

BE(not do)ATTITUDES



a study on **being, receiving & living in blessing**

as declared by Christ in his Sermon on the Mount
and as seen in the life of David

{Neighborhood}
S T U D I E S

Kay Wyma

*The place God calls you to is the place where your
deep gladness and the world's deep hunger meet.*

Frederick Buechner

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WEEK 1	INTRODUCTION	MATT 5, PSALM 84
WEEK 2	BLESSED ARE THE POOR IN SPIRIT, FOR THEIRS IS THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN	MATTHEW 5:3
WEEK 3	BLESSED ARE THOSE WHO MOURN, FOR THEY WILL BE COMFORTED	MATTHEW 5:4
WEEK 4	BLESSED ARE THE MEEK, FOR THEY WILL INHERIT THE EARTH	MATTHEW 5:5
WEEK 5	BLESSED ARE THOSE WHO HUNGER AND THIRST FOR RIGHTEOUSNESS, FOR THEY WILL BE SATISFIED.	MATTHEW 5:6
WEEK 6	BLESSED ARE THE MERCIFUL, FOR THEY SHALL RECEIVE MERCY	MATTHEW 5:7
WEEK 7	BLESSED ARE THE PURE IN HEART, FOR THEY SHALL SEE GOD	MATTHEW 5:8
WEEK 8	BLESSED ARE THE PEACEMAKERS, FOR THEY WILL BE CALLED SONS OF GOD	MATTHEW 5:9
WEEK 9	BLESSED ARE THOSE WHO ARE PERSECUTED FOR RIGHTEOUSNESS' SAKE, FOR THEIRS IS THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN	MATTHEW 5:10-11
WEEK 10	BE BLESSED, BECAUSE YOU ARE	PSALM 46

You are valuable because you exist. Not because of what you do, or
what you have done, but simply because you are.

Max Lucado

(PLEASE EXCUSE TYPOS AND SUCH :)

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BRIEF OVERVIEW

The Eight Beatitudes (Matthew 5:3 - 12) offer us a more spacious world, a world where I do not have to explain everything, fix everything, or control anything beyond myself, a world where we can allow a Larger Mystery to work itself out through us and in us. These things are done to us more than anything we can do...Wonderfully, it is not about being right anymore. Who can fully do the Beatitudes "right"? It is about being in right relationship, which is a very different agenda.

Richard Rohr

On a recent holiday, our family decided to ring in the new year in an Escape Room. Needless to say, we were the only patrons that night and had our room of choice to ourselves: Alcatraz – literal jail cells. The nice escape room employee (after yelling “prisoners on deck!”) escorted us into the cells and locked the doors behind us. Then very kindly showed us the abort button if anyone needed it.

She left, we dumbly looked around at the surrounding nothingness then heard over a loudspeaker the warden announcing “lights out in 2 minutes.” Well, that was enough for me. I was ready to abort! The kids convinced me otherwise. And we scrambled and laughed and found one clue after the next that opened doors leading to freedom.

The Beatitudes are like an escape room. One building upon the other, offering an escape to freedom – freedom for which Christ (the source and fulfillment of each blessing) has set us free. The blessings begin with humility (poor in spirit), which is needed to move on to truly mourn (all that isn’t alive of giving life), that then prepares us for meekness (seeing things as God sees them) and so on.

The Beatitudes, Blessed. Not a subjective feeling of happiness but a declaration of an objective reality – “Blessed”. Blessed means happy, joy-filled, settled. Blessed is the receiving of Christ’s Shalom peace which he declared upon us by his action on the Cross.

ECONOMIES OF SCALE (GOD’S SCALE OF SETTLEDNESS)

Blessed/settledness invites a peek behind the greater story’s curtain, revealing that life’s if/then statements are the furthest thing from freedom and life.

God’s because/then (*because* you have been redeemed/then) settles our significance today and forever.

- Because God says we are steadfastly loved, then we can live free from performance pressures;
- Because God says we’re “honored in (his) sight,” we can let go of the endless need to prove ourselves;
- Because God (Jehovah-Jireh) provides, then you can lean into the certainty of his sustenance and perfect provision;
- Because God is faithful (He cannot be counter to his character), then we can rest;

- Because God bestows *his* strength upon us, then we can stop striving in our own;
- Because we are known (“I call you by name”; “you are mine”), then we can operate out of wholeness.

The BEatitudes invite us to live in and out of wholeness, the true essence of our BEing.

(In the Beatitudes) Jesus does not impose anything, but reveals the way of happiness ... the true joy of being "blessed", which is different from worldly happiness. It is the Easter joy. Pope Francis

STRUCTURE

We will be diving into Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount by looking back on the life of King David. Since Jesus’ rule is eternal and his action on the cross final (“It is finished.”), we will consider the life of David in light of the Beatitudes alongside God’s declarations in and through Isaiah and the Psalms.

This effort is just the tip of the iceberg. Please come at it with prayer: that the LORD will open eyes and ears to see and hear, that He will open hearts to receive the blessing so beautifully presented by Christ through whom all blessing flow, that He will increase our capacity to BE (blessed) as we go through acts of doing.

Please come at this study with an open mind to learn and a lot of room for grace (to weather inevitable typos & mistakes :) as this study is a simple (not fancy or all encompassing) effort to invite the Beatitude blessings to come alive in our daily walk.

Please feel free to look beyond the passages provided here as the LORD prompts your heart to further consideration. And share – we’d love to know.

Then, hopefully, enjoy!

*For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named, that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner **BEing**, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith—that you, **BEing** rooted and grounded in love, may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.*

– Ephesians 3:14-19

How

Each lesson, **begin with PRAYER**: “Lord, open my eyes that I might see what you have to show me in your Word.” (Psalm 119:18).

Read the passage. Park preconceived ideas, see beyond what may be familiar. Ask God to open our eyes and ears to be able to see and hear what is available as you consider the questions.

Begin with context: who, what, when, where & why. It doesn’t have to be detailed, just a quick broad overview to help understand what’s going on.

- Who: Who are the players involved? Who is speaking? Who is the author? audience? ...
- What: What are they talking about? Is it a Psalm/song of praise or a story or a directive?
- When: what period of time/what was happening
- Where: the place, surroundings
- Why: the purpose-is it a promise, a command, a caution,...

Consider keeping a running list each week of specifics revealed by and about God.

Who He Is: God is: faithful, trustworthy, a sanctuary, the same yesterday/today/forever, ...

The things He does (explicit/implicit): God: hears, knows my name, is LORD, never wavers, always says what He means and means what He says, speaks ...

The things He says, literally: “But now, **this is what the LORD says ...**”

We study the **Word of God to know the God of the Word** and “to be transformed by the renewing our mind” (Romans 12). The goal is not to complete the tasks but to *know Him* and live in light of His Word, will and ways.

As we study, it’s nice to be **mindful of applications**. Toward that end, questions end each lesson:

- What does this text teach me about God?
- What does this text tell me to do?
- What truths (or promises) do I need to claim?
- What thought(s) will I carry throughout the day?

Sometimes a little more information is helpful – so by all means look further. A few helpful easy to access sources include (but are certainly not limited to): *Dr. Constable’s Sonic Light*, *Bible.org*, *Got Questions*.

Remember, time in Scripture is meant to be a blessing, not a burden. So... **Linger and Enjoy**.

As we read Scripture to know God, we’ll learn about all the ways that HE is faithful. We’ll see over and over that He never leaves us alone – that He knows us *by name*, because *we are his*.

Spend time in prayer – ask God to make His Word come alive. Ask the Lord to reveal Himself in new and meaningful ways.

*Show me your ways, LORD, teach me your paths.
Guide me in your truth and teach me, for you are God my Savior,
and my hope is in you all day long (Psalm 25: 4-6)*

More than anything **HAVE FUN**. Sink into all the wonderful things (even when some may be hard to swallow) the Lord has to share and teach us about himself and about ourselves through Him.

SAFE

*But I trust in you, O Lord.
I say, "You are my God."*

In all situations - whether circumstances and pressures bear down upon me
or whether my own wayward actions or prideful inclinations lead
me or my thoughts astray . . . God is my rock and my fortress.

For His Name's sake
[who He is, His character that cannot
change: His faithfulness, His stated steadfast love,
His holiness...],

God

saves me
leads me
guides me
redeems me
protects me

God is our/your/my refuge.

He:: sees my affliction
keeps me safe
knows the distress of my soul [at depths I likely don't know myself]

He sees, hears and is gracious with me in my times of anguish, sorrow, shame
and fear.

My times are in His hand.

He makes his face to shine upon me.
He saves me in in steadfast love.
His goodness is abundant.

He protects me.

He wondrously shows his steadfast love.

He sees me and hears my cries for help

Even when I *feel* "cut off from (His) sight," I can never be cut off from Him
(according to and as determined by Him.)

Truth that is hard to believe since nothing in this world offers such un-
earned, unwarranted love and safety.

