

Monday, February 22, 2010

Written by Jennifer Whipple

Scripture: Luke 6:20-26

I have always loved the Beatitudes, and this scripture passage is the account of Luke's version of these famous words of Jesus. I love them because they offer words of hope for those who are walking in darkness. I appreciate the opportunity to share them with folks who are struggling, and in our current times there are plenty of people who are struggling and in need of a ray of light that comes at the end of the tunnel.

These words of hope are not without challenge at the same time though. Jesus challenges his followers – US – to press on in our faith, even if others discount everything that we say as believers. He challenges us to rejoice when people tell us that faith is a bunch of hogwash because it means that something got to them about what has been said or done rightly in Jesus' name.

The other challenge comes in the last few verses. I love the translation of these verses that can be found in *The Message* because it makes more sense to my modern brain. It says: *It's trouble ahead if you think you have made it. What you have is all you'll ever get. And it's trouble if you're satisfied with yourself. Your SELF will not satisfy you for long. And it's trouble ahead if you think life's all fun and games. There's suffering to be met, and you're going to meet it. There's trouble ahead when you live only for the approval of others, saying what flatters them, doing what indulges them. Your task is to be true. Not popular.*

Being people of faith means recognizing our blessings and not always wanting more. Being people of faith means looking beyond ourselves to the others in this world and sharing our time, talents, and treasures – recognizing that we are a small part of a much bigger picture. Being people of faith means walking with each other in celebration and in struggle. And being people of faith sometimes means doing not what is most popular but what is most right and being willing to take all that comes with it. These are challenges – no doubt – but with God and one another we can walk the journey and meet the light at the end of the tunnel together.

Prayer: God, thank you for all that you taught through your son, Jesus, both the comforting things and the challenging ones. Help me to open my view to others and to the world around me. Help me to see the places where you can best use me and my skills in your service. Amen.

Tuesday, February 23, 2010
Written by Nancy Nurnberger

Scripture: Luke 6: 27-36

Reading these scripture words about “loving your enemies” definitely struck a chord with me. In my lifetime, God has blessed me with an abundance of love, joy and happiness – all of which I’ve tried to share with family and friends. However, the challenge presented to me in reading this scripture was “Do I have the capacity to love and to share these blessings with someone who irritates me or with someone who I resent or feel bitterness towards?” I’m not necessarily proud of these feelings, but like with many of us, they do exist. There is definitely something in this scripture that is worth contemplating for anyone, like myself, who seeks to be a better person and for anyone who wants to try to live their life on a whole new level. Maybe during this Lenten season, we can find it in our hearts to share a kind word, a thoughtful deed or a simple smile with ALL the people in our lives who need our unconditional love and understanding.

In closing, I would like to share a quote from Gandhi which also encourages us to be merciful and kind toward others.

“It is easy enough to be friendly to one’s friends.
But to befriend the one who regards himself as your
enemy is the quintessence of true religion.”

Prayer: Heavenly Father, please open our hearts to be accepting and understanding of all people. Help us to set a better example for others by living a life where “loving your enemies” is as simple as “loving thy neighbor.” In Jesus’ name, Amen.

Wednesday, February 24, 2010

Written by Clare Robert

Scripture: Luke 6: 37-42

As I look around me, it does seem that other people are often at fault, making the little and big mistakes that “I” would never allow myself to make. “I” am always on time, except when I have a good reason not to be. “They” are always running late. “I” am recycling, reusing grocery bags from home, and even composting my kitchen waste, except when “I” don’t find it convenient, or “I” forget. “They” are not doing all “they” can for the environment. “I” am always even tempered, except when “I” am stressed or hungry or tired and then it’s Ok for me to blow up at “them”, but “they” are usually much more angry than “me”. Or does it just seem that way?

Oh Jesus you really have my number here, don’t you? I look away and I don’t want to see that log in my own eye, but it is blinding me to the way things really are. And the way I really am.

I find this scripture so challenging, that I want to erase it and ignore it and say it isn’t true. But it is true, and it calls me back daily to the truth of my own life, my choices and my tricky ways of trying to escape.

Prayer: Help me, I pray today, to look first to myself and quiet my judgments of others, as I try to live in honesty before you, Lord. Amen.

