

MONDAY, 11/4

Read Luke 10:25-37.

<sup>25</sup> On one occasion an expert in the law stood up to test Jesus. "Teacher," he asked, "what must I do to inherit eternal life?"

<sup>26</sup> "What is written in the Law?" he replied. "How do you read it?"

<sup>27</sup> He answered, "'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind'; and, 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'"

<sup>28</sup> "You have answered correctly," Jesus replied. "Do this and you will live."

<sup>29</sup> But he wanted to justify himself, so he asked Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?"

<sup>30</sup> In reply Jesus said: "A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, when he was attacked by robbers. They stripped him of his clothes, beat him and went away, leaving him half dead. <sup>31</sup> A priest happened to be going down the same road, and when he saw the man, he passed by on the other side. <sup>32</sup> So too, a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. <sup>33</sup> But a Samaritan, as he traveled, came where the man was; and when he saw him, he took pity on him. <sup>34</sup> He went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he put the man on his own donkey, brought him to an inn and took care of him. <sup>35</sup> The next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper. 'Look after him,' he said, 'and when I return, I will reimburse you for any extra expense you may have.'

<sup>36</sup> "Which of these three do you think was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?"

<sup>37</sup> The expert in the law replied, "The one who had mercy on him." Jesus told him, "Go and do likewise."

It was a popular question amongst the Jews. With over 600 commandments, they often asked which was the most important.

Two commandments are lifted up here: the command to love God with all our being and to love our neighbors as ourselves. Elsewhere in the gospels, Jesus offers up the same answer. Perhaps, the person asking had heard Jesus answer this question before.

It should be no surprise that the most important commands address what our hearts love most. Our entire lives are directed by what our hearts love. When we attach our love to the wrong things, we are bound to go in the wrong direction. Our lives will be misaligned with God's will. Jesus calls us to orient our love around God and those whom God has created. Having the right loves, so to speak, will lead us in a faithful direction.

The parable Jesus tells here in response to the man's question about who his neighbor is reveals the inefficiencies and inconsistencies of our capacity to love. While we can say that we should

love everyone, the human condition under sin prevents us from doing so. That is why Christ must do a recreating of our hearts. The work of grace to change us transforms our biases and frees us to love others as Christ does. We need this work if we are to be true neighbors to all.

Praying Together:

“Holy Spirit, expose the things in me that prevent me from loving others as You do. Transform me so that I reflect You in how I love and live in this world. Amen.”

TUESDAY, 11/5

Read Luke 10:38-42.

<sup>38</sup> As Jesus and his disciples were on their way, he came to a village where a woman named Martha opened her home to him. <sup>39</sup> She had a sister called Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet listening to what he said. <sup>40</sup> But Martha was distracted by all the preparations that had to be made. She came to him and asked, “Lord, don't you care that my sister has left me to do the work by myself? Tell her to help me!”

<sup>41</sup> “Martha, Martha,” the Lord answered, “you are worried and upset about many things, <sup>42</sup> but few things are needed—or indeed only one. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her.”

Well, it's election day. Many of us might very well be “worried and upset about many things” today. Perhaps the Lord will speak life to us through His Word.

While Jesus was visiting the home, Martha was busy being the faithful host. We know there is always a lot to do when guests come over. Things had to be done, and yet her sister Mary wasn't doing any of them. She was sitting at Jesus' feet--just listening, of all things.

Many of us sympathize with Martha in the story. We are more likely to be the frantic, worked up one than like Mary who sits at Jesus' feet. There are times we need to be more like Martha, doing the necessary things. There are also times we need to be Mary, who chose the most important thing.

When we dive into the context of this story, we see that Jesus was on His way to Jerusalem. He was at their home for just a moment in time. Jesus was weeks away from the cross. It's unclear if they would ever have a moment like this one again. Now wasn't the time to be consumed with all the things. It was the time to soak up and soak in Jesus.

I have no doubt your day is filled with things that must be done. I'm sure we will also fill the day with concerns about the outcome of the election. On days like this, while there is much to be done and much worry to be had, maybe what we really need is to sit peacefully in Jesus' presence, soaking up His wisdom and peace. In a day when we feel like so much is on the line--where it's easy for our emotions to get the better of us--perhaps what we truly need is to sit at the feet of the King. We need to bask in His glorious presence and consider the hope He has given us that prevails over temporary worries of our days.