Lord...

help me rest in Truth

Step in and fuel my trust

so that I might step out,

stand upon and

be anchored in/on your

solid (unmovable, unshakeable) ground.



BE(not do)ATTITUDES

INTRODUCTION

MATTHEW 5, PSALM 84

The Beatitudes, in particular, are not teachings on how to be blessed.

They are not instructions to do anything. They do not indicate conditions that are especially pleasing to God or good for human beings. No one is actually being told that they are better off for being poor, for mourning, for being persecuted, and so on, or that the conditions listed are recommended ways to well-being before God or man. Nor are the Beatitudes indications of who will be on top “after the revolution.”

They are explanations and illustrations, drawn from the immediate setting, of the present availability of the kingdom through personal relationship to Jesus. They single out cases that provide proof that, in him, the rule of God from the heavens truly is available in life circumstances that are beyond all human hope.

- Dallas Willard

We are faced, pretty much from our beginning, by dueling economies. The first is imbedded in our psyche from the outside—in through the word’s if-then economy (if you do this, then you will be okay) and religion’s performance gospel. It looks like our identity shaped and judged by standard of the world – like acumen, achievement, a group, a score, a GPA, boxes to be checked ... etc. and easily overwhelms.

The second operates from the inside-out, from God’s presence and power that He has placed within us through his Spirit that lives in and through us.

Maybe that’s why we have the Beatitudes. To help move our perspective from outside forces/pressures instead to inside Truth. God’s because-then economy: Because you are (loved, cherished, seen, known, redeemed ... you’re okay!) – then go. Saturated by and in God’s shalom peace (whole and complete), we can go and do.

Overwhelmed is undeniably powerful. It is most powerful when attached to Truth—with all of its grace, peace, hope, and love. By opting to be overwhelmed by Truth instead of the culture’s stress and pressures, we get hit with blasts of oxygen rather than pulled down by feelings of drowning.

The BEattitudes: blessing flowing out from Christ’s justification, offer freedom from the world’s “do in order to be”, offer an open invitation to “be who we are” as determined and declared by God, through Christ who has redeemed us.

Every hour of every day, God is richly blessing us; both when we sleep and when we wake, His mercy waits upon us.

– Charles Spurgeon

World's vs God's economy

Doing in order to be verses BEING (because we *are*, as declared and determined by God) in order to do. Not in our power, our strength our wisdom, our way BUT in and by God's.

The Beatitudes are us *now* (present), the blessing of **BEing who we are** as determined and declared by God, through Christ who has redeemed us.

Begin with prayer, "Lord, open my eyes that I might see what you have to show me in your Word."

Read: **Matthew 5: 1-20**

Consider context: who, what, when, where and why.

What is/has been your relationship with the 8 "Blessed" statements, known as the Beatitudes, from Jesus' Sermon on the Mount? How do you feel when met with these statements?

What do/can we learn about salt and light? Though these might be seen as indictments or warnings, how might this actually set us free?

What is Jesus revealing about our relationship with performance/religion in vv 17-20?

How does *his* fulfillment of the Law inform righteousness in form and practice?

Read: **1 Samuel 15:24 - 16:16**

Consider context: who, what, when, where and why.

[Quick overview: After being set from Egypt and slavery, the LORD acted as their king through Judges – beginning with Moses and ending with Samuel when the nation of Israel asked him “to appoint for us a king to judge us like all the nations.”

The LORD directed Samuel to “(o)bey the voice of the people in all that they say to you, for they have not rejected you, but they have rejected me from being king over them.” (1 Samuel 8:5,7). As Samuel granted their request, he told them to “fear the LORD and serve the him faithfully with all your heart. For consider what great things He has done for you.” Samuel also warned, “But if you still do wickedly, you shall be swept away, both you and your king.” Which is where we meet David.]

What do we learn about God in today’s passage? Is he surprised by this turn of events? What is revealed in these passages about God’s character?

What do we learn about Saul? Samuel? Jesse? David?

Who is the initiator. What is revealed about God’s power, rule, authority and plan?

How does He involve people in his plan? Why do you think He does this?

Read: **Isaiah 59:14 - 60:5a**

Make a list of what is revealed about God

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What does God reveal about the world? about the true king and Savior?

Again, who is the initiator? What is He revealing about light, glory and strength?

How might this inform the passage from Matthew 5?

Greatly ought we to rejoice that God dwells in our soul; and more greatly ought we to rejoice that our soul dwells in God. Our soul is created to be God’s dwelling place, and the dwelling of our souls is God, who is uncreated.

It is a great understanding to see and know inwardly that God, who is our Creator, dwells in our soul, and it is a far greater understanding to see and know inwardly that our soul, which is created, dwells in God in substance, of which substance, through God, we are what we are.

– Julian of Norwich

Mindful of *application*.

- What role does *doing* and *being* play in your daily life?
- What does the text teach me about *being*? about God?
- What truths (or promises) do I need to claim?
- What thought(s) will I carry throughout the day/week?

Spend time in prayer, asking God to further reveal himself as you go forth this week.

SETTLED

The LORD has bared his arm before the eyes of all the nations, and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God.

God IS —

which invites us to BE

to BE still and to know
to BE (because you are) : settled
 safe
 okay

Because ...

God IS : my refuge
 my strength
 my "very present"/well-proved help in times of trouble

Therefore: I need not fear in any circumstance
 in any situation

The LORD of Hosts (Jehovah Sabaoth) I S with us

The LORD I S my Fortress (Jehovah Magen)

consider - remember - remind - ponder - behold - contemplate

the works of the LORD

the ONE who says:

"be still and know that I am God"

GOD alone is ever present

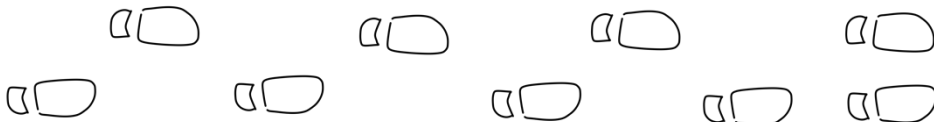
my help
my refuge
my strength

God alone made a way for me to know (experience-know) him

So...

I can BE (still) — even/especially as I walk
 as I wait

BE because you are



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Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven

MATTHEW 5:3

BE

whole, at rest, proven, settled

BECAUSE YOU ARE

Not the spiritual giants, but the "poor in spirit," as he called them, the ones who, spiritually speaking, have absolutely nothing to give and absolutely everything to receive, like the Prodigal telling his father "I am not worthy to be called thy son," only to discover for the first time all he had in having a father.

Fredrick Buechner

Do we find our identity in the things we do? I can sure think of times when I have.

Years ago, I worked at the White House, traveling the U.S. and many parts of the world as a Lead Advance for the Vice President. I can think of many times I was comfortable in my skin because of my employer. I could even get a stroke from something as ridiculous as a bag-tag.

Whenever working a foreign trip, we would be given a tag to put on our luggage that had the official White House insignia, the trip information and our name in bold print. We would keep the tags on our bags even after the trip – the number of tags indicating some level of prestige.

I'm embarrassed to think of the warm feelings I would get when an airline ticketing agent would notice my special name tag and sometimes even bump me to first class. I was "special" simply by association, by a fleeting identifier that comes and goes as Administrations change.

But, dare we receive our true identity, a "citizen" of heaven. To lean into the settled self that comes with absolute, eternal (yesterday, today & tomorrow) acceptance by God. We have been made free from striving, achieving, and searching by Christ who sits on the throne of heaven having declared, "It is finished", complete. We have been made whole: "my peace I give to you" by Jehovah Shalom ... "on earth, as it is in heaven."

Dare we receive? the glorious end of striving? This LIGHTness of being as the Light of the world eternally bosses darkness and the ways of this world, is ours. He stands ready to help us live it.

Have you ever allowed your identity to be informed by what you are doing? When/where?

Did it last? How did you feel when change entered the picture?

But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body..

Philippians 3:20-21

The Beatitudes begin with the considering the condition of our heart/soul, harkening back to Samuel's admonition in our lesson last week to "fear [wonder/awe] the LORD and serve the him faithfully with all your heart" with thankfulness – focus on all God has done/is doing/will do.

Living/dwelling in blessing (in joy) is the posture of our inside-self, our spirit.

BLESSED ARE THE POOR IN SPIRIT, FOR THEIRS IS THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN.

Blessed are: we ARE (essence of our being) blessed according to HIS doing (not ours)

Poor in spirit: Humility: no more striving or having to be or to prove or justify ourselves.

Rather than the opposite: *rich* in our spirit (focus-on-self). Puffing up or putting down through comparison, blame, shame, one-upmanship; "trusting in (ourselves) that we are righteous" based on what we have or haven't done.

True humility is not thinking less of yourself, it's thinking of yourself less.

– CS Lewis

Kingdom of heaven: we can experience what God has given us: heaven – eternal Light, Life, peace now, today – informing and authority over all things.

