



WEEKLY STUDY July 30-August , 2023

(Use this guide to individually or with a group dive deeper into this week's sermon.)

Beatitudes – Week Four

Our sermon series for July is: Beatitudes: A Series on the Blessed Practices of Jesus. These statements in Matthew and Luke call us to remember who is blessed in the kingdom of God. Pastor Sam has invited all of us to entire sermon on the mount in Matthew, chapters 6 and 7. We are to consider how the nine statements of blessing reveal to us the characteristics of kingdom people.

Our scripture this week is:

“Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.” **Matthew 5:9**

- 1) Pastor Sam helped us with our knowledge about peace through scripture then stated that we need to make room for peace within ourselves. She talked about different ways she has done this over the years: solitude; journaling; reading; quiet times in the chapel while in divinity school; hiking; music; scripture; meditation. She is now experiencing peace within while exercising. This is a good reminder that finding peace within ourselves is not dependent on one method for all time. We adapt and change according to our life stage. We learn and we grow. We need these spiritual disciplines to stay focused on living the life of a disciple of Jesus Christ. In worship Sam had all of us practice a breathing prayer. As we breathed in, we said to ourselves, “Breathe in the peace of Christ.” As we breathed out, we said to ourselves, “breathe out the chaos within.” The one I’ve used is similar. Breathing in, saying, “Breathe in the breath of God”. Breathing out, saying, “Breathe out hurt and despair.” Sam invited us all to craft pockets of peace in our lives.

Question: In what ways have you crafted pockets of peace in your life? What works best for you now (or what are you going to try that you feel will work best for you now)?

- 2) Pastor Sam quoted from Romans 12:18, saying “....as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone.” She reminded us that living in true peace is not the same as failing to speak up in order to keep the peace. She called this “fabricated peace” and reminded us that this kind of peace will not last. In order to live in relationships with one

another, we have to have conversations that are sometimes awkward, or uncomfortable or tense. But at the same time this does not mean harsh or rude or vindictive. Sam stated that peace has to permeate every relationship – with God, with self, with others, with the whole world.

Question: Can you identify with times in your life when you denied your own beliefs in order to keep the peace with a family member or a friend? How did you feel? How could you have approached things differently to create true peace?

- 3) I love a good hymn story. Pastor Sam told us of the story of the hymn, “Let There Be Peace on Earth” written by Jill Jackson-Miller and Sy Miller. Jill attempted suicide but didn’t succeed, and after that she experienced God’s unconditional love. She knew she was loved and had a purpose. Together, she and Sy wrote the song and used it first at a California retreat for young people. Attendees were a group of 180 teenagers of all races and religions meeting at a retreat high in the California mountains. Sy (who wrote the melody) recounted how the teenagers all linked arms, formed a circle and sang this song of peace, believing that in singing that song it would help to create a climate for world peace and understanding. He went on to say that when the young people came down from the mountain, they brought the song with them, and started sharing it. This started the song’s journey around the world. It’s a reminder that words have power. Spoken word, word acted out, word whispered to ourselves, word prayed.

Question: What are the words of peace you feel that in speaking can help create a climate for world peace and understanding? In what ways can you carry the message of peace forward?

- 4) As we conclude our series on the beatitudes, Pastor Sam stated at the end of the sermon, “We have heard these teachings. We have been called to grieve, to depend on God, to be kind and gentle, to hunger and thirst for righteousness, to be merciful to others, to seek pure news of heart, to make peace.” The question before us is, “In my life today, what will these beatitudes look like through my actions?” In her book, *Sermon on the Mount: A Beginner’s Guide to the Kingdom of Heaven* A.J. Levine says instead of trying to memorize or recite these beatitudes (blessings), it would be better to continue the pattern and develop our own. She states, “Blessed are those who care for broken bodies or lonely children, blessed are those who sit by the dying at night, blessed are those who can sing of God, asking, ‘Whom shall I send?’ and respond ‘It is I Lord....I have heard you calling in the night.’” (Pg 22)

Question: Reflect on Pastor Sam’s statement. How can you develop your own beatitudes that link each to specific attitudes, and actions you can take?

Prayer: (This prayer is based on the Affirmation of Faith we used in Sunday worship) “Blessed God, we give you thanks for this and every day. We give you thanks for life itself. And we lift our voices with others in praise to you. Hear today our cries, O Lord. We are crying, “peace, peace” but there is no peace . We long for a day when we can deal courageously with conflict without violence. We believe as told in Isaiah that one day we will turn our swords into shovels, our weapons into gardening tools. And violence will come to an end and there will be peace. We

yearn for that day. Help us O God to cling to the hope that your kingdom will be here on earth as it is in heaven. And we join with other voices in saying, 'Let there be peace on earth and let it begin with me.' Amen"

Weekly Challenge: This week, do a daily search for peace. What are your daily moments of peace? What works of peace do you see in our community? Who do you notice working for peace? Give thanks to God for the peacemakers.

(Weekly study guide prepared by Rev. MaryJane Pierce Norton)