstances acting on your own good will)
will make of you tomorrow.
Only God could say what this new spirit
gradually forming within you will be.
Give Our Lord the benefit of believing
that his hand is leading you,
and accept the anxiety of feeling yourself
in suspense and incomplete.

By Pierre Teilhard de Chardin



SATURDAY | PRAY

Pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. *Thess. 5:17-18 ESV*

There are many types of prayer. Through prayer, one should experience power and insight, gain courage and receive guidance. During the Lent journey, we will be practicing three types of prayer:

Each day ends with **reflective prayer**. This type of prayer invites you to pay attention to God's presence in your day. Think back on the events of the day. Ask the Spirit to guide you in this. Choose one or two prominent events that were positive or negative. Think on these events in the presence of God and speak to Him about them.

Weekly, you will receive a **repetition prayer** to pray daily throughout the day – as you remember. A repetition prayer is a short prayer, prayed continually to anchor you in Him and to still your thoughts.

On Saturdays, you are invited to pray a **revisional prayer**. This prayer is self-explanatory, in that you are invited to “re” “vision” what you've experienced throughout the week. Do an overview of your week and pause at the times where you experienced movements from God. It could be that something left you with hope, or something that stuck with you through the week, or even something that left you with a feeling of resistance. Read the Scripture of the week again. Read through your notes. Go back to the experience of the week that stays with you or stands out to you. Reread that day's devotional and exercise. Speak to God about your experience.

Exercise:

Practice these three types of prayer throughout the day. Start the morning with a reflective prayer on your week of preparation. Throughout the day, you can practice the repetition prayer to help turn your thoughts to God. Do the reflective prayer at the end of the day and pay attention to where you might have experienced God's presence.

Repetition Prayer:

Lord, give me the grace to choose Your life.



The Road Less Travelled

HUMILITY

WEEK 1

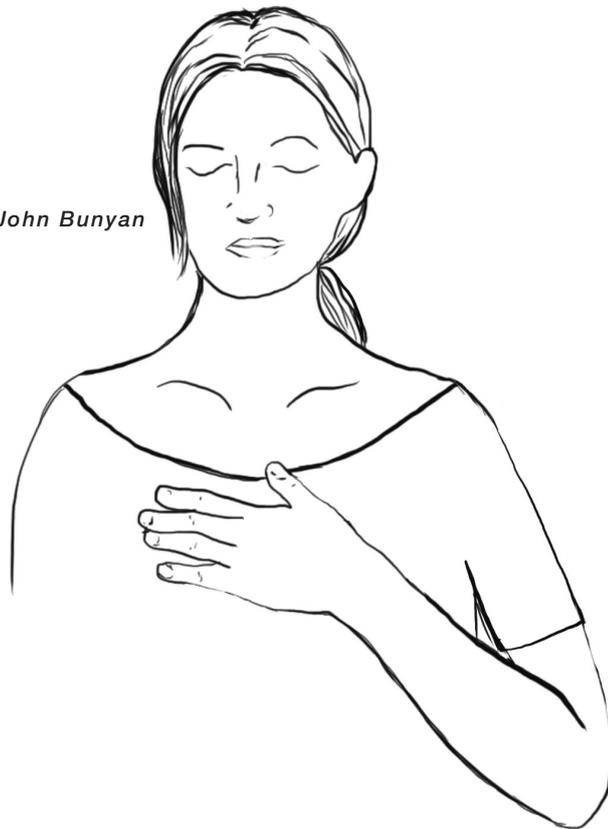


HE that is down needs fear no fall,
He that is low, no pride;
He that is humble ever shall
Have God to be his guide.

I am content with what I have,
Little be it or much:
And, Lord, contentment still I crave,
Because Thou savest such.

Fullness to such a burden is
That go on pilgrimage:
Here little, and hereafter bliss,
Is best from age to age.

The Shepherd Boy Sings In The Valley Of Humiliation by John Bunyan





SUNDAY | HUMILITY

“To some who were confident of their own righteousness and looked down on everyone else, Jesus told this parable: “Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee stood by himself and prayed: ‘God, I thank you that I am not like other people—robbers, evildoers, adulterers—or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week and give a tenth of all I get.’

“But the tax collector stood at a distance. He would not even look up to heaven, but beat his breast and said, ‘God, have mercy on me, a sinner.’

“I tell you that this man, rather than the other, went home justified before God. For all those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted.”

Luke 18:9-14 NIV

In this parable, Jesus poses a problem. He shows two different roads to solve this problem and leaves everyone with a choice.

The problem is to be justified. This means to be approved of, accepted, to be taken into account. In today’s language, we refer to being “okay”, to have a good image of oneself, to live with respect, or to receive recognition. It is something we all want.

The first road is that of the Pharisee. He has a from-the-outside-to-the-inside approach. He tries to be justified by doing good. His motive is to be approved of by God and others. He compares everyone to himself and his prayers do not center around God, only himself. This is the road of pride.

The other road is that of the sinner. It is a from-the-inside-to-the-outside approach. There is nothing he can do to be justified. He asks for it and does not attempt to create it himself. His prayer is “have mercy on me” – it does not center around him, but God. He is convinced that only Jesus can justify him. This is the path of humility.

During this week, we will explore these two roads as well as ways of being and living:

God blesses those who are humble, for they will inherit the whole earth. Mattheus 5:5 (NLT)

Practice of Faith for the Week:

Write a hymn of praise (like Maria’s hymn in Luke 1) to Jesus.



MONDAY | TWO ROADS

God blesses those who are humble, for they will inherit the whole earth. Mattheus 5:5 (NLT)

This week, we are on a journey with the parable of Jesus that gives us a choice of one of two roads that lead to real life (Luke 18). The theme of two roads is often used in Jesus' teachings. He speaks of the two roads in many different ways. He calls them the broad and narrow roads. He speaks of the path of the flesh and the path of the Spirit. It is the path of Babylon or the path of Jerusalem. It is the path of forsaking self or finding self. It is the path of pride or the path of humility.

The path of pride is a way of life that is centered on oneself. In this parable, Jesus says that there are those that depend on themselves and condemn others. This is the fundamental attitude towards life in which I depend only upon my own insight and might. I compare myself to others and find that I am better than they are.

Humility is the opposite road. It is a life centered on God and others. It is a life in which I do not depend on myself, but on God: that He knows better, that His will is better than my own and that I cannot make it in this life without His power. I do not compare myself to others, as there will always be someone better or worse than me.

We are all on the journey of life and we are all on one of these two roads. Jesus tells this story to make everyone aware of the road that they have chosen. Perhaps you do not remember choosing a road. You now simply find yourself on one of these roads.

