

**The Weekly Word**  
December 3-9, 2018

Welcome to December and ADVENT. May the Lord be with you as you spend time in His Word. Happy reading...  
Grace and Peace, Bill

To hear the Bible read click this link... <http://www.biblegateway.com/resources/audio/>.

**Monday, December 3: Matthew 6- The most famous prayer...**

The most famous prayer...

*“This, then, is how you should pray (said Jesus): “ ‘Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.’(9-13).*

I don't recall where I heard the recent comment, but it fired anew as I read Jesus' model prayer. The comment called attention to the fact that the prayer is plural not singular,

*Give us today...*

*forgive us our debts...*

*lead us not...*

The prayer Jesus taught is not merely a prayer I should pray personally but one that we, God's people, pray together.

There is a difference between 'give us our daily bread' and 'give me my daily bread'. I get that this is a model prayer for me to pray but with all my personal attention on it, I have missed the corporate nature of it. Praying 'us' rather than 'me' alters my mindset as I pray. I am not simply praying that I have enough food, but that we, the people in my church family, have enough food. Praying this prayer could potentially mean I am the answer for someone else's daily bread. When I am praying this side by side with others 'us' forces me to look at life from more than my personal vantage point... give us our daily bread.

And the same could go for the other invocations of the prayer. *Forgive us our debts* is more than forgive me, Lord. It is me petitioning for others, which could force me to forgive someone else.

And it is not just that I am not led into temptation but that we are not... my brother, my sister struggling with temptation, I am praying for them even as I pray for myself.

These musings are new to me, and like a good tea they will need to steep in my life for the full affect and flavor to mature.

*Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one... in Jesus' name I pray. Amen.*

**Tuesday, December 4: Matthew 7- ...**

Jesus' sermon on the mount is one thought provoking statement after another. It is difficult to know where to pause and meditate. Because of a recent news item, I chose verse 2.

A news item is this. On Nov 16<sup>th</sup> the General Conference on Weights and Measures, the organization that oversees weights and measures worldwide, voted to change the definition of the

kilogram. Prior to the vote the weight of the kilogram was based on Le Grand K, a precise rod of a titanium alloy kept in a secure climate controlled vault in France. At certain intervals of time the two replicas in the US, and I assume elsewhere in the world, are flown securely to France to be measured against Le Grand K, thus insuring throughout the world the precise value of the kilogram upon which every weight is measured. The grams in your medicines, the grams of food on the labels in packaging etc. are all based on Le Grand K, which has been housed in France for over 120 years. Scientists are concerned that Le Grand K could be off infinitesimally as a by produce of being in the world where atoms could attach or leave do to this or that reaction. The concerns of the science community while unimportant for you and me, are a concern for them. And they want to replace Le Grand K with some equation based on constants that cannot change. The science is beyond me.

What caught my attention is the precision of measurement.

In Matthew 7:1-2, Jesus says, *Do not judge, or you too will be judged. For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with **the measure you use, it will be measured to you.***

The idea of Jesus measuring me against the measure I use is frightening.

I am not very merciful... if Jesus is only as merciful with me as I am with others I am in trouble.

I am not very gracious... if Jesus is only as gracious with me as I am with others I am in trouble.

I am not very generous... if Jesus is only as generous with me as I am with others I am in trouble.

I am not very loving... if Jesus is only as loving with me as I am with others I am in trouble.

The mounting realization from this statement hits me like a sledge hammer.

My judging others is a BIG deal for Jesus. God is confronting me to deal with this, something I do far too easily –in thought many times if not in action.

*Oh, God, the weight of this Jesus teaching is pressing upon me. Forgive me for my cavalier attitude toward judging others. I pray in Jesus' name. Amen*

### **Wednesday, December 5: Matthew 8- Be about God's business...**

The account of healing Peter's mother-in-law generally caught my attention. No fanfare, no hoopla, just a simple healing moment and response. *When Jesus came into Peter's house, he saw Peter's mother-in-law lying in bed with a fever. He touched her hand and the fever left her, and she got up and began to wait on him (14-15).*

The simple eye witness detail of the story, *He [Jesus] touched her hand*. I love the simplicity of the miracle. A simple touch... hand touching hand. What could be more natural? And she is healed.