Praying Together:

"Jesus, You are Lord. While our days are filled with many things, we choose to do the most important thing, which is to come before You. We sit at Your feet. May Your glorious peace reign over us today. May Your promises resonate in us this day. Amen."

WEDNESDAY, 11/6

Read Luke 11:1-13,

*One day Jesus was praying in a certain place. When he finished, one of his disciples said to him, "Lord, teach us to pray, just as John taught his disciples."*

<sup>2</sup> *He said to them, "When you pray, say:*

*"Father,*

*hallowed be your name,*

*your kingdom come.*

<sup>3</sup> *Give us each day our daily bread.*

<sup>4</sup> *Forgive us our sins,*

*for we also forgive everyone who sins against us.*

*And lead us not into temptation!"*

<sup>5</sup> *Then Jesus said to them, "Suppose you have a friend, and you go to him at midnight and say, 'Friend, lend me three loaves of bread; <sup>6</sup> a friend of mine on a journey has come to me, and I have no food to offer him.' <sup>7</sup> And suppose the one inside answers, 'Don't bother me. The door is already locked, and my children and I are in bed. I can't get up and give you anything.' <sup>8</sup> I tell you, even though he will not get up and give you the bread because of friendship, yet because of your shameless audacity<sup>[a]</sup> he will surely get up and give you as much as you need.*

<sup>9</sup> *"So I say to you: Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. <sup>10</sup> For everyone who asks receives; the one who seeks finds; and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened.*

<sup>11</sup> *"Which of you fathers, if your son asks for a fish, will give him a snake instead? <sup>12</sup> Or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion? <sup>13</sup> If you then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!"*

Several years ago, we did a Lenten series on the Lord's Prayer. So many people were interested in learning how to pray like Jesus. It's not that they didn't know how to pray at all, but they wanted to pray more like how Jesus prayed.

If I were to sum up the difference between how Jesus prays and how we often pray, I would look to this prayer, specifically verse 2. Jesus prays, "Your Kingdom come." Matthew's gospel captures it like this: "Your Kingdom come, Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven." Jesus

prays for the will and way of God to be accomplished here amongst us as it is in heaven where God reigns.

For many of us, our prayer life reflects our own little kingdoms more than it does God's Kingdom. We spend the bulk of our time praying over our needs and the needs of those we love. I'm not criticizing that as Jesus models it for us in His prayer. What I am suggesting is that we need to be praying just as much for God's Kingdom. We need to be praying that the Kingdom expands as we reach out in Jesus' name. We need to be praying for neighbors and friends who don't yet believe to come to faith in Christ. We need to pray for the ministry of our church as we make disciples.

This, I believe, is how you and I can pray more like Jesus. We can better round out our prayer lives by praying not only for our needs and the needs of those we love, but also the matters of the Kingdom.

Praying Together:

"Lord, teach me how to pray like You so that my heart reflects Yours. I pray that Your will is done in me and in our church and community. We want our church and communities to reflect heaven, where Your will, which is good and pleasing, is done. Amen."

THURSDAY, 11/7

Read Luke 11:14-28.

<sup>14</sup> Jesus was driving out a demon that was mute. When the demon left, the man who had been mute spoke, and the crowd was amazed. <sup>15</sup> But some of them said, "By Beelzebul, the prince of demons, he is driving out demons." <sup>16</sup> Others tested him by asking for a sign from heaven.

<sup>17</sup> Jesus knew their thoughts and said to them: "Any kingdom divided against itself will be ruined, and a house divided against itself will fall. <sup>18</sup> If Satan is divided against himself, how can his kingdom stand? I say this because you claim that I drive out demons by Beelzebul. <sup>19</sup> Now if I drive out demons by Beelzebul, by whom do your followers drive them out? So then, they will be your judges. <sup>20</sup> But if I drive out demons by the finger of God, then the kingdom of God has come upon you.