Exercise:

You are invited to ask the Lord to make it clear to you which road you are on. You might find yourself on both these roads. Sometimes quite full of yourself and other times, with a very low self-image. Tell Him exactly what you think and how you feel about this.

Repetition Prayer:

Oh God, have mercy on me, a sinner!



TUESDAY | A ROAD THAT LOOKS RIGHT

God blesses those who are humble, for they will inherit the whole earth. Matthew 5:5 (NLT)

At first glance, the Pharisee looks like a good and humble person, doing the right thing (Luke 18). He prays, kneels before God and is grateful. Is it really wrong to be grateful because I do not steal? That I do no harm to others? That I do not use violence to get my way? Is it not better? He attributes all these things to God.

This brings us to a very subtle and complex aspect of humility, one we also find in Jesus' teaching. As an example, He says that we are not to take up the front seats as we will be moved to the back. We will be humiliated if more important people are to attend the gathering. Instead, take the back seat so that you may be called to the front – in this way you will become more.

But this is not what happens to this man. His prayer is still only centered on himself. We can show remorse, but the remorse is really only a form of self-pity, for it is only centered on ourselves. "Poor me, look at what's happening to me."

Deep remorse is concerned with our actions and the state of our hearts: defective and dependent. We are invited to go to a place where we cannot deny reality. Jesus says that He Himself is meek and humble (Matt 11:28). It does not make Him prideful. It is not a denial of reality or goodness, but a recognition of dependence.

It is said that Golda Meir, a previous Premier of Israel, walked around with two cards in her pocket. One said: you are dust, you are of the earth, you are actually nothing. The other card said: to you belongs the earth and the world. We often need to go to one of these polar opposites: A recognition of the truth, but also a total dependence on God.

Exercise:

Think about the polar opposites of humility and pride in your life. From what place are you currently functioning? Speak to God about it.

Repetition Prayer:

Oh God, have mercy on me, a sinner!



WEDNESDAY | THE ROAD TO ... DEATH

God blesses those who are humble, for they will inherit the whole earth. Matthew 5:5 (NLT)

Solomon says that there is a road that looks right, but leads to death. We would only choose such a road if we thought it led to life. No one would choose the wrong road if they realised that it only led to pain and their lives falling apart.

Paul describes the path of pride as the path of the flesh: "It is obvious what kind of life develops out of trying to get your own way all the time. Repetitive, loveless, cheap sex; a stinking accumulation of mental and emotional garbage; frenzied and joyless grabs for happiness; trinket gods; magic-show religion; paranoid loneliness; cutthroat competition; all-consuming-yet-never-satisfied wants; a brutal temper; an impotence to love or be loved; divided homes and divided lives; small-minded and lopsided pursuits; the vicious habit of depersonalizing everyone into a rival; uncontrolled and uncontrollable addictions; ugly parodies of community. I could go on." (Gal 5:19-21 MSG)

Reread this piece of scripture slowly a couple of times. Note if you see something of yourself in it. It can be very difficult to admit, but it could be the first step towards humility in your life. 'I need the Lord. I can't do it on my own. I don't know better. I can only do it with His help.'

A professor once said that "all-about-me-ness" (pride), is like a black spider, on a dark night, sitting on a dark grey rock. You can't see the spider. You can only see it if you shine the light of God upon it. The purpose of this is not to induce guilt or a fear of punishment. Instead, the purpose is to realise which road you are on. You can make a choice. There is another way to live.

Exercise:

Share your realisation with Him and spend the day with this repetition prayer: "Jesus Christ, have mercy on me."

Repetition Prayer

Oh God, have mercy on me, a sinner!

**THURSDAY | A MAP FOR THE ROAD****God blesses those are humble, for they will inherit the whole earth. Matthew 5:5 (NLT)**

In this week, Jesus uses this parable to teach us what life is truly about. He tells us what life really is and how it should be lived. He lived this life himself and He is the Way. He said: "I am gentle and humble in heart" (Mr 11:29).

If we cannot admit that He (The Way) is wonderful, we won't want to choose this path. We are invited to take a long and deep look at Jesus, to realise who He truly is and how He lived, to be convinced and become attracted to this way of life. So, what stands out and attracts you to the life of Jesus?

Here are three aspects of Jesus that we can ponder upon. In the first place: He finds His value in the fact that he is the beloved son of the Father. He hears a voice from heaven saying to Him that He is the beloved son of the Father (Mt 3:11). He accepts it. He believes it. He does not attempt to get His value from what others say of Him. This is why He is free from what others think of Him. When He encounters opposition and others insult Him, He does not become depressed. He does not consider abandoning His mission. When people praise Him and calls Him the Messiah, he does not become prideful and feels the world belongs to Him, or believes that He can do anything. No, He is unbothered by praise or curse.

Secondly, he was a friend to tax collectors and sinners. He wasn't bothered with associating with important or good people. He associated with anyone who came across His path. Yet, He was especially attracted to building relationships with the homeless, the sick and those who were discriminated against. He didn't think or mind that His association or connection to these people would tarnish His reputation. He truly added Himself to the humble.

Thirdly, He was willing to perform the duties of a slave. He washes feet. By this, He says that a man adds value by what he does. And so, He is free to do anything.

Exercise:

You are invited to think about who Jesus was and to note His humility. Ponder upon it for a moment. Share your admiration with Him. You can now write a hymn of praise.

Repetition Prayer:

Oh God, have mercy on me, a sinner!



FRIDAY | WANDERING ON THE ROAD

God blesses those who are humble, for they will inherit the whole earth. **Matteus 5:5 (NLT)**

Jesus not only says that we should be humble, but that we should humble ourselves. This means that there are ways to practice and promote humility in our lives. In this week's parable, there are three methods exemplified by the tax collector.

In the first place, he admits his sinfulness and dependence on God. He admits that he has chosen the wrong path and that he has depended on himself. This confession leads to the receiving of grace. The humble will receive grace, but the prideful will be resisted by God (1 Pet 5:5). Through His grace, I receive forgiveness. This enables me to forgive others. We often try to be good without first receiving the goodness and power of God.

Secondly, he did not compare himself to others. When we compare ourselves to others, we either become prideful or depressed, as there will always be those who are better than us (which makes us depressed) or worse than us (which makes us feel good). By not comparing ourselves, we become free of this cycle and this helps us not to try and earn our worth, but simply receive it as a gift from God.

Thirdly, he bows his head, pounds on his chest and keeps his eyes downcast. He does not look down on others pridefully. He does not condemn anyone. He sees himself as one with everyone.

