



Immersed in God's Word

His disciples came to him, and Jesus began to teach them.

-- Matthew 5:2

Monday, November 5: Disciples learn to Judge Others (Under Jesus) with the Right Attitude: Valuing People

Do not give dogs what is sacred; do not throw your pearls to pigs. If you do, they may trample them under their feet, and turn and tear you to pieces.

~ Jesus, Matthew 7:7

This proverb of sorts in Matthew 7:7 comes at the end of Jesus' statements about judging and appears to insinuate that certain people might be categorized as dogs and pigs. And there is an instance of Jesus making such insinuations (See Mark 7:27) But many bible scholars have noted that Jesus calling people dogs and pigs is out of character for the rest of the Sermon on the Mount.

So what gives with the proverb? To give dogs what is sacred is unquestionably a show of poor judgment (as is throwing pearls before pigs). One of the best views I have read puts Jesus' proverb in this light: Don't treat people – who are sacred and valuable – poorly. To misjudge, pre-judge or harshly judge is to treat such treasures of God poorly. That would be a mistake akin to throwing that which is sacred to dogs. "God forbid!" as some have been known to say. This theme of seeing people as valuable will carry us through the week of IMMERSION.



Prayer for the week: Father God, thanks for the reminder that people are sacred and valuable to You. Just as you have restored me to holiness through the death and resurrection of Jesus, so all of your creation is redeemable and deemed valuable in your eyes. Help me see the world through your eyes. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.

Micro-Meditation: Psalm 103:7-12

Read vs. 7-12 2x

Mark the words or phrases that catch your attention?

Meditate: Talk with God about those words. Ask him to impress things upon your heart and mind in response.

7 He made known his ways to Moses,
his deeds to the people of Israel:
8 The Lord is compassionate and gracious,
slow to anger, abounding in love.
9 He will not always accuse,
nor will he harbor his anger forever;
10 he does not treat us
as our sins deserve
or repay us according to our iniquities.
11 For as high as the heavens
are above the earth,
so great is his love for those who fear him;
12 as far as the east is from the west,
so far has he removed
our transgressions from us.



Pondering Point: Most of us know what it is like to be treated as we deserve after poor choices. But what joy and gratefulness there is when we are treated better than we deserve! This, thanks to Jesus, is the relationship we get to have with God.

Tuesday, November 6: God's Mission in Matt. 13:44-46

"The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field. When a man found it, he hid it again, and then in his joy went and sold all he had and bought that field. Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant looking for fine pearls. When he found one of great value, he went away and sold everything he had and bought it."

~ Jesus, Matthew 13:44-46

There is a song *You're My Treasure* with these opening lyrics:
*You're my treasure, You're my hope
You're my fortune, You're worth far more than gold
And Jesus I invest my life in You (by Jonathan Foster)*

This song displays a great response to our loving God. Listen to it if you have time. Today's reading talks about seeking a treasure as well – and giving everything up for it. Often people view these two micro-parables with God's people as the subjects of the parable – the treasure seekers. But re-read them again, seeing yourself and the rest of God's people as the OBJECT of the parable, as the treasure. Then the Treasure-Seeker becomes none other than the Son of Man, Jesus Himself. With the change of one small word to that opening lyrical clip (**and to as**), we can capture the essence of such a view. It would be as if Jesus were singing over us:

*You're my treasure, You're my hope
You're my fortune,
You're worth far more than gold
As Jesus I invest my life in You*



Is that not a beautiful mental picture? And what's even better about this imagery is that it's an accurate picture. It's true. You are treasured by God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ. We all are!



Prayer for the day: Lord God, your love for the world led to deep sacrifices for those whom you treasure, sacrifices of time, effort, suffering, and ultimately your life itself.

Remind us that we are treasured – thank You! – and that we are loved deeply. And remind us that the others around us are also loved deeply and treasured by you. Let us then bring you honor, joy and satisfaction in our treatment of these treasures known as people; through Jesus Christ we pray. Amen.

Micro-Meditation: Psalm 139:19-24

Ps 103:7-8 He made known his ways to Moses,
his deeds to the people of Israel:
The Lord is compassionate and gracious,
slow to anger, abounding in love.

Teaching or Command of God:

Let us then approach God's throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.



Hebrews 4:16

THE PROMISE

Romans 8:32

He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all—how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things?



Pondering Point: Is it your default mode to see God looking at you with abounding love? In Christ, this is the case.

Wednesday, November 7: Your Identity in Christ

- **In Christ, we are sought-after treasures of God, worth the life of His beloved Son.**

They will be called the Holy People, the Redeemed of the LORD; and you will be called Sought After, the City No Longer Deserted.

~ Isaiah 62:12

If you take time to read through Isaiah 62:1-12, you will see the prophet using imagery of the city of Jerusalem and the Mount of Zion that she sits upon. In doing so, Isaiah reminds the people of God that they are not forgotten but beloved and rejoiced over. This can be hard to believe about oneself if we have taken a dim view of yourself personally. This could be due to years of negative self-talk or harmful language heaped upon us by others. Keep in mind that God, despite our sinfulness, holds us dear. He holds you dear. Tomorrow we reflect on another facet of this sought-after dynamic, but for today we finish with a prayer of thanks.



Prayer: Father God, it is good to know that I am sought after, that I am beloved. I don't always feel that way. Thanks for reminding me of the truth that you value me and that you rejoice that I am part of your family in Christ. I love you. Amen.

Micro-Meditation: Psalm 139:19-24

Ps 103:9-10 He will not always accuse,
nor will he harbor his anger forever;
he does not treat us as our sins deserve
or repay us according to our iniquities.

Teaching or Command of God:

He was pierced for our transgressions,
he was crushed for our iniquities;

the punishment that brought us peace was on him... Isaiah 53:5a



THE PROMISE

...and by his wounds we are healed.