Thursday, February 25, 2010

Written by Gordon Rankin

Scripture: Luke 6:43-49

This past summer we grew our first ever family garden. We grew carrots, cucumbers, cilantro, and squash. Our garden yielded a surprise however. We thought the squash seedlings we planted were for green summer squash. What grew thought was yellow squash. We like yellow squash, but it was a bit of a shock after waiting all summer for summer squash to see something different grow. We are not actually sure where the mix up was. Were the seedlings mislabeled? Did we grab from the wrong shelf? Who knows? But what we are certain of is that though we didn’t know it they had to be yellow squash seedlings all along.

Jesus says faith is much like this. The seeds we plant in our souls yield what is planted. If we plant the seeds of judgment, anger, greed, jealousy, and hedonism in our souls then we ought not be surprised when destructive and damaging things grow. But if we plant the seeds of patience, fortitude, peace, hope and love we can be assured that miracles will bloom. It doesn’t matter what kind of faithfulness we clothe ourselves with on the outside, it is the seeds we plant in our souls which will determine what will grow.

Prayer: O Creative and Creating God, help us to plant the gardens of our souls with the seeds of faithfulness and righteousness. Then may you nurture these seeds so that their harvest is bountiful. Amen.

Friday February 26, 2010

Written by Laurie Phillips

Scripture: Luke 7: 1-10

This passage concerns the centurion who sends elders to Jesus to ask him to heal his servant. But then, as Jesus is going to him, sends friends to say that he would understand if Jesus did not come but he has faith anyway, that Jesus could heal the man. Jesus does heal the servant from afar and marvels at the faith of the centurion.

Here we find a surprise - someone who is not expected to follow Jesus but does. A leader and shaker but someone who knows the value of a good and faithful employee. To save that servant, he humbles himself before the carpenter and expresses his faith that all will be well. He himself has authority but recognizes and respects the greater authority that Jesus bears.

Even great men need help sometimes. And faith to believe that that times will be better, that God can do all things.

Prayer: Lord, sometimes we may feel that we have the burden and problems that come with leadership. We may have a role that makes us responsible for others - as an employer, a parent or a caregiver. It can be difficult and worrisome but if we recognize that Jesus has more authority than we do and can help if we ask him, then it will ease our troubles. Teach us to put our ego aside and to have faith and trust in Jesus. Amen.

Saturday, February 27, 2008

Written by Edie Sletner

Scripture: Luke 7: 11-17

The story of Jesus and his disciples going to the city of Nain, where a great crowd was with him, came upon a widow who was about to bury her only son. A large crowd was gathered with the widow. When Jesus saw her, he felt pity and told her not to cry. The men carrying the casket stopped. Jesus told the man in the coffin to get up. The man did and he spoke. Jesus had given the widow back her son.

The people were filled with fear and praised and they claimed Jesus to be a prophet. The news spread throughout the country and the surrounding land.

Prayer: Dear God, we thank you for the miracle Jesus performed. May we remember that you and Jesus are with us every day to hear out hopes of miracles in our lives come to fruition. Amen.

Sunday, February 28, 2010

Written by Kim Hughes

Scripture: Luke 7:36-50

It's easy to forget how much we need God's grace and love. When life is generally good do we reach out to Jesus? Are we always honest with ourselves about being in need of God's forgiveness? Like Simon, we invite Jesus into our lives but we don't throw ourselves to the floor, we don't kiss Jesus' feet, we don't anoint him with oil.

A woman who was identified as a sinner acts how Jesus wants us to act. She understands what is at stake, she knows the power of God' grace and forgiveness. She knows her shortcomings and therefore is fully open to Jesus' healing power and worships at his feet. Most importantly she knows God's love.

We need to step up our game because we all have shortcomings; we all mess up sometimes and by acknowledging that we can fully open ourselves to God's grace. When we seek and receive forgiveness, we've been shown great love from God and we are more able to give that love back to the world.

Prayer: Jesus, I fail to fall at your feet. I fail to reach out to you and ask for forgiveness because I don't always recognize what I'm doing wrong. Help me to accept your persistent grace and love so I can show that love to others. Amen.