

Monday

## Matthew 5:1–12

Jesus spent a lot of time teaching people how God wants us to live and what God wants us to be like. One day Jesus took his disciples up a mountain, where he taught them these words; “Blessed are those who are humble, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted. Blessed are the poor, for they will inherit the earth. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be satisfied. Blessed are the merciful, for they will receive mercy. Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God. Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God. Blessed are those who are persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when others make fun of you and hurt you and say bad things about you because of me. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for the prophets before you were also persecuted.”

People don't usually think it's a good thing to mourn or to be poor or persecuted. But Jesus said people were “blessed” for these things. To be “blessed” means to be happy, but it also means much more than that. To be “blessed” means that we have great joy in knowing that we love God, and that God loves us, that we are his children, and that we are living the way Jesus wants us to live. When bad things happen, it reminds us that God has promised us a better life in heaven. This life isn't going to last forever, and to us, that's a good thing, because we are blessed. Jesus calls us to be his followers – to live differently and to think differently than the rest of the world – and so to know that we are truly blessed.

- **What does it mean to be “blessed”?**
- **What are some of the ways that Christians live and think differently from the rest of the world?**

Close with prayer

Tuesday

## Matthew 6:19–34

After Jesus taught his disciples what it means to be blessed, he taught them many other important things too – things that are still very important for us.

Jesus taught the disciples that they should make sure their treasures are in heaven and not on earth, which means making sure that your faith and love for Jesus is what is most important to you. Jesus told them they should not give all their time and energy to earning money or getting things, but they should serve God and trust God to provide what they need.

Jesus said to them, “Do not be anxious about what you're going to eat or what you're going to drink, nor about your body, what you're going to wear. Look at the birds.” They don't work hard to grow or buy food and store it up in barns or freezers. “Yet, your heavenly Father feeds them.” Jesus wanted his people to know that they were much more special than birds. Jesus wanted them to trust that God would give them food and everything they needed until he took them to heaven.

Jesus also said they should look at the flowers growing outside. Flowers don't work hard, and they don't have to make clothes or buy clothes. But not even King Solomon, in his best royal robes, was dressed and looking as beautiful as the flowers.

Jesus wanted his people to have faith that God loves each one of them very much and will always take care of them, no matter how they look. If you believe that, then you are free to spend your time and energy seeking God, and enjoying God, and serving God, instead of worrying about silly, temporary things. Jesus tells us not to worry about food or clothing or anything. “Your heavenly Father knows that you need them all,” Jesus said. “So seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and then everything else is extra.”

God cares for us so much that he provided for our greatest need by sending Jesus to be our Savior from sin, death, and the devil. Because God loves us so much, he will surely give us all the smaller things we need, like food and clothing. Jesus calls us into his kingdom through faith in him. Jesus takes away all our worries, and tells us always to trust in him.

- **Who feeds the birds and makes the flowers look so beautiful?**
- **What does Jesus want all people to have?**
- **How can you put seeking God's kingdom first, as more important than anything else, in your daily life?**

Close with prayer

Wednesday  
**Luke 11:1-12**

One day, when Jesus was finished praying, one of his disciples said to him, "Lord, teach us to pray, as John taught his disciples." And Jesus did.

He said to them, "When you pray, say; Father, hallowed be your name." This means treating God as holy and very special, and honoring God's name and reputation. Jesus wants us to pray that God will be thought of highly by everyone, not ignored or hated. We should want all people to worship God.

Then Jesus said, "Your kingdom come." With these words we ask God to cause his kingdom to grow in our hearts and to spread to the hearts of others by faith through the sharing of the good news of Jesus' death and resurrection. We also look forward to the fulfillment of our faith, when we live with God in heaven.

Jesus continued, "Give us each day our daily bread." God provides us with much more than bread. With these words we ask God to give us what we need for our lives today: food, drink, clothing, and a home. We do not need to worry; we can trust God to provide for our life on earth as long as we live.

Jesus continued, "Forgive us our debts, as we forgive everyone who is indebted to us." With these words, we confess to God that we sin every day. We know that we deserve God's punishment. We ask that our loving heavenly Father would forgive our sins. Knowing that God has forgiven us, we ask him to give us the strength to forgive those who sin against us.

Jesus also said, "Lead us not into temptation." We have three big enemies – the devil, the world, and our own sinful nature. But we have a bigger God who can defeat them all. Our God will protect us and give us his power to win over evil's temptations. And when we sin, he forgives us.

Once Jesus had finished teaching this special prayer, he explained more about prayer to his disciples. He said that just like a father gives what is good to children who ask him for it, so God will give what is good to his children when they ask him.

Our heavenly Father invites us to pray. Because Jesus has paid for our sins, God listens to our prayers for Jesus' sake. That is why we often end our prayers saying, "In Jesus' name I pray." How wonderful it is to know that we can pray directly to the one true God, and that he hears our prayers. Let us give thanks to God for all this that he gives us.

- **What is God's attitude toward us when we pray?**
- **What did Jesus teach us to pray about?**

Close with the Lord's Prayer

Thursday

## Matthew 5:14–16

Have you ever searched for lightning bugs? On a hot summer night, it's easy to spot them, especially when it's very dark outside. It's hard for a lightning bug to hide from us!

In today's Gospel lesson, Christ tells us about another light—the light of Christ inside each one of us! He tells us that when we do good things for people, WE are the light of the world. He tells us that when we have this light, we cannot hide it. We want to show it to everybody. As a Christian, you want to be like the lightning bugs, shining out in the darkness.

But then he tells us a very important thing. When we have this light, and when we do good things for people, we want people to think about God. We try to give glory to God, not to ourselves. That means that when we help other people, we don't brag about it or tell everybody "Look what I did!" We just let the light of Christ shine out! Then people will say, "Now THAT is what a Christian is!"

Jesus has made us different from the rest of the world. The world is full of the darkness of sin. But the light of God's love for all – that is what you are. Let us show it every day!

Dear Holy Spirit, guide us through the darkness of this world to show the love and light of Christ to all those around us. Amen.

Friday

## Matthew 5:21–26, 38–48

As Jesus talked to the people he seemed to be saying, “I know a better way for you to live. And if you will try to live my way – God’s way – you will be so much happier.”

His way, of course, was the way of love. See how he tried to make it plain to those who came to listen to him: “You have heard,” he said, “that it has been said, ‘You shall not murder, and anyone who murders will be subject to judgment.’ But I tell you that anyone who is angry with someone else will be in danger of the judgment.”

Here was a new idea. It was not only wrong to murder but wrong even to be angry. In fact, Jesus said, just calling somebody names is displeasing to God. And why? Because it isn’t the way of love.

Again, Jesus said, ““You have heard that it was said, ‘Eye for eye, and tooth for tooth.’ But I tell you, do not resist an evil person. If anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to them the other cheek also. And if anyone wants to sue you and take your shirt, hand over your coat as well. If anyone forces you to go one mile, go with them two miles.”

This was hard to take. No doubt many in the crowd were thinking, “If I could just get hold of so-and-so, I’d treat him as he treated me.” But now they could not deny they ought never think such thoughts at all. God’s better way was the way of forgiveness, of turning the other cheek, of going the second mile.

But now Jesus went still further, saying, “You have heard that it was said, ‘Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be children of your Father in heaven.”

What! You can imagine someone asking, “Do you mean to say we are to love the Romans, the tax collectors and sinners, and everybody else who tries to hurt us?”

“Yes,” Jesus said, “Everybody.” It is love that matters most to God. This was his better way, the way to real, lasting happiness. This is the way he promises we will live for eternity.

Close with prayer