Isaiah 53:5b



Pondering Point: As one of five brothers, I know what it is like to be punished for my brother's sin. I didn't volunteer for it. But this is what our brother Jesus willingly did for us.

Thursday, November 8: Re-Center around God

*They will be called the Holy People, the Redeemed of the LORD;
and you will be called Sought After, the City No Longer Deserted.*

~ Isaiah 62:12

Yesterday we were reminded that, despite our sinfulness, God holds us dear. Today we remember that, despite the sinfulness of others, God sees them as sought-after treasures. Some of us take a dim view of others, allowing ourselves to ignore or even detest them at times. God forgive us and change our hearts!

Review the week. Whom have I taken a dim view of, forgetting that God seeks to bring them back, win them back, call them back into the fold of his flock?

Repent if necessary: Repent of any poor treatment of fellow human beings, be they family, neighbors, associates, co-workers. Ask God to uncover ungodly views that you are currently unaware of harboring.

Return as necessary: Come to God in prayer and offer him your eyes to see as He sees, your ears to hear as He hears, and your heart to love the way that He loves. As one of God’s Holy People, learn to treasure what God treasures.

Micro-Meditation: Psalm 139:19-24

^{103:11} For as high as the heavens are above the earth,
so great is his love for those who fear him;

Teaching or Command of God:

Because of the LORD’s great love we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail. They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness.



Lamentations 3:22-23

THE PROMISE

Lament. 3:32-33

No one is cast off by the Lord forever. Though he brings grief, he will show compassion, so great is his unfailing love. For he does not willingly bring affliction or grief to anyone.



Pondering Point: It is interesting that, when it comes to sin, God is not consumed by His anger, nor are we consumed by His anger, but rather we are consumed – as in “taken in” – by His love, by His unfailing love

Friday, Nov 9: Discipleship Point from Galatians 5:13-18

Discipleship Point: Our discipleship point comes from the Apostle Paul’s letter to the Galatians (5:13-15): *You, my brothers and sisters, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the flesh; rather, serve one another humbly in love. For the entire law is fulfilled in keeping this one command: “Love your neighbor as yourself.” If you bite and devour each other, watch out or you will be destroyed by each other.*

As we ponder how much God values people despite their sinfulness, let's consider how we can use our God-given, Christ-purchased freedom to serve others humbly in love. From these inspired Words of God, we move into a prayer written by a fellow disciple who lived 800 hundred years ago. Known as Francis of Assisi, he founded the monasteries whose monks are known as Franciscans.



Discipleship Prayer:

Lord, make me an instrument of your peace:
 where there is hatred, let me sow love;
 where there is injury, pardon;
 where there is doubt, faith;
 where there is despair, hope;
 where there is darkness, light;
 where there is sadness, joy.



O Divine Master,
 grant that I may not so much seek
 to be consoled as to console,
 to be understood as to understand,
 to be loved as to love.

For it is in giving that we receive,
 it is in pardoning that we are pardoned,
 and it is in dying that we are born to eternal life. Amen

Micro-Meditation: Psalm 139:19-24

Ps 103:12 as far as the east is from the west,
 so far has he removed our transgressions from us.

Teaching or Command of God:

Because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved.



Ephesians 2:4-5

THE PROMISE

Isaiah 54:10

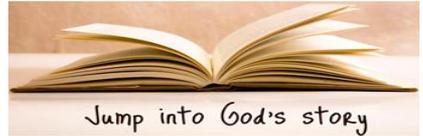
Though the mountains be shaken and the hills be removed, yet my unfailing love for you will not be shaken nor my covenant of peace be removed, says the LORD, who has compassion on you.



Pondering Point: At times we hold onto that which God lets go of: Our sin. Guilt and shame are key contributors to this problem. Let God help you let go of sin, shame, and guilt.

Saturday, November 10: Scripture's Story for the Week

Parables of the Hidden Pearl
And Hidden Treasure
Matthew 13:44-46



As shared in Tuesday's devotion, people often view these two mini-parables with man as the subject of the parable: Treasure seekers. Instead consider Jesus as the Treasure Seeker and Pearl Purchaser and let that inform His plan to come and give His life "as a ransom for many" as shared in Matthew 20:28. The story is only a few short verses. See if you can commit them to memory. Who knows where God might later use them in your life – or someone else's.



Prayer prompt:

Father God, help me place Your Word in my heart – such as these parables – to learn it, and to guard it there. Let me treasure You and Your Word as You treasure me and all people. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.



Sunday, Nov 11: Call to worship God, to gather together

Let the message of Christ dwell among you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom through psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit, singing to God with gratitude in your hearts.

~ Colossians 3:16

Worship is giving God the best that he has given you. Be careful what you do with the best you have. Whenever you get a blessing from God, give it back to him as a love gift. Take time to meditate before God and offer the blessing back to him in a deliberate act of worship. If you hoard a thing for yourself it will turn into spiritual dry rot, as the manna did when it was hoarded. God will never let you hold a spiritual thing for yourself; it has to be given back to him that he may make it a blessing to others. ~ *Oswald Chambers*

Prayer Prompt: A Prayer for Your Church:

Lord, let our church be an instrument of your peace:

where there is hatred, let us sow love;

where there is injury, let us share pardon;

where there is doubt, let us inspire faith;

where there is despair, let us bring hope;

where there is darkness, let us shed light;

where there is sadness, let us increase joy.

O Divine Master, as your disciples at Hope,

grant that we may not so much seek

to be consoled as to console,

to be understood as to understand,

to be loved as to love.

For it is in giving that we receive,

it is in pardoning that we are pardoned,

and it is in dying that we are born to eternal life. Amen