We have so much in common. We all have pain. We have all tried and failed. We all have something good in us – the image of God – and that is something to be celebrated. I can also see the uniqueness in others. Different to me, better in some aspects, and I thank the Lord for it.

Exercise:

Are there other ways in which you can be more humble today? Choose a way and at the end of the day, do a reflective prayer about it.

Repetition Prayer:

Oh God, have mercy on me, a sinner!



SATURDAY | REVISIONAL PRAYER

Saturday Morning:

1. Ask the Lord to remind you of the week's experiences. Trust in what you experience.
2. Reread the weekly text. Look at your notes.
3. Go back to the experience of the week that stays with you or stands out to you. Reread that devotional and exercise. Speak to God about what you experience.

Saturday Evening:

1. Where did I experience God's presence?
2. How am I invited to be more humble?



The Road Less Travelled

P E A C E

WEEK 2



Get out, damn it
Close the door, don't slam it
Let me be alone a while
To give my nerves a rest
Whatever you do I love you
No matter what you do I love you
And I want to run out after you
But I don't know what's best

You will take good care of me
I'll be your caretaker
You'll be the maker of the peace
I'll be the peacemaker
You will take good care of me
And I'll be your caretaker
You'll be the maker of the peace
I'll be the peacemaker

Hours later
I hear the key in the front door
We look each other in the eye
A timid, sorry pair
There's a little more conversation
Just little more conversation
A battle's lost, a war is won
I think we've cleared the air

You will take good care of me
I'll be your caretaker
You'll be the maker of the peace
I'll be the peacemaker
You will take good care of me
And I'll be your caretaker
You'll be the maker of the peace
I'll be the peacemaker

Lyrics of Peacemaker by Albert Hammond





SUNDAY | PEACE

“All this I have spoken while still with you. But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you. Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid. “You heard me say, ‘I am going away and I am coming back to you.’ If you loved me, you would be glad that I am going to the Father, for the Father is greater than I.” Joh 14:25-28 NIV

What is peace? If you Google it, you will find: “Free of disturbance, tranquility.” This means that your outward circumstances are favorable: nothing is disrupting you, nothing is bothering you, nothing is upsetting you. Your world is all together. It would also suggest the presence of emotions like harmony, calm and peacefulness.

If this is your definition of peace, then Jesus did not have peace. His outward circumstances and His emotions were often tumultuous.

- Politically: The land is taken over by the Romans. The disciples were expecting Him to get rid of the Romans and restore political peace.

- Economically: He did not have His own home. We read that He often did not have a place to sleep.

- Occupation: The Rabbi's of the time rejected Him. In fact, at the end of His life, they had all turned against Him. The Pharisees and Sadducees saw Him as a rebel, someone who did not fit into the system.

- Family: His father passed away when He started with His mission. His brothers do not believe in Him. His mother stood with Him. We read that Jacob and Judas only started believing in Him after His resurrection.

- Friends/ Disciples: It was not always easy-going. There are huge problems with His treasurer, Judas, and he is finally responsible for Jesus' betrayal. In the end, all of His disciples abandon Him.

- Internally: Jesus is known as the Man of Sorrows. He experienced much pain. At a stage, He becomes angry. He cries. We read that at the end of His life, in the garden of Getsemane, He is deeply upset and asks His disciples, “Please pray with Me.”

Jesus is clearly referring to a different kind of peace in Scripture. In Luke 12:51 He says that He did not come to bring the peace of this world. Not the kind of peace that we are looking for. Not the kind of peace where there is complete harmony and favorable circumstances.



The peace that Jesus brings, is a peace that will reign within you in spite of circumstance and in spite of your emotions:

- “Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.” Joh 14:27 NIV
- “I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.” Joh 16:33 NIV

You are invited to grow in the beatitude:

Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God. Matt 5:9 NIV

Practice of Faith for the Week:

Read the paper daily/ listen to the news. Ask God how you can join Him in being a peacemaker within our world and circumstances.



MONDAY | PEACE AS A PRIMARY NEED

Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God. Matt 5:9 NIV

Upon Jesus' birth, Zechariah, John the Baptist's father, announced that He would come to bring the forgiveness of sins that would indicate and give us the road to peace (Luk 1:78-79). He directly links the forgiveness of sins to peace, and through this he indicates that this peace is a peace between us and God. This is the primary peace. Peace between you and God is the great, absolute, complete and unconditional gift that God brings and gives to you.

The problem is that we do not always realise that this is the primary need of our hearts. Many of us believe that our primary need is knowledge, or energy, or inspiration, or opportunity. But our primary need is peace with God because we are alienated from God through our brokenness. Jesus comes and becomes a bridge. He establishes peace between you and God.

Because we are not always aware that this is our primary need, we practice becoming aware of God's peace and receiving it.

Exercise:

Reflect on the desires of your heart. Talk to God about them.

Repetition Prayer:

God, I ask for the grace to experience your peace that surpasses all understanding.



TUESDAY | PEACE AS WELLBEING

Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God. Matt 5:9 NIV

Jesus is a peacemaker. His peace does not only mean the absence of war. It is not merely the presence of harmony and peacefulness. In the words of Henri Nouwen: “His peace is the fullness of wellbeing.” Jesus says: “My own peace I give to you, a peace the world cannot give, it is my gift to you.” (John 14:27 paraphrase).

The Hebrew word for peace is Shalom, which means wellbeing of spirit, heart and body. It is applicable individually as well as in community. It can exist in the midst of a war-torn world, even amidst unsolved problems and a rise in human conflict. Jesus brought this peace by giving His life to us. Are we willing to give our lives in the service of peace?

Exercise:

Today you are invited to give your life in the service of peace by helping someone in need: a child, a sick person, an old or weakened person. There are many forms of help: to bring a smile to a stranger’s face; to react with loving friendliness to someone who acts in a hurtful way towards you or someone else; to send an anonymous gift; or to offer your assistance without requiring thanks or recognition.

Repetition Prayer:

God, I ask for the grace to experience your peace that surpasses all understanding.



WEDNESDAY | PEACE AS UNANIMITY

Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God. Matt 5:9 NIV

We are fragile beings. Our search for safety and security often causes us to enter the world with dualistic thinking. Our first instinct is to divide the world into those who are like us, like what we like and believe what we believe. We want security and try to find it by associating with certain groups. My family. My country. My race. My religion. My culture.

