



## WEEKLY STUDY February 4-10, 2024

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

### **No Time Like the Present**

**Our sermon series for January is: No Time Like The Present.**

**It's a new year with new opportunities. As disciples, Jesus invites us to a life of growth, transformation, greater purpose and deeper meaning. We are invited to get started today and be led to all that Jesus has in store for us, our families, and our communities.**

**Our scripture this week is: Matthew 20: 29-34**

"As they were leaving Jericho, a large crowd followed him. There were two blind men sitting by the roadside. When they heard that Jesus was passing by, they shouted, 'Lord, have mercy on us, Son of David!' The crowd sternly ordered them to be quiet, but they shouted even more loudly, 'Have mercy on us, Lord, Son of David!' Jesus stood still and called them, saying, 'What do you want me to do for you?' They said to him, 'Lord, let our eyes be opened.' Moved with compassion, Jesus touched their eyes. Immediately they regained their sight and followed him."

- 1) This week, as we wrap up the theme: "No Time Like the Present," we again have an interesting passage from Matthew to consider. In fact – 3 of our questions today are centered on comments Rachael made in the sermon about the scripture. She first called our attention to the fact that the blind men approached Jesus with praise, calling upon him saying "Lord" and "Son of David". They didn't then call him saying, "Heal our blindness". They said instead "Have mercy on us." She noted that they approached Jesus first with praise instead of need. And she went on to say how this because part of the Jesus prayer of the Desert Mothers and Fathers and a prayer we are still encouraged to pray today. "Lord Jesus, Son of God, have mercy on me a sinner."  
**Question: Take time now (no time like the present!) to stop and prayer, "Lord Jesus, Son of God, have mercy on me a sinner." Sit quietly with this prayer. What thoughts and feelings are triggered for you as you pray – not with a need, but with praise?**

- 2) I also appreciated Rachael's second observation from the scripture. She had us consider the crowd. Instead of supporting the two blind men, the crowd tried to silence them. But the men persevered. Rachael told how in the current Wednesday night study using the book *On Purpose: Finding God's Voice in Your Passion* (and reminding us that Sam was one of the writers of this book), participants were asked to name someone who has been an encourager for them in their lives. Rachael said all of us can name encouragers

who have helped us. And she said at the same time, most all of us could probably name those in our lives who have not offered support, and have tried to silence us in our desires like the crowd did to those two men. And she said, “Don’t be like the crowd. Don’t try to silence others. Instead be an encourager for others.”

**Question: Think about your life. Who has encouraged you to follow your dreams? Who has been like the crowd trying to silence you? What voices have you been more willing to hear as you have considered your desires for your life? Those in support or those in opposition? Why?**

- 3) Jesus addresses the men saying, “What do you want me to do for you?” And the men tell him! Rachael asked us to consider what we desire; what we want. And she noted that there was no verbal response from Jesus – just loving touch. Rachael then stated that Jesus approaches us always with compassion, with love, with tenderness, with grace. What a powerful statement! Too often we feel we don’t deserve to state our desires. Rachael then invited to close our eyes. To imagine Jesus standing before us and saying to us, “What do you want me to do for you?” We are invited to tell our deepest desires.

**Question: Stop now and do the visualization exercise Rachael suggested. What would you say to Jesus in response to his question, “What do you want me to do for you?”**

- 4) Rachael told us of a book by Bronnie Ware *The Top Five Regrets of the Dying*. These come from Ware’s work with those at the end of life, and Rachael listed each for us:

#5: I wish I had let myself be happier

#4: I wish I had stayed in touch with my friends

#3: I wish I had the courage to express my feelings

#2: I wish I hadn’t worked so hard

#1: I wish I had the courage to live a life true to myself and the the life others expected of me.

Consider these questions. We – who are among the living at this moment – can ask ourselves “Are we living in such a way now that one of these regrets might be something we would find ourselves saying as we move toward death?”

**Question: If the answer is yes, what changes do you feel you need to make in your life? If the answer is no, what do you affirm that you are currently doing that will help you approach the end of your life without regrets?**

**Prayer:** (As we think about balance, about life lived well, about life lived in the moment, about saying yes to God’s call, the prayer I feel helps us the most day by day is The Lord’s Prayer) Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name; thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever. Amen

**Weekly Challenge: This week be deliberate in scheduling quiet time for yourself. Sit in the stillness. Breathe slowly and release those things distracting you from this moment. Sit with this question (not letting your mind rush to an answer): “What is my deepest desire?”**

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