Begin with prayer, "Lord, open my eyes that I might see what you have to show me in your Word."

Read: **Luke 18: 9-14**

Consider context: who, what, when, where and why.

Consider lingering a bit longer on *why*. Why do you think Jesus would share this parable? How does it describe the world's economy/human nature?

What does this reveal about Jesus' love for the people to whom is speaking?

Compare and contrast the players in this story – similarities & differences.

	PHARISEE (making his case)	TAX COLLECTOR (asking for mercy)
SIMILAR		
DIFFERENT		

What is the pharisee revealing about himself? Though he “is not like” others, how is he actually like his judgements? imprisoned?

What is the tax collector revealing about himself?

What naturally results when we “trust in (ourselves)”? when we’re honest with ourselves?

What aspects of each character can you related to or struggle with?

How can “one who humbles himself... be exalted”?

Doing mode is focused on action and accomplishment and tells you there’s always more you could be doing. The being mode is focused on presence, mindfulness, and the journey rather than the goal, and tells you that your intrinsic value and self-worth depend on who you are, not what you do. – Anonymous

Read: **1 Samuel 17:12-40**

Consider context: who, what, when, where and why.

What is David’s posture with his father? with his brothers? with the men of Israel? With Saul?

What see regarding David’s heart/mind-set? How do his actions reveal his heart?

How does Saul respond and what does this reveal about his heart?

What is revealed about God in this passage?

Taking into account that all of this occurred after Samuel anointed David, what can we learn about David and a *spirit of humility*?

A song of Ascent. Of David

O Lord, my heart is not lifted up;
my eyes are not raised too high;
I do not occupy myself with things
too great and too marvelous for me.
But I have calmed and quieted my soul,
like a weaned child with its mother;
like a weaned child is my soul within me.

O Israel, hope in the Lord
from this time forth and forevermore

Psalms 131

Read: **Psalms 84**

Make a list of what is revealed about God: who He is, the things He says/speaks, the things He does (explicit/implied), ...

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Consider dwell and dwelling place. What do these mean? How do we dwell? How can dwelling lead to our being (vs. doing)?

What are the “blessed” statements in this Psalm?

What does “blessed” mean? What does a thesaurus search offer? Jot down a few as you think through them.

How is the blessing ignited?

You're blessed when you're content with just who you are—no more, no less. That's the moment you find yourselves proud owners of everything that can't be bought.

Eugene Peterson

Mindful of *application of our*

- What's happening in life? has you hiding? tricked you into being in control?
- What does the text teach me about God?
- What truths (or promises) do I need to claim?
- What thought(s) will I carry throughout the day/week?

Spend time in prayer, asking God to further reveal himself as you go forth this week.

LOVED

The LORD made it known to me and I knew

God: calls
 calls me
 calls me the "beloved" of his soul
 his heritage

God: knows
 knows me
 knows my heart
 my thoughts
 my surroundings
 my circumstances
 my challenges
 my wins & losses
 my hardships

God: makes
 makes things
 makes things known

and I know.

God: tells the truth
 directs my path and thoughts
 warns me : don't believe the lies, liars speak friendly words;
 "(My Name) is near in their mouth, far from their heart"

God: protects and avenges



BE(not do)ATTITUDES

Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted

MATTHEW 5:4

BE

comforted, consoled, encouraged, supported

BECAUSE YOU ARE

During my first year as Chaplain here, our much-loved Head Porter, Ray Smith, died quite suddenly and quite young. His daughter was my scout on Staircase 3. I was preparing to take the funeral, and she told me she wouldn't come to it. Why on earth not, I said, of course you must come. 'Well,' she said, 'I know I'll just cry and cry.' 'That's precisely why you must come,' I said. That's what a funeral is for, and don't let anyone tell you different.'

Grief is the shadow side of love; not to grieve implies that you haven't loved, and, if you have, then not to grieve is to live a lie. But truth will out sooner or later, and sooner is better. She came; and she grieved; and she was comforted.

And so the comfort which Jesus promises as part of the blessing of the Kingdom, the comfort which will be fully ours in the new world which God will make, comes forward from that world to meet us in the present. Thank God, there is both a future hope and an anticipation of that future hope in the present. – NT Wright

Is mourning compassion? Is it recognizing/leaning into the existence and reality of death? Is it calling out anything that is not alive/life? Is mourning something that must happen in order to live? ... to be able to be fully alive?

Then there's *comfort*, the promise given and delivered by Christ. Is comfort HOPE? Seemingly – yes. Hope that reigns eternal. The hope that *is* Christ, as we are made alive (the alive that is forever) even in the presence of death.

That is who we are. Alive. Made alive in and by Christ.

We can mourn – are invited to mourn – *must* mourn. Which takes us to our deepest place of vulnerability and honesty, touching (giving access to) the depth of our soul. God's seeing and engaging (not turning away, but coming toward/meeting us) is the essence of comfort. We grieve that we may experience/know comfort – Jesus, who is comfort.

No need to fear or hide from our dead-ness.

No need to cover it up or fix it.

No need to try to make is look less dead or to ignore/justify/blame.

We can simply lay our mourning in the Comforter's lap, crawl up into safety and grieve things that are not alive in the arms of steadfast love.

And breathe.

And receive.

Comfort.

Without grieving, we might fail to experience it.

Have you ever mourned? Why, when & how?

Have you ever mourned something that did not involve a physical death? How did it impact you?

*You turned my loud crying into dancing.
You removed my clothes of sadness and dressed me with joy.
So my heart will sing your praises. I can't keep silent.
Lord, my God, I will praise you forever.*

Psalm 30:11-12

BLESSED ARE THOSE WHO MOURN, FOR THEY SHALL BE COMFORTED.

Those who mourn: *to grieve or lament* (cry, weep) over death, over all things that are not alive, over things that steal rather than give life.

Comfort: the easing or alleviating of deep grief; informing and transforming all things that are not alive by and through Resurrection life.

Begin with prayer, "Lord, open my eyes that I might see what you have to show me in your Word."

Read 2 Samuel 11:1-5, 26 – 12:23

We're jumping ahead in David's story to the time after he is placed as king over the nation of Israel. Consider the context (who, what, when, where, why):

In vv 11:1-5, what do is revealed about David?

In 11:26 – 12:23, there's a lot going on in this story. Let's consider the characters and track their engagement with things that are not alive or bringing life as we consider mourning and comfort.

Bathsheba _____

Nathan _____

David _____

What can we learn about types of things that involve death (things that are not alive, that steal life) and how they impact our ability to live (physical death, desire, sin, ...).

What is declared by Nathan in v.13 that informs David's mourning? How does this comfort David even as consequences are declared?

Where does David turn?

What can we learn from David about mourning and comfort?

Where do we see Christ/Resurrection life in this story?

How had David believed and acted upon the ways of the world? Our actions may not be extreme like David's, but how can we find ourselves doing the same thing?

God has not been trying an experiment on my faith or love in order to find out their quality. He knew it already. It was I who didn't. In this trial He makes us occupy the dock, the witness box, and the bench all at once. He always knew that my temple was a house of cards. His only way of making me realize the fact was to knock it down.

— C.S. Lewis, *A Grief Observed*

Read John 11:1-44

Consider the context (who, what, when, where, why):

Jesus, comfort incarnate, does not shy away from grief and mourning. What does he reveal about:

His knowledge

His power

His authority

His tenderness, compassion and love (as it meets each person in their unique need)

Grieving

Comfort

Resurrection LIFE

What is happening in your situation/circumstance that involves death. How can/does this offer hope?

Why is it important to grieve?

He heals the brokenhearted
and binds up their wounds.
He determines the number of the stars
and calls them each by name.
Great is our Lord and mighty in power;
his understanding has no limit.

Psalm 147:3-5

Read Psalm **40**

What is revealed about God?

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What is revealed about comfort?

What can we learn about hope, steadfast love, protection, provision and peace in this passage?

Mindful of *application of our*

- What grief
- What does the text teach me about God?
- What truths (or promises) do I need to claim?
- What thought(s) will I carry throughout the day/week?

Spend time in prayer, asking God to further reveal himself as you go forth this week.

NEAR

*The Lord is near to the brokenhearted
and saves the crushed in spirit.*

I will praise the Lord at all times. My soul (the depth of my being) makes its boast in the Lord.

Let us sing *together* - so that we can hear and experience Truth, *together*.

When we seek God, genuinely/humbly seek

God: answers me
delivers me from all my foes
makes me radiant and unashamed (wow!)

For God: hears
saves me out of all my trouble
encamps around and delivers me

"Oh taste and see that the LORD is good."

GOD IS NEAR

Our afflictions may be many, our hearts may be broken and our spirits crushed,

But God:

delivers us out
keeps us safe
redeems the life of his servant

GOD IS NEAR

His name Elohim Mikarov (God who is near) stated by himself, of himself, comforts his people during times when God feels far-off:



"Am I a God who is near," declares the Lord, "and not a God far off? Can a man hide himself in hiding places so I do not see him?"