Jesus reached out to people who did not typically belong in His circles. He approached those that were treated as outsiders. He causes controversy by associating with tax collectors and “sinners”. He welcomed children. He touched those that were considered “unclean”. He treated women with respect and equality in a culture where women were considered inferior. And when His disciples argued about who was the best, he said: “You must... live in peace with each other.” (Mark 9:50 NIV)

What if we could find a way to live past these divisions? Imagine a world where, instead of choosing sides, we attempt to find mutual ground? How might greater peace look in your close relationships? Is it something you desire?

Exercise:

The first step towards a life as peacemaker, is to start with your close relationships. How do I know if I need to make peace? A well-known sign, is when a certain person enters a room, or you hear their name spoken, and you cringe. Some people feel this in their bellies, heads or chests. Our bodies warn us about tension in relationships. If you ignore these signals, it can lead to further conflict. When you experience tension in a relationship, ask yourself: “Did I do something to cause offence? Did this person act in a way that was hurtful to me?” Speak to God about it.

Repetition Prayer:

God, I ask for the grace to experience your peace that surpasses all understanding.



HURSDAY | PEACE AS A MINDSET

Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God. Matt 5:9 NIV

Jesus gives us His peace. He shows us the life of a peacemaker. Living a life of peace is not determined by this world's events or circumstances. Paul also writes of this peace that surpasses circumstance, thoughts and emotions in Philippians 4:6-7:

Don't worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need, and thank him for all he has done. Then you will experience God's peace, which exceeds anything we can understand. His peace will guard your hearts and minds as you live in Christ Jesus. Phil 4:6-7 NLT

The Greek word for "worry" means to be torn apart, to be in pieces, to be fragmented. It is a way in which we often begin to operate. Paul writes and says, you are invited to another way of life. There is another structure, an inner functioning, that we can enter, in spite of what is happening around us, and in spite of what is happening in the world, and in spite of what your life might look like, you can live with God.

He says that this way of life is characterised by peace. This is what will come to you if you can develop a consciousness of God with you, and can live your life with that consciousness. God will give you peace. Eugene Petersen translates peace as a sense of wholeness, of everything coming together for good. You can enter your life with an attitude that everything in my life will eventually come together.

It is a deep belief that my life is in the hands of a good God, and that whatever crosses my path, He will work together into my life; and that things will work out fine, no matter what my life might look like now.

Exercise:

Every time you see something broken, bent, fragmented or torn today, pray the repetition prayer and trust that God works everything together for the good in your life.

Repetition Prayer:

God, I ask for the grace to experience your peace that surpasses all understanding.



FRIDAY | LEARN TO BE A PEACEMAKER

Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God. Matt 5:9 NIV

As God's children, we are called to be peacemakers. When I hear the word "peace", I usually think of wars that need to end. It is certainly a part of the picture. War is terrible and should be avoided at all costs. The early Christians felt so strongly about this, that most of them were pacifists.

But peace means more than the absence of war or strife. It encompasses what happens in our community, congregation, friendship circles, work situation and even our family. Because, where people are together, they rub against each other. They misunderstand each other – and before long, there is tension, hostility and division.

And so, I begin to learn with Him, to be a peacemaker. In my house, my relationships, my work. I learn how Jesus does it – it can take a year or two. It is a lifelong journey of discipleship. This is what it means to be a follower of Jesus: practical obedience to Jesus in my everyday life.

Exercise:

Reflect on the relationships in your life. Where do you feel invited to be a peacemaker now?

Repetition Prayer:

God, I ask for the grace to experience your peace that surpasses all understanding.



SATURDAY | REVISIONAL PRAYER

Saturday Morning:

1. Ask the Lord to remind you of the week's experiences. Trust in what you experience.
2. Reread the weekly text. Look at your notes.
3. Go back to the experience of the week that stays with you or stands out to you. Reread that devotional and exercise. Speak to God about what you experience.

Saturday Evening:

1. Where did I experience God's presence?
2. How am I invited to be a peacemaker?



The Road Less Travelled

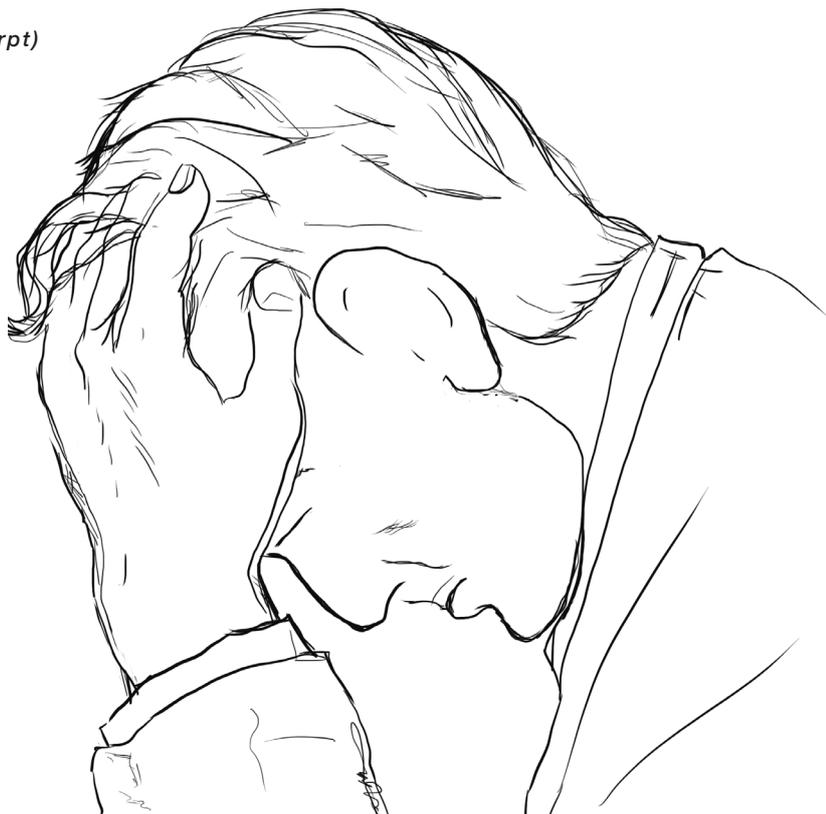
M O U R N

WEEK 3



To live in this world
you must be able
to do three things:
to love what is mortal;
to hold it
against your bones knowing
your own life depends on it;
and, when the time comes to let it go,
to let it go.