<sup>21</sup> "When a strong man, fully armed, guards his own house, his possessions are safe. <sup>22</sup> But when someone stronger attacks and overpowers him, he takes away the armor in which the man trusted and divides up his plunder.

<sup>23</sup> "Whoever is not with me is against me, and whoever does not gather with me scatters.

<sup>24</sup> "When an impure spirit comes out of a person, it goes through arid places seeking rest and does not find it. Then it says, 'I will return to the house I left.' <sup>25</sup> When it arrives, it finds the house swept clean and put in order. <sup>26</sup> Then it goes and takes seven other spirits more wicked than itself, and they go in and live there. And the final condition of that person is worse than the first."

<sup>27</sup> As Jesus was saying these things, a woman in the crowd called out, "Blessed is the mother who gave you birth and nursed you."

<sup>28</sup> He replied, "Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and obey it."

In this passage, Jesus encounters a rather spiritually stubborn crowd. Some questioned the source of His power, claiming He used the enemy's power to do the things He did. Others asked for more and more signs to confirm His identity.

Jesus makes a convincing argument regarding the foolishness that He uses the enemy's power to conquer the enemy. Why would someone use their own resources to oppose themselves if they wanted to be victorious? As Jesus' ministry continues in Luke, more and more people will fail to understand who Jesus is.

There is a glimmer of hope in verse 27 with the woman who blesses Mary, Jesus' mother. Jesus uses this as a teaching opportunity for His followers. "Blessed rather are those who hear the Word of God and obey it," He said. What was Jesus trying to do here? He is trying to coax the crowd to listen. Some in the crowd came just to see, not to be changed. They wanted to see signs, not repent of their sins. Jesus was looking for a real response from the people.

When we come before Jesus, may we listen with the desire to obey Him. Let us come to Him ready and eager for His grace to work in us.

Praying Together:

"Jesus, speak, for we are listening. We will obey You because we know You are good and trustworthy. May anything we do for You be a blessing to You. Amen."

FRIDAY, 11/8

Read Luke 11:29-36.

<sup>29</sup> As the crowds increased, Jesus said, "This is a wicked generation. It asks for a sign, but none will be given it except the sign of Jonah. <sup>30</sup> For as Jonah was a sign to the Ninevites, so also will the Son of Man be to this generation. <sup>31</sup> The Queen of the South will rise at the judgment with the people of this generation and condemn them, for she came from the ends of the earth to listen to Solomon's wisdom; and now something greater than Solomon is here. <sup>32</sup> The men of Nineveh will stand up at the judgment with this generation and condemn it, for they repented at the preaching of Jonah; and now something greater than Jonah is here.

<sup>33</sup> "No one lights a lamp and puts it in a place where it will be hidden, or under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, so that those who come in may see the light. <sup>34</sup> Your eye is the lamp of your body. When your eyes are healthy, your whole body also is full of light. But when they are unhealthy, your body also is full of darkness. <sup>35</sup> See to it, then, that the light within you is not darkness. <sup>36</sup> Therefore, if your whole body is full of light, and no part of it dark, it will be just as full of light as when a lamp shines its light on you."

The generation that asks for a sign will be given one, says Jesus. They will receive the "sign of Jonah." What is the sign of Jonah?

The story of Jonah the prophet is a memorable one. He is called by God to go to Nineveh but runs in the other direction. After a storm, he is swallowed by a great fish and remains in its deep, dark belly for three days before he is spit back out into the light of day. Ok, did you see what I did there? Jesus is using the familiar story of Jonah to point to His death and resurrection. Like Jonah, he will be swallowed up in darkness and three days later emerge into the light of life.

While there are times people want God to perform signs, we already have the sign. Jesus' death and resurrection are the sure signs that He is indeed the Messiah who has come to save.

Praying Together:

"Lord, by Your death for us You showed us Your mercy. By Your being raised from death, You revealed Your power. By sharing Your new life with us, You showed us Your grace. Thank You. Amen."

SATURDAY, 11/9

Read Luke 12:13-21.