Jesus embodied (literally, physically) nearness.

Jesus - Immanuel (God with us) told his disciples to tell the people, "the kingdom of God *has come near*"² (*a completed and perfected verb tense.*)

GOD IS NEAR -

yesterday, today and forever.

¹ Jeremiah 23:23-24; ² Luke 10:9b

BE(not do)ATTITUDES

Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth

MATTHEW 5:5

BE

content, strengthened, proven, whole

BECAUSE YOU ARE

On the topic of meekness, here's a little something from George MacDonald

The meek man may indeed take much thought, but it will not be for himself.

He never builds an exclusive wall, shuts any honest neighbor out. He will not always serve the wish, but always the good of his neighbor. His service must be true service. Self shall be no umpire in affair of his.

Man's consciousness of himself is but a shadow: the meek man's self always vanishes in the light of a real presence. His nature lies open to the Father of men, and to every good impulse is as it were empty.

No bristling importance, no vain attendance of fancied rights and wrongs, guards his door, or crowds the passages of his house; they are for the angels to come and go. Abandoned thus to the truth, as the sparks from the gleaming river dip into the flowers of Dante's unperfected vision, so the many souls of the visible world, lights from the father of lights, enter his heart freely; and by them he inherits the earth he was created to inherit--possesses it as his father made him capable of possessing, and the earth of being possessed.

Because the man is meek, his eye is single; he sees things as God sees them, as he would have his child see them: to confront creation with pure eyes is to possess it.

Blessed are the meek seems an odd statement, until we understand the place of stability from which it springs, best realized by experiencing. And, the only way to experience meekness is to practice it – leaning on, tapping into the source that declares us settled and strong, proven – so we can take a break from proving ourselves to see and encourage the person walking alongside.

What do you think when considering meekness?

Is meek easy or hard for you? Why?

BLESSED ARE THE MEEK, **FOR THEY SHALL INHERIT THE EARTH.**

the meek: the Greek word "praus" translated as "meek" does not imply weakness, but rather a gentle/steady/stable power, resting in/anchored on God's will and strength. It is not to be confused with weakness; rather, it is strength under control.

Inherit the earth: live and experience each day (in the present) and all that surrounds us (the happy, the sad, the pauses, the trials, the victories) in fullness, contentment and wonder – settled.

Begin with prayer, "Lord, open my eyes that I might see what you have to show me in your Word."

Read **1 Samuel 17:41-58**

Consider the context as we pick up from where we left off in week 2, a quick refresh on who, what, when, where & why.

What are Goliath's thoughts as he sees David and why?

What is David literally resting in and on in order to move forward and face Goliath?

Does he appear to waver or tremble? Why or why not?

If God is the same yesterday, today and forever, AND if God loves, cares and covers you as He did David, how can this inform your day's happenings/circumstances?

Where can we find strength/rest?

How can we best tap into it?

How does/do David, Saul, the people react? What does this reveal about them?

How does trusting in and acting through God's ordinance and power (in good or bad situations) invite freedom to live in wholeness in the present? (might be a weird question, but possibly worth some thoughts as we each face our own circumstances – good & bad).

Go, eat your bread with joy, and drink you wine with a
merry heart, for God has already approved what you do.
Let your garments be always white. Let not oil be lacking
on your head. Enjoy life...

Ecclesiastes 9:7-9a

Read **Isaiah 52: 1-12**

What is revealed about God?

What is can we learn about God's strength and power?

What word picture is given to receiving God's strength in v.1? How can it help us lean into God's rather than our own strength?

What else?...

Read **Psalms 27** – a Psalm of David

Where do we find David?

How can you (someone you love, someone you're walking life alongside) relate?

What is revealed about God?

What is revealed about God's strength and power? How can it inform your day?

Meekness:

For what is more lovely than a mouth that knows not how to insult, but is used to bless and give good words? ... Reflecting then on these things, become like (Christ), to the utmost of your power. No longer then will the devil be able so much as to look you in the face, when you have become such a one as this. For indeed he recognizes the image of the King, he knows the weapons of Christ, whereby he was worsted. And what are these? Gentleness and meekness. For when on the mountain Christ overthrew and laid low the devil who was assaulting him, it was not by making it known that he was Christ, but he entrapped him by these sayings, he took him by gentleness, he turned him to flight by meekness.

— John Chrysostom

Mindful of *application*

- What's trials are you facing, what fears are plaguing – how can tapping into/resting in God's power, provision, protection and peace inform today's day.
- What does the text teach me about God?
- What truths (or promises) do I need to claim?
- What thought(s) will I carry throughout the day/week?

Spend time in prayer, asking God to further reveal himself as you go forth this week.

SHELTER

*In God, whose word I praise,
in the LORD, whose word I praise—
in God I trust and am not afraid.
What can man do to me.*

God is merciful

He: listens
is a place to run when I'm afraid
is trustworthy.

He has P O W E R over my fear (internal emotion)

in God I trust

He has P O W E R over what makes me afraid (external forces)

what can mortal man do to me

so, like the faithful who have gone before us (Noah, Abraham, Esther, Isaac, Joseph, Joshua, Ruth, ...)

I will not be afraid.

Vengeance is the Lord's - according to and based upon His statutes

God is: just
judge
and warrior

God is aware of my fear and tears (even the silent ones). He records my tears on his scroll. He keeps them in his records. God maintains a meticulous record of love and care - keeping count of every single tear that passes our eyes, even when tears stream, singularly indistinguishable. Yet God knows every single one.

An interesting prospect, especially when contrasted to the fact that He (holy justice) keeps no record of our wrong-doings.

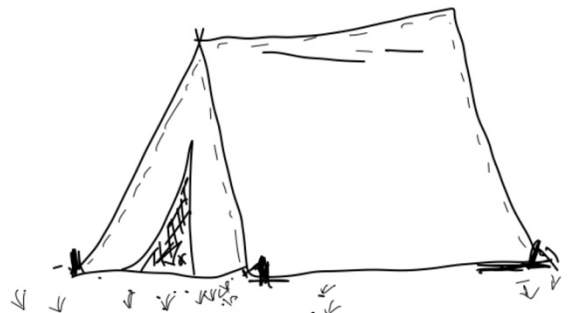
God truly is our Protector and Redeemer.

It is by our Redeemer, Immanuel, the Christ that our record is expunged, willingly taking it upon himself our redemption:

...Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.¹

The Lord makes my enemies run.
His Presence causes them to run away.

God is for me.



¹ Hebrews 12:2

BE(not do)ATTITUDES

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness,
for they will be satisfied.

MATTHEW 5:6

BE

vindicated, defended, protected, proved

BECAUSE YOU ARE

Hungering and thirsting for righteousness (things made right) is a hard. Especially for those who have been desperately wronged and wounded –sometimes by trusted people (people espousing love), sometimes by those in authority, sometimes in God’s name, sometimes with no hope of justice.

And – even if the wrong is outed and judged, most people are generally not fully satisfied with earthly justice. It tends to be imperfect and biased, unable to achieve complete fairness. True justice can only be achieved through God.

Choosing and resting in God (in his protection, authority, justice), we are afforded to experience his justice, to live in freedom, free even in fear, free in lacking earthly justice that avenge the crime, free in the certainty that justice will triumph by the hand of God where good prevails and wrong is punished.

God’s justice actively defends, protects and upholds the oppressed, because He says so. Whether we can see it or not.

This is not saying that what happened is okay, but allowing God to make *us* okay. The Cross is power over all of our sin – the things we have done, things we have left undone **and the things done to us**. Putting it all at in Christ’s sufficient and open arms, gives us access to the overarching power of forgiveness.

Something Auschwitz survivor Eva Kor, who would never have the satisfaction of seeing her oppressor Dr. Joseph Mengele brought to justice, explains:

What I discovered for myself was life-changing. I discovered that I had the power to forgive. No one could give me that power and no one could take it away. It was all mine to use in any way I wished . . .

I imagined Mengele was in the room with me. I picked up a dictionary and wrote down 20 nasty words which I read clear and loud to that make-believe Mengele in the room. And at the end I said, "In spite of all that, I forgive you. . . ." [It] made me feel good. I, the guinea pig of 50 years, even had the power over the Angel of Death of Auschwitz.

I felt free. Free from Auschwitz. Free from Mengele. But now that I had forgiven him, I knew that most of the survivors denounced me, denounce me today. But what is my forgiveness? I like it. It is an act of self-healing, self-liberation, self-empowerment. . . .

I want people to remember that we can never change what happened. That is the tragic part. But we can change how we relate to it.

It's not easy. We never need got it alone. As Paul tells us in Romans, "by him, through him and for him are all things." In His power, though his strength, we are made whole and can live.

(Again, It's probably not an accident that this beatitude comes after meekness.)