In Blackwater Woods By Mari Oliver (Excerpt)



Poem



SUNDAY | MOURN

Now Mary stood outside the tomb crying. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb and saw two angels in white, seated where Jesus' body had been, one at the head and the other at the foot. They asked her, "Woman, why are you crying?" "They have taken my Lord away," she said, "and I don't know where they have put him." At this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not realize that it was Jesus. He asked her, "Woman, why are you crying? Who is it you are looking for?" Thinking he was the gardener, she said, "Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have put him, and I will get him." Jesus said to her, "Mary." She turned toward him and cried out in Aramaic, "Rabboni!" (which means "Teacher"). Jesus said, "Do not hold on to me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father. Go instead to my brothers and tell them, 'I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.'" Mary Magdalene went to the disciples with the news: "I have seen the Lord!" And she told them that he had said these things to her. John 20:11-18 NIV

In this story, we are invited, like Mary, to go into our pain and work through it. We do this by:

- *Accepting our losses*

In this world, loss is unavoidable and causes pain. The whole world, however, is determined to avoid pain. In this story of Mary, Jesus invites us to go into our pain, not to flee from it, ignore it, avoid it or deny it. We are invited to accept our loss and feel the pain.

- *Explore the story behind our pain*

Jesus invites us to reflect on what happens to us, put it into words and share it with Him. He asks Mary why she is crying. It is not a judgmental question, blaming her for crying. He cares and feels for her. But He is inviting her to realise what is going on inside of her. He is simply no longer present in the way He was before. She has not lost Him, He is still there. With her, just in another way. By grieving, she can come to this realisation and enter this new way of living with Him.



- *To grieve*

It is a process that she needs to go through in order to let go of her pain. Jesus gives her 40 days to adjust and to say goodbye to the old life they shared together. He told her in advance that it would be a better life. She slowly began to understand and started moving into this new way of life. It is a process. But in the pain, there is comfort. It gets better. The frequency and intensity of the periods of pain become less. It is as if our souls require time to process the shock and grief, so that we can step into the new life that He has for us.

Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted. Matt 5:4 NIV

Practice of Faith for the Week:

Take the time to write a Psalm during this week.



MONDAY | WHY MOURN?

Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted. Matt 5:4 NIV

A while ago, I spoke to someone who said that she was in a fight for survival and didn't have time to sit and cry. She has to go on with life. Her therapist recommended that she come to a stop, give herself time to mourn and warned her that her soul and body would turn on her and her decision if she didn't.

Things happen to us that invite us to come to a standstill, to reflect, take it in and feel it. If we keep on running and arrange our lives so that we keep avoiding it by looking forward and staying busy with positive things, our souls will suffer. In post-traumatic stress responses, our painful experiences play on an endless loop of unprocessed feelings, images and physical sensations inside of us.

The other problem is that if we cannot feel bad, we will eventually not be able to feel good either. The part in our brains responsible for good feelings, is the same part responsible for bad ones. When we shut it off, we become "flatliners". The pain is not processed unless we are willing to feel it. Time does not heal all wounds. Even though it takes time to heal, it is not the passage of time that does the work. Mourning and crying does the work. Some of us are unaware that we are walking around with unprocessed pain in our lives. Our lives become grey and we think it has something to do with what we are doing, with whom we are doing it, or where we are doing it. We want to live somewhere else, share our lives with different people and do different things, because we believe it will add to our lives. The birth of a new life goes hand in hand with pain, as with the birth of a baby.

Exercise:

You are invited to revisit the great losses in your life. What am I still carrying with me that I've not yet dealt with? What requires my attention? What should I give time to?

Repetition Prayer:

Lord, I ask for the grace of tears, to mourn my losses.



TUESDAY | TOO AFRAID TO FEEL

Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted. Matt 5:4 NIV

As a preacher, I've had to give unpleasant news to people on many occasions. I often experience a hesitance within myself. I was afraid that the bad news could cause great damage to them. Isn't it true that we often fear that bad news and the pain that it causes might cause great damage? I've had to do with so many big, strong men who are too afraid to get in touch with their feelings. They can handle physical pain, but are afraid of emotional pain. Some of them are too afraid to love, because the risk of giving myself in a relationship and then to be disappointed and experience pain, is too great.

It often happens in a relationship that people are not willing to fully commit, but keep themselves slightly outside of the relationship. It is like they are moving into a new house, but only want to unpack their suitcase and not really live there. It is as if many want to walk into a relationship, expecting only pleasure. And the moment there is pain, conflict or uncertainty, they feel that the relationship is not working out and is no longer worth it.

We can be certain that we do not go through these losses and pain alone. He is there with us, He comforts and strengthens us. He takes us through it towards a better life.

Exercise:

Today you are invited to pause at the inner movements you experience when you fully experience your pain and even your happiness. Ask Him to make these movements clear to you and to help you with them.

Repetition Prayer:

Lord, I ask for the grace of tears, to mourn my losses.



WEDNESDAY | SO MUCH TO MOURN

Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted. Matt 5:4 NIV

We suffer so many losses in this life. We lose people in death. There are relationships that come to an end as friendships fall apart. There are marriages in which we feel that we are growing apart. There are children who become alienated from their parents as they start to walk their own path or simply become too busy. There is a love we so desperately want that we simply can't get, that we become obsessive about. Then there are the unrealised dreams or the dreams that don't turn out as we had hoped. There are job opportunities we lose out on.

Every honeymoon we go on – whether a marriage, job opportunity, a new place to stay or whatever – comes to an end. There are also the aspects surrounding ourselves that we should mourn. Our own inability to do something that we should have known how to do. Our negligence in doing what we should have done. Our unfaithfulness. The pain we caused with our words, the things we did to those closest to us. Our sins.

The biggest work we are to do is to mourn. It is not the only thing we need to do, but it cannot be passed over. We need to find our own path. It is not a simple task, there is no real formula and each of us need to find our own way to do it.

Exercise:

Is there anything mentioned above that you are wondering about, perhaps realising that you are ignoring it or deem it unimportant? Take some time to reflect on this and speak to Him about it.

Repetition Prayer:

Lord, I ask for the grace of tears, to mourn my losses.



THURSDAY | MOURN WITH THOSE WHO MOURN

Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted. Matt 5:4 NIV

“Cry with those who cry.” - Riz

A long time ago now, I decided to go on retreat with a group of friends. We started this time together by reflecting on what was good in our lives. We shared what fills us with a lust for life. We also looked at the pain in our lives. We decided to make or find a symbol for our pain. A picture, a poem, a piece of art or an image. We brought these symbols together and shared it with each other. It wasn't long until the tears started flowing. We became fragile and vulnerable. It wasn't easy, but it really brought us closer together.

What we found was that it really helped us process and work through our pain. For many of us, it was the first time ever we'd shared our pain in this way. To simply listen to each other in a safe space, where we're not instructed what to do or say, or told that it isn't as bad as we think, was so valuable. Some of us discovered that it wasn't easy to simply sit and listen and be there in each other's pain. This experience helped us realise that we really need each other, and that it really helps to work through our pain with others.

