



### **WEEKLY STUDY July 16-22, 2023**

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

#### **Beatitudes – Week Three**

**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 the meek, for they will inherit the earth." Matthew 5:5**

- 1) As we began our third week with the Beatitudes, Pastor Sam reminded us that these were written to the whole faith community, not individuals. This means as one body, we have different strengths so we lean on one another in a way that utilizes all of the qualities – not just one person's. This is a hard concept for those of us in the U.S. since ours in an individualistic culture – not a collective one. We continue to think we have to possess all traits and forget to lean on others. In confirmation we do a spiritual gifts quiz that both confirmands and mentors take and it literally uses parts of the body to represent how we are joined together for common good. When I heard that Mark Whitler had died, I immediately thought about the last confirmation retreat, and Mark's gifts. His assessment was a tie so that he equally exhibited the traits of the brain (ability to analyze and find solutions) and the traits of the stomach (ability to process and use what is best for the whole body). Others scored high on hands (ability to get in and get things done) or feet (willingness to be sent on behalf of the community to represent and to serve), and so on. I found it comforting to know that these beatitudes – just like spiritual gifts – are evidenced by different people in the faith community and are not all dependent on me.

**Question: Read through all of the beatitudes. Which ones do you see in yourself? Who are others in our faith community that you see evidencing different beatitudes?**

- 2) I particularly appreciated Pastor Sam sharing with us Matthew 12:18-21. This quotes a prophecy from Isaiah that Matthew says Jesus fulfilled. It says, “Here is my servant whom I have chosen, the one I love, in whom I delight; I will put my Spirit on him, and he will proclaim justice to the nations. He will not quarrel or cry out; no one will hear his voice in the streets. A bruised reed he will not break, and a smoldering wick he will not snuff out, till he has brought justice through to victory. In his name the nations will put their hope.” Sam reminded that Jesus was a very different king than the world expected. (And I would say, continues to expect.) And she quoted one scholar who says, “Meekness in Matthew characterizes those who have renounced the violent methods of worldly power.”

**Question: Consider this image in Jesus. What appeals to you? What makes it difficult for us to accept and act out of the meekness that Jesus possessed?**

- 3) Pastor Sam told of someone in the 8:30 service who said she once heard meekness defined as strength under control. Sam then asked us this question, “How might gentility, humility and nonviolence push back against the harshness, the egocentric worldview, the violence we experience in ways big and small every day?”

**Question: Prior to worship on Sunday and hearing the discussion about meekness, how would you have defined it? Would you have described it as a weakness or a strength? What would you say to another in characterizing what Jesus meant in saying, “Blessed are the meek.”**

- 4) I had to laugh when Pastor Sam described her daughter Madeline’s reaction when she came at her with a tissue for wiping her nose. It reminded me of the many times this happened to be both with my boys and in teaching preschool. And I wish I had been less dive and done and more gentle and slow. Sam told us of have the toddler teachers used the phrase “kind hand; gentle hands” in guiding the behavior in class. And my mind went to the hymn in our hymnal, “Jesus hands were kind hands.” We don’t sing this often but the words are amazing and are a reminder of what we heard in Sunday’s sermon:

*“Jesus hands were kind hands, doing good to all,  
Healing pain and sickness, blessing children small,  
Washing tired feet, and saving those who fall;  
Jesus hands were kind hands, doing good to all.  
Take my hands, Lord Jesus, let me work for you;  
Make them strong and gentle, kind in all I do.  
Let me watch you, Jesus, til I’m gentle too,  
Til my hands are kind hands, quick to work for you.” (hymn #273)*

**Question: In what ways can we as a faith community intentionally hold others and the earth in kind hands?**

**Prayer:** (Adapted from this week’s affirmation of faith) “Blessed God, You who blessed us remind us that we continue and embody those blessings in the way we act and speak. Remind us, O God to respond to ourselves and to others with gentleness instead of harshness. Help us

choose softness instead lashing out with rough words or actions. Loving God redefine fur us what it means to be meet for we often see it only as weakness. Transform us into people of tenderness who are deeply for all of creation. Amen”

**Weekly Challenge: This week once again read chapters 5-7 in the Gospel of Matthew and Luke 6:17-49. This week be in prayer for the youth and the adults who accompany them who are in mission work in Kentucky this week. At the end of each day, ask yourself, “How did I use my hands in meek and kind ways today?”**

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