*"Is not this laid up in store with me, sealed up in my treasures?
Vengeance is mine, and recompense, for the time when their
foot shall slip; for the day of their calamity is at hand, and their
doom comes swiftly." For the Lord will vindicate his people and
have compassion on his servants...*

Deuteronomy 32:34-36

Have you ever been wronged, pursued justice that did not prevail, leaving you to deal with it?

How do you deal with it?

BLESSED ARE THOSE WHO HUNGER AND THIRST FOR RIGHTEOUSNESS, **FOR THEY SHALL BE SATISFIED.**

hunger & thirst for righteousness: long for/need justice

satisfied: ultimate, full and comprehensive justice that can only come from the One who sees, hears, knows all things across all dimensions and time.

Earthly justice bandages, God's eternal/ultimate justice heals – complete healing that is uniquely His and trustworthy.

Begin with prayer, "Lord, open my eyes that I might see what you have to show me in your Word."

Read: **1 Samuel 24**

Consider the context who, what, when, where & why.

Where do we find David? Why is he on the run? (peek back to 1 Samuel 18:1-9 and 1 Samuel 20:1 for further context).

What is at the core of Saul's indictment? Is it warranted or fair?

How does David respond?

What does David do when afforded the opportunity to gain warranted justice himself?

Why does David choose to offer mercy?

What is the result? . . . with Saul; within himself?

The Lord is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer; my God is
my rock, in whom I take refuge.

Psalm 31:2

Read **Isaiah 51:1-11**

What is revealed about God?

_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

What is revealed about comfort?

What is revealed about God's strength, justice and righteousness?

What is their result?

*The Christian does not think God will love us because we are good, but that God will
make us good because He loves us. – CS Lewis*

Read **Psalm 16**

What can we learn about God?

_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

What does God make known to us? ... when and how?

How can I respond?

“We do not think ourselves into new ways of living,
we live ourselves into new ways of thinking.”

Fr. Richard Rohr

Mindful of *application*

- How can I face unmet/mismet outcomes in safety and wholeness?
- What does the text teach me about God?
- What truths (or promises) do I need to claim?
- What thought(s) will I carry throughout the day/week?

Spend time in prayer, asking God to further reveal himself as you go forth this week.

DELIGHT

He rescued me because He delighted in me.

God is: my strength
my fortress
my deliverer
my rock (unmovable, unshakeable) in whom I take refuge
my shield
my stronghold
my SAVIOR

*He sent from on high, he took me, he drew me out of many waters. He
rescued me from my strong enemy
... the Lord was my support.*

From His temple He hears.
From his temple He rescues.

He rescued me because HE DELIGHTED IN ME

God delights in (adores, cherishes, revels in, loves... likes) us!

When was the last time, any time, someone delighted in you? God does - all day, every day. And He acts on it.

He sets my feet to be secure

He trains me in strength (his strength)

He gives me the shield of salvation

His right hand supports me

His gentleness makes me great

He sets my feet on stability (solid ground) so I don't slip

He equips me with His strength (not mine, but His)

to overcome, to be victorious (His victory through/for us)

He is power over all - He is in all/through all

— THE LORD LIVES —

He (his love) is steadfast.

help me/us to believe, help me/us to receive.

BE(not do)ATTITUDES

Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy

MATTHEW 5:7

BE

seen, known, forgiven, covered by/blanketed in grace

BECAUSE YOU ARE

The essential act of mercy was to pardon; and pardon in its very essence involves the recognition of guilt and ill-desert in the recipient. If crime is only a disease which needs cure, not sin which deserves punishment, it cannot be pardoned. How can you pardon a man for having a gumboil or a club foot?

...Mercy, detached from Justice, grows unmerciful. That is the important paradox. As there are plants which will flourish only in mountain soil, so it appears that Mercy will flower only when it grows in the crannies of the rock of Justice – CS Lewis

Mercy is defined as *compassionate or kindly forbearance shown toward an offender*. It is characterized by grace, compassion and forgiveness.

Jesuit Priest James Keenan calls mercy “the willingness to enter into the chaos of another”. It has everything to do with our operating from a solid sense of worth (as declared and determined by God). Willingness invites compassion and grace (mercy components), so we can see a person as a human being with dignity (including ourselves). It’s never victimization.

Saint Francis of Assisi, an Italian Catholic friar, was known for mercy. In fact, his contemplation of it and wonder at its power earned him the label “channel of mercy.” He embraced, experienced, and took note of mercy’s transformational power as it affected the core level of his soul. Mercy softened and deeply altered him—setting him free from preconceived ideas and perceptions, setting him on a path toward connection with people. Even those he had once thought (through religious teaching) wretched.

In his *Testament*, he shared about his time serving people he did not want to serve and his heart transformation as he did:

It seemed very bitter to me to see lepers. And the Lord Himself led me among them and I had mercy upon them. And when I left them, that which seemed bitter to me was changed into sweetness of soul and body; and afterward I lingered a little and left the world.ⁱ

There's something about extending mercy that opens the door to our receiving and experiencing mercy. And (in some mysterious way) by practicing mercy, we deepen our knowledge and trust in God, in his provision, justice, authority, protection and love. I don't think it's by accident that this mercy beatitude follows the justice beatitude.

[God speaking:]

I will betroth you to me forever.

I will betroth you to me in righteousness and in justice,
in steadfast love and mercy.

I will betroth you to me in faithfulness.

And you shall know the LORD.

– Hosea 2

BLESSED ARE THE MERCIFUL, FOR THEY SHALL BE RECEIVE MERCY.

merciful: seeing beyond the moment to the person/people, compassion & grace, giving dignity to the human beings (Imago-Dei) involved

receive mercy: experience, accept, encounter, pocket, secure, collect, take-in.

In practicing true mercy (which we can only do from a place of wholeness, leaning into and functioning from our identity as declared and determined by Christ), we actually experience God's love, forgiveness, grace and compassion as it flows through us for others.

Begin with prayer, "Lord, open my eyes that I might see what you have to show me in your Word."

Read: **2 Samuel 8:15 – 9:13**

Consider the context who, what, when, where & why.

Who is Mephibosheth? (see 2 Samuel 4:4 for context)

Why is it unusual for David to bring Mephibosheth into his household?

What does this reveal about David? his stability, his heart?

How is David engaging with mercy?

How can receiving God's mercy help us extend it?

*Teach me to feel another's woe, to hide the fault I see,
that mercy I to others show,
that mercy show to me.*

Alexander Pope

Read **Isaiah 30:15-26**

What can we learn about God? What is revealed by Him about Him?

What is revealed about us?

What is the secret about safety and strength?

Who is the Teacher? How does He lead and guide us?

What does this passage reveal about salvation, light and Life?

What else?

Therefore the Lord waits to be gracious to you,
and therefore he exalts himself to show mercy to you.

Isaiah 30:18

Read **Psalm 103**

What can we learn about God? about his faithfulness, he love, his mercy...

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How does David respond?

How can I respond?

Grace is something you can never get but can only be given. There's no way to earn it or deserve it or bring it about any more than you can deserve the taste of raspberries and cream or earn good looks or bring about your own birth...

The grace of God means something like: "Here is your life. You might never have been, but you are, because the party wouldn't have been complete without you. Here is the world. Beautiful and terrible things will happen. Don't be afraid. I am with you. Nothing can ever separate us. It's for you I created the universe. I love you."

There's only one catch. Like any other gift, the gift of grace can be yours only if you'll reach out and take it.

Maybe being able to reach out and take it is a gift too.

– Frederick Beuchner

Mindful of *application*

- How can I receive and extend mercy today (to others, as well as myself)?
- What does the text teach me about God?
- What truths (or promises) do I need to claim?
- What thought(s) will I carry throughout the day/week?

Spend time in prayer, asking God to further reveal himself as you go forth this week.

ISAIAH 30
ATTENTIVE

*Whether you turn to the right or to the left, your ears will hear a voice behind you, saying,
"This is the way; walk in it."*

In	{	returning	to Him
		thinking	
		considering	
		focusing on	
		coming back	
and	{	rest	in Him
		respite	
		settledness	
		peace	
		stillness	

you shall be saved.

In quietness and trust shall be your strength.

God is patient : "He waits to be gracious to you."
"He glorifies himself to show mercy to you."

God is attentive: "He will surely be gracious to you at the sound of your cry"
as soon as He hears it HE ANSWERS
(period)
(regardless whether I can see or hear his answer)

The LORD "binds up"
the brokenness
heals
heals the inflicted wounds

BE(not do)ATTITUDES

Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God

MATTHEW 5:8

BE

justified, undivided, uncontaminated, spotless

BECAUSE YOU ARE

. . . I have the immense joy of being [hu]man, a member of a race in which God Himself became incarnate. As if the sorrows and stupidities of the human condition could overwhelm me, now [that] I realize what we all are. And if only everybody could realize this! But it cannot be explained. There is no way of telling people that they are all walking around shining like the sun. . . .