Exercise:

Think on your pain. With whom can you share your pain? For whom can you be there, to listen and hold onto in their pain?

Repetition Prayer:

Lord, I ask for the grace of tears, to mourn my losses.



FRIDAY | MOURN WITH HOPE

Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted. Matt 5:4 NIV

Paul says that we should mourn with hope. There are ways of mourning that aren't very helpful, and doesn't necessarily promote healing. When mourning takes on the form of exhibitionism, self-pity, and excess of self, it usually isn't fruitful. One of these unhelpful methods of mourning, is mourning without hope.

When you've experienced a loss and your life is tossed into disorientation, it is very important to hold on deeply to hope. It is important to realise that it is not the end. It does not mean that you'll never have a good life again. It is actually a way for God to take you to something new.

In the book of Revelation, John writes that the bad times in which we find ourselves is not the end, and he shows us what will happen in the end. In other words, he says: 'Let me tell you what happens in the last chapter of history. We are not living in the final chapter now. It may be dark, but know, everything will eventually turn out well.'

In the words of Juliana of Norwich: "All shall be well, all manner of things shall be well, all shall be well."

We meet our losses with the knowledge that there is a God. He is good. He is with us and gives us strength. I go in knowing that after death, there is resurrection. Just as He was delivered and lost His freedom, health, reputation, and life, it did not mean His end. It is also the pattern in which He works with us. We can also know that our new life will be better than our old one. It does not always appear that way, but with time, we will see it.

Exercise:

Share the discouragement in your loss with Him and ask Him for the trust necessary in the way He is working in you.

Repetition Prayer:

Lord, I ask for the grace of tears, to mourn my losses.



SATURDAY | REVISIONAL PRAYER

Saturday Morning:

1. Ask the Lord to remind you of the week's experiences. Trust in what you experience.
2. Reread the weekly text. Look at your notes.
3. Go back to the experience of the week that stays with you or stands out to you. Reread that devotional and exercise. Speak to God about what you experience.

Saturday Evening:

1. Where did I experience God's presence?
2. How am I invited to mourn?



The Road Less Travelled

M E R C Y

WEEK 4



The quality of mercy is not strain'd;
It droppeth as the gentle rain from Heaven
Upon the place beneath: it is twice bless'd;
It blesseth him that gives, and him that takes:
'Tis mightiest in the mightiest; it becomes
The throned monarch better than his crown:
His scepter shows the force of temporal power,
The attribute to awe and majesty,
Wherein doth sit the dread and fear of kings;
But mercy is above his scepter'd sway;
It is enthroned in the hearts of kings,
It is an attribute to God himself;
And earthly power doth then show likest God's
When mercy seasons justice.

Mercy by William Shakespeare



SUNDAY | MERCY

Jesus entered Jericho and was passing through. A man was there by the name of Zacchaeus; he was a chief tax collector and was wealthy. He wanted to see who Jesus was, but because he was short he could not see over the crowd. So he ran ahead and climbed a sycamore-fig tree to see him, since Jesus was coming that way. When Jesus reached the spot, he looked up and said to him, “Zacchaeus, come down immediately. I must stay at your house today.” So he came down at once and welcomed him gladly. All the people saw this and began to mutter, “He has gone to be the guest of a sinner.” But Zacchaeus stood up and said to the Lord, “Look, Lord! Here and now I give half of my possessions to the poor, and if I have cheated anybody out of anything, I will pay back four times the amount.” Jesus said to him, “Today salvation has come to this house, because this man, too, is a son of Abraham. For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost.” Luk 19:1-10

We all need mercy in our lives, and when give it to others, we come into contact with how much we need it ourselves. That is why it is easier to look away – to ignore it – not because I don’t want to help, but because I fear that I cannot even help myself. The good news is that mercy is already given to me in my brokenness – I can receive it.

Jesus’ life shows us the path to a life of mercy. Think of Zacchaeus the tax collector in Luke 19. In those days, tax collectors were not considered favourites in the community. Children spat on them as they passed. They were characterised as people who consorted and lived with sinners. Jesus comes to town, sees Zacchaeus and says: “I must stay at your house today.” Can you imagine what Zacchaeus must have felt? In that moment, he received Jesus’ mercy and transformation takes place in his life. He pays back those he has done in. He shares his possessions and makes peace with his enemies – because God’s mercy has touched and transformed him.

This week, you are invited to open yourself to receive mercy, to share it and become aware of how to get it.

“Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy.” Matt 5:7 NIV

Practice of Faith for the Week:

During the course of the week, write down the names of those for whom you can/ will/ and do care. Name them in prayer to God at the end of the week.



MONDAY | MERCY AS A GIFT

Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy. Matt 5:7 NIV

Augustinus writes: “The entire life of a believer is a holy longing. What you desire, you cannot yet see. But the desire gives you the ability to be fulfilled when you see it...”

When we recognise our need and desire, we take the first step towards wisdom and a deeper relationship with God. We all have a deep inner longing to experience that we are cared for by others. Even so, we experience the privilege and joy of showing mercy to others.

Sometimes when we don't experience the receiving of mercy, we feel empty, and start to question our meaning. Then it is especially difficult to give mercy to others. God gives us mercy freely – the first step is simply to accept it.

Exercise:

Think of the people, things or places in which/ through which you experience mercy. How can you receive mercy through these experiences?

Repetition Prayer:

Lord, give me the grace to be merciful.



TUESDAY | SHOWING MERCY TO OTHERS

Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy. Matt 5:7 NIV

It is better to give than to receive. To give mercy, brings life – to us, and to others.

The river Jordan flows from the North of Israel to the South. It flows into the sea of Galilee, and then out to the Dead sea. At the sea of Galilee, there are many streams flowing out of it, but there are none flowing out of the Dead sea. Where there are streams in Galilee, there is life. At the Dead sea, where there are no streams, there is death.

This is an image of mercy in our lives: The more streams of mercy that flow from us, the more we see and realise that Jesus' life streams through us to others.

Exercise:

Think of a person with whom you have regular contact. How do you care for that person? How can you be merciful to him/ her today?

Repetition Prayer:

Lord, give me the grace to be merciful.



WEDNESDAY | MERCY AND BECOMING AWARE

Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy. Matt 5:7 NIV

The lyrics of the song: Break my heart for what break yours, invites us to get to know God's heart. His heart is merciful. We see this in the life of Jesus: He shared mercy intentionally. In each meeting he was aware of the movements in His heart, but also of that of others, and then reacted mercifully.

