



WEEKLY STUDY July 2-8, 2023

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

Beatitudes – Week One

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 the read in 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 those who mourn, for they will be comforted.” Matthew 5:4

“Blessed are you who weep now, for you will laugh...” Luke 6:21b

- 1) In her time with the children on Sunday, Pastor Gracie used the Disney Movie, “Inside Out” to talk with the children about emotions. The scripture reading this Sunday focuses on grieving and sadness. And Pastor Gracie reminded the children that in the movie, “Inside Out”, it starts from a place of thinking everyone should be happy. Gradually through the movie, the message becomes one that says ALL emotions are accepted and people do feel not just happy, but sad, or mad, or scared, or anxious, or peaceful. All have their place and living life fully means experiencing things that lead us to feel all the emotions.

Question: Think about your reaction to the emotions of grieving and sadness. Have you had times when you felt these were unacceptable? Have you had times when you have felt you needed to hide the fact that you were mourning, or feeling overwhelmed by sadness? Have you ever felt that church was place where you had to put on your ‘happy face’ no matter what was going on in your life? Talk about those times.

- 2) Our speaker this Sunday was Rev. Chris O’Rear. He is the director of the counseling center housed in our church. At the beginning of his sermon, Rev. O’Rear reminded us that the word “beatitude” means “supremely blessed.” It made me consider that what

Jesus was doing was describing to his audience what constitutes being “supremely blessed” in the kingdom of God.

Question: Spend a few minute contemplating the meaning of “supremely blessed.” If trying to explain this to another, what would you use as illustrations for “supremely blessed.”

- 3) Through the sermon, Rev. O’Rear talked about person grief. He talked about the death of his father in 2020. And he described the grief of loss when his family home was destroyed in a mudslide in the flood of 2010. He also talked about the grief we experience as a community when we witness events in the world where people are the innocent victims of violence or hateful language, where leaders more concerned with power than the needs of people; where we see others shunned or harmed because differences. We mourn because of personal loss. And we mourn because of societal loss. Both are a part of our lives. He said there is truly a blessing in grieving, in acknowledging our feelings, in recognizing losses.

Question: At this particular time in your life, what losses, what people, what events are you grieving?

- 4) Sometimes I find myself surprised by unexpected connections between scripture, a sermon and a “beach read” novel. Rev. O’Rear told us that grieving is part of an abundant life. It is connected to the ability to love fully – not holding back because of fear of being hurt. Unbelievably, I had just read something similar in the novel, *Happy Place* by Emily Henry. The main character in the book observes the grief of a woman who has endured the unexpected death of her husband. The narrative of the book states, “I understood, then, the immense honor it is to hurt like she does. To have loved someone so much that the taste of maple syrup can make you cry and laugh at the same time.” And now back to the sermon, Rev O’Rear reminded us that grief is not the opposite hope. He said, “those who grieve well are truly blessed” and encouraged us to have the courage to love and be loved fully and deeply.

Question: For whom have you experienced deep hurt because you have experienced deep love? How have you found hope in the midst of hurt and mourning?

Prayer:

“Gracious God, as we are reminded by the scripture, your blessings come to us in all of the ways of life. And just as some days are days of joy, some are days of mourning and sadness. You, our creator, created us to be able to feel and experience all the emotions of life. Help us open our eyes to the presence of your kingdom on earth and join in seeking to live as your kingdom people each day. In Jesus’ name we pray, Amen”

Weekly Challenge: This week read chapters 5-7 in the Gospel of Matthew. Pray daily for those who mourn the loss of loved ones, the loss of a job, the loss of a relationship, the loss of hope.

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