Then it was as if I suddenly saw the secret beauty of their hearts, the depths of their hearts where neither sin nor desire nor self-knowledge can reach, the core of their reality, the person that each one is in God's eyes. If only they could see themselves as they really are. If only we could see each other that way all the time.

– Thomas Merton

Pure heart is characterized by integrity of character – no duplicity, no contradiction between thoughts, intentions, and actions. It is calling out and ditching the things that grab our attention and thoughts toward the ways of this world that are counter to God's.

Easy idols trick us into believing we are okay when we buy in. They find life in things like being in a certain group or profession, achieving certain pinnacles (athletic, academic, professional, etc.), attending certain schools, looking a certain way, wearing a certain size, driving a certain car, living on a certain block, accumulating, achieving, having a powerhouse resumé.

The lengthy list goes on, because that's the thing about idols, the never really satisfy. There's always more to get or gain as measuring marks move and *enough* remains elusive.

Calling them out and letting them go offers freedom. Focusing instead on grounding thoughts in truth. To be pure in heart means to be single-minded in who we actually are, our deepest truest self, our basic and unchangeable identity in God. Rather than be contaminated by false self or distracted by life's would's, should's, could's, blame or shame.

Pure is undivided, singular, free from contaminates – which we can be, because we are, through Christ who has made us pure.

What pressures or circumstances threaten to overwhelm your day? Or put another way, what ignites anxiety or fear in your heart?

How might Truth extinguish those flames?

It is safe to tell the pure in heart that they shall see God,
for only the pure in heart want to.

CS Lewis

BLESSED ARE THE PURE IN HEART, FOR THEY SHALL SEE GOD.

pure: not mixed or adulterated with any other substance or material; without extraneous & unnecessary elements, free of any contaminates, wholesome, clean, spotless

in heart: integrity of character, focused, clear in our heart – the spiritual center of life where thoughts, desires, sense of purpose, will, understanding, and character reside. Made pure by Christ.

see God: hear, see, understand, experience Truth of who we are in God's eyes. To be close/near in our soul – rather than distracted by pressures, measurements and standards of the world.

Begin with prayer, "Lord, open my eyes that I might see what you have to show me in your Word."

Read: **Isaiah 41**

Who is speaking? _____

What does God reveal about himself?

What does God declare over us?

What does he promise (“I will...”). What does he say about fulfillment?

What can we learn about idols and the ways of the world?

Where does our strength come from? How can it be renewed?

To be loved but not known is comforting but superficial. To be known and not loved is our greatest fear. But to be fully known and truly loved is, well, a lot like being loved by God. It is what we need more than anything. It liberates us from pretense, humbles us out of our self-righteousness, and fortifies us for any difficulty life can throw at us.

Tim Keller

Read: **2 Samuel 7:18-29**

Consider the context who, what, when, where & why.

Where is David’s focus? What guards his heart?

What does David reveal about God?

How does this inform his heart, his inner-self?

Take a moment to write your own gratitude prayer, calling out God’s faithfulness, power, authority as it relates to your own circumstances. Remembering that just as God’s promises impact David’s life, they impact yours – for they all lead back to and are anchored in Christ (the greater story that informs all stories)

Read **Psalm 81**

What can we learn about God? about his faithfulness, he love, his mercy...

What can I learn about me/my propensity in this Psalm?

For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named, that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith—that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

Ephesians 3:14-19

Mindful of *application*

- How can I practically function from the self I am in God's eyes?
 - What does the text teach me about God?
 - What truths (or promises) do I need to claim?
 - What thought(s) will I carry throughout the day/week?
-
-
-
-
-

Spend time in prayer, asking God to further reveal himself as you go forth this week.

MIGHTY

*"The LORD your God is in your midst, a mighty one who will save;
he will rejoice over you with gladness;
he will quiet you with his love"*

The King: The LORD my God is
- in my midst
- mighty

The King: The LORD my God:
saves
rejoices over me with happiness (with delight)
calms me with his love
celebrates over me with loud singing
comforts suffering
deals with my oppressors (for vengeance is HIS)

The King: The LORD my God:
saves the lame
gathers the outcast
changes/transforms shame into rejoicing
brings me in

The King: The LORD my God:
R E S T O R E S

So . . .

I can sing
I can celebrate/rejoice with all my heart
I need never fear evil

I can BE strengthened
I can BE restored
I can BE at peace, because I am (through Him)



BE(not do)ATTITUDES

Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God

MATTHEW 5:9

BE

at peace, a reflection of peace, an heir of peace, His

BECAUSE YOU ARE

I recently spent some time studying one of the simplest verses in the New Testament: “blessed are the peacemakers.” There are no tricky words in this verse, no difficult Greek to parse. To be blessed means to be happy or to experience God’s favor; to be a peacemaker is to (wait for it!) make peace. But though the words are simple, the application takes some work. Essentially, Jesus is saying that peace *with* God leads us to make peace *like* God.

Timothy Chailles

All of us have come into contact with peace making and peace keeping.

When I was young, each August my family would embark on an adventure, in the car, cross country. We are a family of six. Which meant a lot of luggage (which rode in a carrier attached to the roof of our blue Buick station wagon) and tight spaces, and limited (poor at best) air-conditioning – this was the 70’s.

My sister, brothers and I would fight for a seat with space, shade and cool-air. We fought over other things too, not excessively but enough to garner a stern finger-snapping from my mom from the front seat followed by the drawing of imaginary (not to be crossed) lines down the seats to keep some peace.

Did they work? Not so much. But they made us laugh and mimic – as if a fake line could be a real boundary. My folks knew it too. But what else was there to do on long road trips on hot summer days.

We might think the same thing about Christ’s declaration upon us the blessing of peacemaker. As if humans can do that – make peace. We want peace. But we also want it *our* way. Which really isn’t peace at all.

But God . . . never sets us up for failure. He always points us toward freedom. The secret to the peace, like all the other paths to freedom, is Christ – Jehovah Shalom, the ultimate, ever-present, all-powerful, complete and whole peace. Not in or of ourselves, but by and through Him.

Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.

John 14:27

BLESSED ARE THE PEACEMAKERS, **FOR THEY SHALL BE CALLED SONS OF GOD.**

peace maker: give and receive peace; unity, together, chaos to order; not peace creator, but maker; someone who brings about peace in conflicted spaces; creating environments where mutual understanding and cooperation can thrive.

"A peace maker: We decide to look at others, whatever their position, whoever they are, not as rivals to beat out but as brothers and sisters to love into wholeness."

Eugene Peterson

sons of God: receive, linger in, live out peace from the source of peace that flows forth from Him within us; a statement of character, bearing resemblance. God is the initiator, we are the image bearer (Imago Dei)

Arise, shine, for your light has come,
and the glory of the Lord has risen upon you.
For behold, darkness shall cover the earth,
and thick darkness the peoples;
but the Lord will arise upon you,
and his glory will be seen upon you.

Isaiah 60:1-2

Begin with prayer, "Lord, open my eyes that I might see what you have to show me in your Word."

Read: **2 Samuel 3**

Consider the context who, what, when, where & why.

Who is Abner?

What resulted from Abner's altercation with one of Saul's sons?

How does David respond? Why is this unusual?

How is David a peacemaker (in his role as King, leader of God's people, authority over his army)?

How does God and David's source of identity (not only as king, but as God's child) play a role?

What else?

On the cross, Jesus didn't destroy the enemy. He destroyed the enmity that separates us from God, ourselves, and others.

Jesus wasn't a peacekeeper, He was a peacemaker. A peacekeeper is someone who avoids conflict, a peacemaker is someone who creates peace in conflicted spaces.

Jamie Winship

Read: **Isaiah 26:1-12**

What can we learn about peace in this song of Judah?

What is revealed about God? How is He the source of peace

How does God's righteousness and justice inform and empower peace.

How does this inspire our practicing peace?

What situations or circumstances today offer an opportunity for peace-making?

The Son of God became a man to enable
men to become the sons of God.

CS Lewis

Read **Psalm 25**

What can we learn about God?

What does this Psalm of David provide insight on his approach to Abner? His receiving, welcoming, and grieving Abner?

What is revealed about God's blessing? ... blessing in receiving and extending peace?

"For he himself is our peace, who has made the two groups one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, by setting aside in his flesh the law with its commands and regulations. His purpose was to create in himself one new humanity out of the two, thus making peace, and in one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility."

-Ephesians 2:14-16

Mindful of *application*

- How can I practically function from the self I am in God's eyes?
- What does the text teach me about God?
- What truths (or promises) do I need to claim?
- What thought(s) will I carry throughout the day/week?