In the beatitudes of Jesus we learn that the pathway to a happy life is to care for others (to be merciful). To be merciful asks that I look past my own needs, and in my meetings, become aware intentionally of the needs of others. It asks that I, in relationships, pay attention to the movements in my heart that reflects God's heart, and then react to it.

Exercise:

This evening, think back on your day. Where did you come into contact with someone in need – physically, spiritually or emotionally? What emotional effect did this have on you (on your heart)? Speak to God about it.

Repetition Prayer:

Lord, give me the grace to be merciful.



THURSDAY | MERCY FOR MYSELF

Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy. Matt 5:7 NIV

“Mercy” says that we react with love, compassion and grace to those who are suffering, those who need our love and care. No, we cannot always restore righteousness with one deed, but with many small, loving deeds of compassion, we can better the lives of many. And so, we begin to share the blessing that we have received.

The reality is, you cannot share something that you do not have. There is a saying: “There are six important people, and you are all seven.” This basically means that you need to take care of yourself too.

Think of the image of a dam. Each person has a dam full of care. When a dam’s water flows out, it needs to be refilled. Your dam of caring needs a balance of inflow and outflow. Nothing can flow out if the dam is empty. This is why we need to be still and evaluate our water levels to ensure we have enough to share.

Exercise:

When you come into contact with water today, take a moment to evaluate: What is the capacity of my care-dam?

Repetition Prayer:

Lord, give me the grace to be merciful.



FRIDAY | A JOURNEY TO MERCIFULNESS

Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy. Matt 5:7 NIV

We can go through our entire lives without experiencing God's mercy. God will not force His mercy down our throats – we can miss it. We miss it when we believe in our own goodness. We don't want to face our own sinfulness. We constantly want to confirm our own goodness. We feel that we don't require mercy, and compare ourselves to others who are less good than we are, so that we don't look as bad.

It is God's mercy that heals us, that frees us, that forgives us, and makes us whole again. It is a wonderful experience to experience God's mercy! And this is not a one-time event – it is continual – we continually return to the Father, for his mercy is renewed each morning.

Martin Luther King once said that your life's mission (your calling) should have length, depth and height. Length – something you can get better at during your lifetime. Depth – by touching the lives of others. Height – by satisfying your soul's longing for a better world.

This sort of life indicates a journey of growth with God – also in mercy.

Exercise:

Put a list together of the times in your life where you experienced God's mercy. Thank Him for this.

Repetition Prayer:

Lord, give me the grace to be merciful.



SATURDAY | REVISIONAL PRAYER

Saturday Morning:

1. Ask the Lord to remind you of the week's experiences. Trust in what you experience.
2. Reread the weekly text. Look at your notes.
3. Go back to the experience of the week that stays with you or stands out to you. Reread that devotional and exercise. Speak to God about what you experience.

Saturday Evening:

1. Where did I experience God's presence?
2. How am I invited to be merciful?



The Road Less Travelled

PURITY

WEEK 5



I came to love you too late, Oh Beauty,
so ancient and so new. Yes,
I came to love you too late. What did I know?
You were inside me, and I was
out of my body and mind, looking
for you.

I drove like an ugly madman against
the beautiful things and beings
you made.

You were inside me, but I was not inside you...
You called to me, you cried to me; you broke the bowl
of my deafness; you uncovered your beams, and threw them
at me; you rejected my blindness; you blew a fragrant wind
on me, and

I sucked in my breath and wanted you; I tasted you
and now I want you as I want food and water; you
touched me, and I have been burning ever since to
have your peace.

I came to love you too late by St. Augustine of Hippo





SUNDAY | PURITY

The next day John was there again with two of his disciples. When he saw Jesus passing by, he said, “Look, the Lamb of God!” When the two disciples heard him say this, they followed Jesus. Turning around, Jesus saw them following and asked, “What do you want?” They said, “Rabbi” (which means “Teacher”), “where are you staying?” “Come,” he replied, “and you will see.” So they went and saw where he was staying, and they spent that day with him. It was about four in the afternoon. Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother, was one of the two who heard what John had said and who had followed Jesus. The first thing Andrew did was to find his brother Simon and tell him, “We have found the Messiah” (that is, the Christ). And he brought him to Jesus. Jesus looked at him and said, “You are Simon son of John. You will be called Cephas” (which, when translated, is Peter). The next day Jesus decided to leave for Galilee. Finding Philip, he said to him, “Follow me.” Philip, like Andrew and Peter, was from the town of Bethsaida. Philip found Nathanael and told him, “We have found the one Moses wrote about in the Law, and about whom the prophets also wrote—Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.” “Nazareth! Can anything good come from there?” Nathanael asked. “Come and see,” said Philip. When Jesus saw Nathanael approaching, he said of him, “Here truly is an Israelite in whom there is no deceit.” “How do you know me?” Nathanael asked. Jesus answered, “I saw you while you were still under the fig tree before Philip called you.” John 1: 35-48 NIV

Your heart is the centre, the core, the place where all the functions of our being come together. Functions like our thoughts, emotions, imagination, memory, feeling, body, etc. Jesus says that if your heart is pure, you will see God.

I want to go to an early understanding of the church of how our hearts can be pure. The access point to the purification of our hearts is through our desires. Your heart is pure and clean if your life’s overarching desire is for God. The idea was that we should surrender and work together so that we can reach our deepest desire of Him that is within us, and that this should become our greatest desire in life.

In John 1 we see how Jesus assists people in the process of purifying their hearts. He invites you to listen to your heart, to discover what you truly want, to verbalise it, and to ask for His assistance. Jesus invites you on an inner journey, to work with your desires so that your heart may be purified and you may see God in everything.

“You’re blessed when you get your inside world—your mind and heart—put right. Then you can see God in the outside world.” Matt 5:8 (MSG)

Practice of Faith for the Week:

Write a letter to God about the desires of your heart. Then, write a letter from God to you as a response to your letter.



MONDAY | FIND YOUR HEART

“You’re blessed when you get your inside world—your mind and heart—put right. Then you can see God in the outside world.” Matt 5:8 (MSG)

Jesus invites us to go on an internal journey. He invites us to find our hearts. This means that we need to know what is in our hearts and we need to listen to our hearts. How do we find the core, the centre, the place where everything comes together in our lives?

In this week, you are invited to take a road taken by those in the early church. There are probably many ways to do this, but based on their understanding of Scripture and Christ’s teaching, one’s desires are the key to the door of one’s heart.