<sup>13</sup> *Someone in the crowd said to him, "Teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me."*

<sup>14</sup> *Jesus replied, "Man, who appointed me a judge or an arbiter between you?"* <sup>15</sup> *Then he said to them, "Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; life does not consist in an abundance of possessions."*

<sup>16</sup> *And he told them this parable: "The ground of a certain rich man yielded an abundant harvest. <sup>17</sup> He thought to himself, 'What shall I do? I have no place to store my crops.'*

<sup>18</sup> *"Then he said, 'This is what I'll do. I will tear down my barns and build bigger ones, and there I will store my surplus grain. <sup>19</sup> And I'll say to myself, "You have plenty of grain laid up for many years. Take life easy; eat, drink and be merry.'"*

<sup>20</sup> *"But God said to him, 'You fool! This very night your life will be demanded from you. Then who will get what you have prepared for yourself?'*

<sup>21</sup> *"This is how it will be with whoever stores up things for themselves but is not rich toward God."*

One day a man came to Jesus with a straightforward question about settling a dispute over an inheritance. Jesus doesn't answer him; instead, he warns the man. "Watch out for greed," Jesus said. The man was so wrapped up in the fight for what he believed he deserved that he was unaware of the internal motivations that drove him.

If you've been in such a situation, you know all too well what was behind this. You've seen greed sink its teeth into people and draw out the worst in them. This happens to us as well, often without our being aware of it. Greed is a sneaky sin that slowly infiltrates our hearts. It's hard to resist in a culture driven by consumerism. It creeps in and can remain undetected if we aren't intentional about checking our hearts.

We must always be on the lookout for greed in our own hearts. We're constantly bombarded with messages that tell us we need more than we have. This creates a sense of discontent in our hearts. We can combat greed with generosity; discontent with gratitude. Our capacity to give frees us from the entanglements that greed imposes on us. Gratitude steers our minds to what we are blessed to have.

Praying Together:

"Father, guard my heart against greed. I do not reflect You when I crave more and more. Thank You for the countless blessings in my life. I know they come from You. Amen."

SUNDAY, 11/10

Read Luke 12:22-34.

*<sup>22</sup>Then Jesus said to his disciples: "Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat; or about your body, what you will wear. <sup>23</sup>For life is more than food, and the body more than clothes. <sup>24</sup>Consider the ravens: They do not sow or reap, they have no storeroom or barn; yet God feeds them. And how much more valuable you are than birds! <sup>25</sup>Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to your life? <sup>26</sup>Since you cannot do this very little thing, why do you worry about the rest?"*

*<sup>27</sup>"Consider how the wild flowers grow. They do not labor or spin. Yet I tell you, not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these. <sup>28</sup>If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today, and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, how much more will he clothe you—you of little faith! <sup>29</sup>And do not set your heart on what you will eat or drink; do not worry about it. <sup>30</sup>For the pagan world runs after all such things, and your Father knows that you need them. <sup>31</sup>But seek his kingdom, and these things will be given to you as well.*

*<sup>32</sup>"Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has been pleased to give you the kingdom. <sup>33</sup>Sell your possessions and give to the poor. Provide purses for yourselves that will not wear out, a treasure in heaven that will never fail, where no thief comes near and no moth destroys. <sup>34</sup>For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.*

Today's teaching from Jesus piggybacks yesterday's story regarding the man asking for an inheritance. Jesus refuses to participate in the man's dilemma but instead speaks to the pitfalls of greed. The irony with greed is that while it is a desire for more, it actually steals from you. It robs you of meaningful purpose and peace. Accumulating more is an empty pursuit. We'll lose it one day anyway.

We also forfeit our peace in the pursuit of more. This is why Jesus tells us not to worry, which is a tall order. The reason we need not worry is that our hope isn't bound up in stuff, but in God. We are valued by Him, and that has more meaning than anything in this world.

Jesus tries to recenter our focus by saying, "But seek His Kingdom, and these things will be given to you as well." We are not to aim for monetary success, but to seek God's Kingdom. If we set our sights on the right thing, everything will fall into its place. Jesus is trying to rightly order our lives. I wonder if what you are aiming for in life is set on the right target. Let us pursue God's Kingdom in all things.

Praying Together:

"Jesus, we set our sights on Your Kingdom. Rid our hearts of any greed or desire that distracts us. We want Your will to be done in us. Amen."