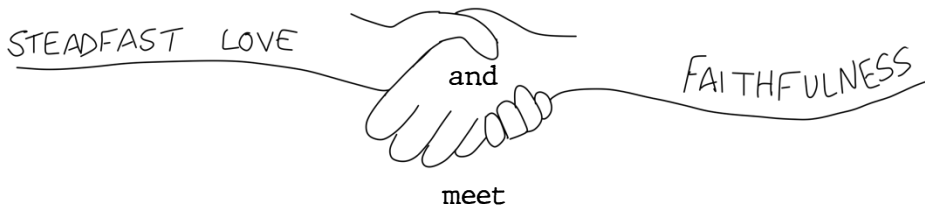
Spend time in prayer, asking God to further reveal himself as you go forth this week.

EVERYTHING, EVERYWHERE, ALWAYS

*"Faithfulness springs up from the ground, and righteousness looks
down from the sky."*

The LORD God is from

STRENGTH TO STRENGTH



righteousness and peace kiss each other

LOVE OVERWHELMS

*"Faithfulness springs up from the ground,
and righteousness looks down from the sky."*

above & below

EVERYTHING

EVERYWHERE

ALWAYS

The LORD will give what is good (He can't not, for He is faithful)

There is no weakness or glitch or pause or outage

HE IS STRENGTH

lasting	peace
unrelenting	&
permanent	love
perpetual	

BE(not do)ATTITUDES

Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake,
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Matthew 5:10-11a

Blessed are YOU when others revile you and persecute you and
utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account.

Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven

BE

joy-filled

BECAUSE YOU ARE

The Lucky Persecuted

"Blessed are those who are persecuted"

Eugene Peterson

Unfriendly waters do a friendly
Thing: curses, cataract-hurled
Stones, make the rough places
Smooth; a rushing whitewater stream
Of blasphemies hate-launched,
Then caught by the sun, sprays rainbow
Arcs across the Youghiogheny.
Savaged by the river's impersonal
Attack the land is deepened to bedrock.
Wise passivities are learned
In quiet, craggy occasional pools
That chasten the wild waters to stillness,
And hold them under hemlock green
For birds and deer to bathe and drink
In peace — persecution's gift:
The hard-won, blessed letting be.

On the topic of persecution, our thoughts can quickly travel to the Joan of Arcs or Dietrich Bonhoffers. And we cringe, hoping their story to not be ours. Because they were persecuted – to the point of physical death.

But persecution isn't always martyrdom. Persecution is everyday sneaky too, quietly humming in the background, laughing and pointing fingers at the ridiculousness of faith, ever-luring our eyes off Truth and onto fleeting logic that steals joy.

I'm reminded of one such experience which I shared in *Not the Boss of Us*.

When I was in high school, I dipped my toe then dove into the inviting waters of an eating disorder. It started with a skinny girl on a diet, as if any teen girl should be on a diet, and ended at full-blown self-destruction mode.

By the time I was a junior in college, I looked up one day and found myself in dire need of help. Asking for help wasn't hard. But there were parts of the help that *were* hard—like actually getting it—and, for me, coming to grips with my faith and the role it had played and didn't play in my life. Because, how could my claimed faith in God and redemption ever be informing a life that literally wallowed in performance pressures.

I needed the not-alone part of getting into a program for help. I learned so much by sitting in group counseling with a drug addict, a teenage prostitute, a middle-aged morbidly obese man, an overweight shopaholic elderly woman, and a fourteen-year-old anorexic who was my roommate. From the outside, we were a gathering of misfits. On the inside, we were all alike.

All of us had been reaching for self-destructive methods to cope with the pressures in our very different lives—our striving, our circumstances, our need to be known, to belong, and to be loved, really, just to be okay. Our environments vastly differed from each other, yet it amazed me how similar we all were. It still does.

So when the concept of faith entered the picture—as it does in most recovery programs—I had a hard time accepting that putting my faith in a higher power, even in an object like a chair (the example presented to us since it really didn't matter what it was as long as we could get our eyes off ourselves), was the answer.

"I don't think the chair is going to cut it," I announced after taking a deep breath. "I get the needing faith part. And I understand that the higher power can be pictured in our minds as that chair. But I have to say out loud that I'm pretty sure God is the One who can fix this."

I was scared of the rejection that I expected to hit me on the other side of those words, which it did. "If God is your answer," the morbidly obese man scoffed, "why are you here?" "Yeah," another ridiculed, "whatever god you've got isn't listening, for sure not answering." Nods and quiet laughter circled the room.

"I don't know," I told them. "I think my being here probably has more to do with me and my messed-up thinking than it does with God. But I don't know. Still, I'm betting on God."

I figured my understanding (whether I could or couldn't) didn't change God. So, I might have felt foolish in front of them, but I held on to the hem and hoped for answers.

God's answer meets us. It is true, steadfast, unwavering, LIFE & love. It's the only sure thing.

Maybe persecution is a gift, the plate on which its promise (for *theirs is the kingdom of heaven*) is served, the chance to experience what Jesus prayed: *May it be on earth as it is in heaven*.

Where do your thoughts travel when considering persecution?

Have you (or someone you loved) experienced persecution for righteousness sake? How did it go?

But Jesus taught us to pray: “Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on Earth as it is in heaven.” If we really take that seriously, then we realize the Christian story is not about how humans get from earth to heaven. It’s about how God comes to live with us in the new heaven and the new earth. These will be combined: The last chapters of the Bible in the Book of Revelation aren’t about saved souls going up to heaven. They are about how the dwelling of God is now with humans.

NT Wright

BLESSED ARE THE PERSECUTED, **FOR THEIRS IS THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN.**

persecuted: subjected to sarcasm, hostility and ill-treatment based on beliefs; harassed, oppressed or annoyed persistently

Kingdom of Heaven: experiencing “on earth as it is in heaven”, the glories of eternity (yesterday, today, tomorrow) that are sewn in TODAY

Begin with prayer, “Lord, open my eyes that I might see what you have to show me in your Word.”

Read: **2 Samuel 3:22-39**

Picking up where we left off last week with Abner and David. Consider the context (who, what, when, where, why)

To get further in the “why”, consider what was happening behind the scenes, what people were thinking (Saul’s family, David’s army, Joab, tactics of warfare, etc.)

How does Joab respond? and how might this fall in a category of persecution for righteousness sake?

Why might it be different than David’s response when Abner approached him? And why might David’s response to Abner be considered righteous?

How did Joab take action? and what was his justification? its source?

How does David respond? How does this impact the people of Israel?

Jesus goes further in this Beatitude to make it personal:

Blessed are **you** when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account.

Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven

How is he preparing us to be able to weather responses living what might look counter-intuitively, but what is eternal (though unseen at the moment) reality.

To pray for your enemies, to worry about the poor when you have worries enough of your own, to start becoming yourself fully by giving of yourself prodigally to whoever needs you, to love your neighbors when an intelligent 4th grader could tell you that the way to get ahead in the world is to beat your neighbors to the draw every chance you get—that was what this God asked, Paul wrote. That was who this God was. That was who Jesus was. Paul is passionate in his assertion, of course, that in the long run it is such worldly wisdom as the intelligent 4th grader's that is foolish and the sublime foolishness of God that is ultimately wise... Paul quoted Isaiah's "What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man conceived, [that is] what God has prepared for those who love him." – Frederick Beuchner

Read **Matthew 4:1-11**

Consider the context (who, what, when, where, why)

Why is Jesus being harassed?

How does He respond?

Where are his thoughts, his soul anchored? How?

You have kept count of my tossings, put my tears in your bottle. Are they not in your book? Then my enemies will turn back in the day when I call. This I know, that God is for me. In God, whose word I praise, in the Lord, whose word I praise, in God I trust; I shall not be afraid...

Psalms 56:8-11

Read **Isaiah 49:1-18**

What can we learn about God?

What can we learn about ourselves?

What identity declaration in this passage impacts you most today? Why? How can it inform your (or someone you love) situation/circumstance – especially when being harassed or jeered for not buying into the world’s ways.

How can living in wholeness offer freedom and even a heart of compassion?

Our lives are full of supposes. Suppose this should happen, or suppose that should happen; what could we do; how could we bear it? But, if we are living in the high tower of the dwelling place of God, all these supposes will drop out of our lives. We shall be quiet from the fear of evil, for no threatenings of evil can penetrate into the high tower of God.

– Hannah Whitehall Smith

Mindful of *application*

- How can I practically function from the self I am in God’s eyes?
- What does the text teach me about God?
- What truths (or promises) do I need to claim?
- What thought(s) will I carry throughout the day/week?

Spend time in prayer, asking God to further reveal himself as you go forth this week.

UP OUT

*"This is my name forever, and thus I am to be
remembered throughout all generations."*

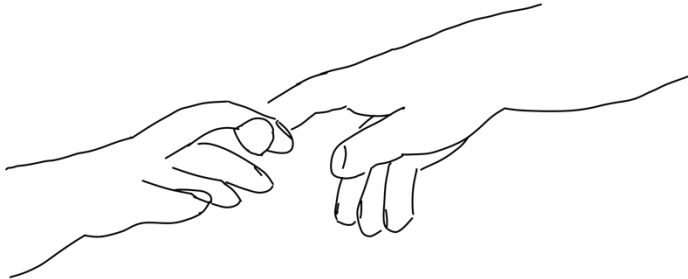
God speaking:

*I am who I am
This is my name forever
(ALWAYS)*

*I have observed you (seen me)
... what has been done to you*

*I will bring you up out
of affliction.*

God always does what He says.
He cannot be unfaithful.