I was never taught what to do with my desires. Should I take note of them or should I ignore them? I was warned that desires are dangerous, and that I need to be careful. What is important, is the ‘will of God’ – which is usually the opposite of what I want. If I want to do what I really want, I am selfish. I must go against my desires. So, a great emphasis was placed on willpower. And if I didn’t do this, I felt very bad and it played on my emotions so that I might do what is right.

How do you think a marriage might fare if a couple were to come together, say they love each other, and then one of the parties expects the other to forsake all of their own desires? From now on, only the one party’s desires are valid. Is that a relationship? A love relationship? The problem with this approach is that it causes a split in our inner world. That what God wants, is always against what I want. What I want is bad and unimportant. Is it possible that God loves us? That He is intensely interested in what goes on inside of us and wants us to be happy?

Exercise:

You are invited to come into contact with what you think about your desires, how do you go about your desires? Do you think about them? Do you give in to them or fight them? He comes to us and asks us what we want. Verbalise it and share it with Him.

Repetition Prayer:

Create in me a pure heart, oh God.



TUESDAY | WHAT DO YOU REALLY WANT?

“You’re blessed when you get your inside world—your mind and heart—put right. Then you can see God in the outside world.” Matt 5:8 (MSG)

Christ invites us to go on an inner journey, by listening to our hearts and finding out what we are really searching for. Think about it and say (verbalise) it. When you go on this journey, you will find out immediately that it is not easy to determine what your desires truly are.

In the first place, you have many desires. There are physical, emotional and spiritual desires. And then, these desires are often in opposition to each other. I want to be honest, but I want to be very popular. I don’t want to hurt anyone, but I want to speak the truth. I want to be heathy, but I don’t want to eat right and exercise.

You will also discover that your desires contain even greater desires. That which I think I want is not actually what I want. There are greater desires beyond the desires I have. I want a house, as an example, but what I am actually after, is security or comfort.

The disciples didn’t always know what they really wanted. They asked Jesus to show them where he lived. Later they realised that they didn’t care where He lived, they were actually searching for Him.

Exercise:

Here are a couple of exercises that could assist you in coming into contact with the deep desires within you.

- Your daydreams could give you an indication.
- The people you admire could give you an indication.
- Reflecting on the highs and lows of your day could give you an indication.

Choose an exercise and share your experiences with Him.

Repetition Prayer:

Create in me a pure heart, oh God.



WEDNESDAY | DISORDERED ATTACHMENTS

“You’re blessed when you get your inside world—your mind and heart—put right. Then you can see God in the outside world.” Matt 5:8 (MSG)

When you go on this journey of discovering your desires, you will discover that you have many desires, but that one or a few of them are dominant. Your dominant desires also change from time to time.

According to the early teachings of the church on desires, desires in and of themselves are not bad, but when I attach too much value to a certain desire, it can become destructive in my life. When we become too attached to a need – like to food or sex or pleasure – it can derail our entire lives. The need becomes a desire. We try to get more out of the fulfillment of the need than it can give us.

The solution is not to get rid of the desire, but rather to reorder it and to attain a dominating desire. A greater desire reorders other desires and even overcomes some desires. To have superficial and destructive desires rule our lives, does not lead to fulfillment, but to a life that becomes small and takes us away from God. When our desires are in order, my life becomes bigger and it draws me closer to God.

Exercise:

Take a look at your dominating desires and judge them. Are there perhaps good needs that God has placed within you that have now become dominating and disordered? Share your dominating desires with Him. Confess if some needs have become dominant desires in your life. Ask Him to lead you to the deepest desires of your heart.

Repetition Prayer:

Create in me a pure heart, oh God.



THURSDAY | PURE OF HEART

“You’re blessed when you get your inside world—your mind and heart—put right. Then you can see God in the outside world.” Matt 5:8 (MSG)

“You have made us for yourself, O Lord, and our heart is restless until it rests in You.” - St. Augustine

There are two convictions the early church had concerning desires. The first conviction is that God placed a deep desire for Him within each of us. The other conviction is that these desires are buried and that we often don’t recognise them. When we reach this desire, it can order our other desires.

We have a stake in this – in the finding and recognition of this desire. This is what the purification of our hearts comes down to. Kierkegaard said: “To be pure of heart is to will only one thing.” When I make contact with my deep desire for God and begin to live with the intention to set Him above all else, that intention purifies my heart. It is not something I can do on my own. Only He can do it, but He doesn’t do it without me (Psalms 51:12). We do it with Him (James 4:8).

In this week’s Scripture, Jesus meets His disciples where they are. They don’t know what they really want, but they tell Him what they think they want. He goes into a discussion with them. Eventually, He asks them to follow Him. They react to the invitation. They came into contact with their deepest desire and now recognise it.

It is the only way for us to be happy. Blessed are the pure of heart. Purity equals happiness. It is a great thing to believe in the world we live in. It determines your dreams, it determines what you long for in life, the energy you live with is determined by your dreams and that determines your decisions.

Exercise:

Share with Him where you are on your journey with Him.

Repetition Prayer:

Create in me a pure heart, oh God.



FRIDAY | WE CAN SEE GOD

“You’re blessed when you get your inside world—your mind and heart—put right. Then you can see God in the outside world.” Matt 5:8 (MSG)

At one time, I was standing in front of a wonderful nature scene with a couple of friends. We admired it together. One of my friends said that she would love to bring her easel and paint so that she could paint the scene. Another friend began daydreaming of development possibilities. One wanted to buy the place to sell it again later. Yet another friend was enamoured by the cattle and wanted to start farming there. I stood there as a preacher and thought that this would make a wonderful illustration, and wondered what we really had as we stood there: is it a painting? Is it a development possibility? A property? Or a preaching opportunity? It all depends on how you look at it. And I realized that each one of us was looking at it through the lenses of who we are. One of us was an artist, the other a developer, the other a property agent, the other a farmer and me a preacher.

Paul says that everything is pure to those who are pure (Tit 1:15). We see as we are. We don’t usually see things as they are, and that is why you will see God if you are pure of heart. You begin to find God in everything you see.

Exercise:

Reflection prayer helps to clean our lenses. You are now invited to note the good, beautiful, and noble things in your life and to thank God for them.

Repetition Prayer:

Create in me a pure heart, oh God.



SATURDAY | REVISIONAL PRAYER

Saturday Morning:

1. Ask the Lord to remind you of the week's experiences. Trust in what you experience.
2. Reread the weekly text. Look at your notes.
3. Go back to the experience of the week that stays with you or stands out to you. Reread that devotional and exercise. Speak to God about what you experience.

Saturday Evening:

1. Where did I experience God's presence?
2. How am I invited to be pure of heart?



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