BE

happy, settled, still

BECAUSE YOU ARE

Peace is the rest of the blessed souls.
Peace is the dwelling place of eternity.

Pope Leo 1

Of all the months to give birth, especially when your house is already full of school-aged kids, is May. , school is winding up, projects are due, exams administered. End of the year parties, getting ready for summer, signing up for activities, camps, vacation plans – the list goes as tasks beg to be accomplished. Suffice it to say, our 5th was born May 1st.

Adding an infant to our mix quickly spotlighted life's intensity. But in the least expected way, our instant-overload offered a lifeline. A life line always within reach, rarely embraced, sometimes shamed. It is an integral part of life that is daily practiced, celebrated by some, dreaded by others – but on the whole, a non-negotiable.

The name of this lifeline: nap – otherwise known as a breather, a daily repose, a time of quiet, stillness.

I think that is one of the keys to Christ's declaration of blessings in the Beatitudes. They point to and call out the sufficiency of the Cross – its power to settle and still our souls, anchored in all He has done that we might be able to live complete and whole from our place of peace (Shalom completeness, wholeness). But how?

Eugene Peterson suggests starting from Square One:

If we are going to truly live a Christian life, and not just use the word Christian to disguise our narcissistic and promethean attempts at a spirituality without worshipping God and without being addressed by God, it is necessary to return to Square One and adore God and listen to God.

Given our sin-damaged memories that render us vulnerable to every latest edition of journalistic spirituality, daily re-orientation in the truth revealed in Jesus and attested in Scripture is required. And given our ancient predisposition for reducing every scrap of divine revelation that we come across into a piece of moral/spiritual technology that we

can use to get on in the world, and eventually to get on without God, a daily return to a condition of not-knowing and non-achievement is required.

We have proven, time and again, that we are not to be trusted in these matters. We need to return to Square One for a fresh start as often as every morning, noon, and night.

Or as the LORD says through the Psalmist: “**Be** still, and know that I am God.” Psalm 46:10-11

Begin with prayer, “Lord, open my eyes that I might see what you have to show me in your Word.”

Read: **2 Samuel 24**

Consider the context (who, what, when, where, why)

Why does David choose to “number” his people? What is revealed about David? About Abner?

What is revealed about God?

How is David gauging his worth vs. BE-ing

What does David do when he realizes his waywardness? What does David choose and why?

What does this reveal about the tendencies of man? mercy of God? our worth and identity?

Read: **1 Peter 1:1-9**

Consider the context (who, what, when, where, why)

Consider the verb tenses, repeated phrases, etc. What do you notice? What stands out?

What is revealed about God, his care, his promise/covenant and role within, his purpose and love? Take note of specifics that reveal the place of honor that he bestows upon his people, and through whom.

What can we learn about God, about Jesus, about the Holy Spirit, about us? How is our worth/identity informed?

We need to find God, and he cannot be found in noise and restlessness. God is the friend of silence. See how nature - trees, flowers, grass- grows in silence; see the stars, the moon and the sun, how they move in silence...

We need silence to be able to touch souls.

Mother Teresa

Read **Psalm 46**

What can we learn about God?

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What can we learn about ourselves?

Spend a moment of quiet stillness contemplating God, inviting and allowing him to inform the goings-on of your day, asking for help to receive. How and where can his declarations of blessing, quiet the chaos?

How might BEing inform our doing?

Which BE(not do)ATITUDE has impacted you most?

Give up yourself and you will find your real self. Lose your life and you will save it. Submit to death, death of your ambitions and favorite wishes every day and death of your whole body in the end submit with every fiber of your being, and you will find eternal life. Keep back nothing. Nothing that you have not given away will be really yours. Nothing in you that has not died will ever be raised from the dead. Look for yourself, and you will find in the long run only hatred, loneliness, despair, rage, ruin, and decay. But look for Christ and you will find Him, and with Him everything else thrown in.

CS Lewis

Bible Overview

Knowing where we are in Scripture in light of the whole is important. A lot of us know the Bible stories, like Noah and a boat or *Zacchaeus* the wee little man or baby Moses in a basket. In considering them as stand-alone stories, we might miss the overarching time-line that puts these stories into perspective and ties everything together. Knowing the way these work together can take our Bible to being three-dimensional rather than feeling flat. Scripture becomes alive as we put the pieces together.

If we went to the bookstore, we would see the books arranged by subject and type of literature. Our Bible works in a similar way. It is one book. But like a store, it houses many books that are arranged by subject and type. The Bible's arrangement begins with two major books: the Old Testament (before Christ) and the New Testament (from Christ's birth – on.)

The Old Testament

The Old Testament is made up of 39 individual books written by twenty-eight different authors and spans the period of two thousand years. It begins with creation and tells the story of the Jewish people up to the time of Christ.

Within the **Old Testament**, are several books. The **historical books**, arranged chronologically, the **poetic books**, and the **prophetic books**. The prophetic books *proclaimed* the word of God both for the future and for the present. These are labeled as “major” and “minor” simply according to the letter's length. These books were penned before (PreE) , during (E) and after (PostE) the time of the Jewish nation's exile from the land promised to them by God.

A natural division that we'll follow for the purposes of our study are:

- **The Patriarchs** covers the Lord's setting apart a people/nation through which redemption will come. Genesis chapter 12 records the covenantal promise made by God to Abraham. A promise that will be fulfilled by Christ through the line of Abraham:
- **The Exodus/Law** covers the period of the Jewish nation in which God leads them out of captivity in Egypt and into the land promised to the Patriarchs.
- **Judges** covers the period of time when the Lord led and governed the Jewish nation. God worked through *Judges* who were not only leaders, but also warriors and sometimes prophets. Disbelief leads to disobedience, to consequence - to repentance & redemption – on repeat
- **The Kings** cover an expansive time in the Jewish nation's history as chronicled in 1st & 2nd Kings, 1st & 2nd Chronicles. The prophetic books, which fall within this period, are designated as major and minor simply based on size, with further designation associated with the time of their authorship {Pre-Exile (PreE), during Exile (E), & Post-Exile (PostE)}

- **The Silent Years** refers to the time between the Old and New Testaments during which the Lord did not speak to the Jewish nation. This ended with the coming of John the Baptist, the Messiah's forerunner.

The following chart will hopefully help give some perspective on the Old Testament's timing:

Historical	Poetry	Prophets:
Genesis – “The Beginnings” & patriarchs	Job	
Exodus Leviticus Numbers –counting of the people Deuteronomy –restating of the Law Joshua - faith to obedience to blessing		
Judges Ruth		
1 & 2 Samuel – beginning of the Jewish kings 1 & 2 Kings – history of the kingdoms 1 & 2 Chronicles “	Psalms Proverbs book of wisdom Song of Solomon Ecclesiastes	Isaiah (PreE) Jeremiah (PreE) Lamentations (PreE) Hosea (PreE) Joel (PreE) Joel (PreE) Amos (PreE) Obadiah (PreE) Jonah (PreE) Micah (PreE) Nahum (PreE) Habakuk (PreE) Zephaniah (PreE) Micah (PreE)
Esther (exile) Ezra (exile/post exile) Nehemia (exile/post exile)		Ezekiel (E) Daniel (E) Haggai (PostE) Zechariah (PostE) Malachi (PostE)

The Period between the Old and New Testaments is designated by hundreds of years of silence – as far as the Lord outwardly communicating with the Jewish people. The silence was broken by the Lord's covenantal promise (from Genesis 12) coming to fruition through an unlikely event that involved a faithful, young girl.

The New Testament

The **New Testament** is made up of 27 individual books written by nine different authors. It records Jesus' birth, ministry, death & resurrection as well as the ministry of His disciples. It also includes the prophetic book of Revelation, written by John. The New Testament covers a

time period of less than a hundred years. It is made up of **Historical Books** (up until 60 AD), the **Pauline Epistles** (written between 48-67 AD) and the **General Epistles** (written between 48 and 95 AD), **Prophetic** (AD 96)*

Historical Books	Pauline Epistles	General Epistles	Prophetic
Mathew Mark Luke John Acts (author Luke)	Galatians 1 & 2 Thessalonians 1 & 2 Corinthians Romans Ephesians Colossians Philemon Philippians 1 Timothy Titus 2 Timothy	James 1 Peter 2 Peter Hebrews Jude 1, 2, 3 John	Revelation

*Bible Gateway

ⁱ Testament 1-3. Cf. Francis of Assisi: Early Documents Vol.1, eds. R. Armstrong, J. A. W. Hellmann, W. Short (New City Press, New York, 1999).