Then comes the real highlight for me. *And she got up and began to wait on him*. Peter's mother-in-law, once healed, immediately set about her business of caring for the guest in her home. No 'Price is Right' jumping up and down joyously screaming. She simply attended to her business by meeting the needs of the guests who arrived.

In watching Peter's mother-in-law, I thought when the Lord heals us, we are healed for a reason, so get to it, be about the business of God.

In similar respects whenever God blesses us, however He blesses us, accept God's blessing and be about His business.

*Lord, You have blessed me in so many ways... healing from cancer, the blessing of a wonderful wife, church, staff... I am realizing that the best way I can thank and honor You is to be about Your business. Help me focus, Lord, on living Your will. I pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.*

#### **Thursday, December 6: Matthew 9- Connecting with others...**

So many meditative choices... I chose the final verses. *Jesus went through all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom and healing every disease and sickness. When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. Then he said to his disciples, "The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field"* (35-38).

Jesus' mix of metaphors caught my eye. First metaphor, people are like sheep without a shepherd. Then he immediately switches to a harvest metaphor. I wondered why the switch?

For all my pondering, I couldn't come up with an answer. I mean Jesus could have stayed with the sheep imagery and said something like 'Sheep are lost and shepherds few. Ask the Lord of the flock to send shepherds out into the field.'

But to my mind –and I don't think it is because I am familiar with this saying –the sheep/shepherd imagery isn't as appropriate as harvest/workers. Also continuing the sheep/shepherd would be to make up a situation where the harvest/worker illustration was real life for the people of Jesus' day.

The more I consider the switch of metaphors the more it makes sense, plus the harvest metaphor is far more connecting with His audience. And isn't that what Jesus is particularly good at, connecting with his audience? People loved Jesus...

My last line pushes me to wonder if I am good at connecting with people. Do I make others a priority? Do I use language that is meaningful to them? Do I put them at ease? Jesus often did... He connected so that He could tell them about the kingdom of God...

*Lord, help me to be a better connector so that I have more and better opportunities to talk about Your kingdom and Your way. I pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.*

#### **Friday, December 7: Matthew 10- Authority...**

For some reason I was overloaded as I read Jesus' many injunctions. I sensed a need to set it aside for a time, so I did a few other things before I returned to the Word from God.

When I returned I opted to soak in the opening of the chapter. *Jesus called his twelve disciples to him and gave them authority to drive out impure spirits and to heal every disease and sickness. These are the names of the twelve apostles: first, Simon (who is called Peter) and his brother Andrew; James son of Zebedee, and his brother John; Philip and Bartholomew; Thomas and Matthew the tax collector; James son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus; Simon the Zealot and Judas Iscariot, who betrayed him. These twelve Jesus sent out with the following instructions: "Do not go among the Gentiles or enter any town of the Samaritans* (1-5).

This passage comes immediately on the heels of the 'harvest is plentiful' comment I brooded over yesterday. In truth, this is one place where the chapter/verse designation obscures the natural link. The apostles are the first answer in God sending workers into the vast harvest field of the world.

What really caught my attention was the latter half of verse 1: *he... gave them authority to drive out impure spirits and to heal every disease and sickness.* We have been studying the authority we have as followers of Jesus so the word authority caught my eye and ear.

I find it interesting that authority is what Jesus gave the apostles as he sent them out. And having Jesus' authority gave them everything they needed *to drive out impure spirits and to heal every disease and sickness.* Authority, apparently, is the key to unlocking everything we need to execute God's Will and do the things Jesus would have us do.

And in the rest of the NT we learn that authority was not only given to the Twelve, but all Christ followers. We have God's authority to set people free...

Wow! Incredible!

*Oh, God help me to FULLY live into Your authority, so that I can be an effective ambassador for You as I live my life and follow Your Spirit's leading. I pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.*

### **Saturday, December 8: Matthew 11- ...**

Jesus' answer to the disciples of John who were asking if He was the one, struck me. *Jesus replied, "Go back and report to John what you hear and see: The blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is proclaimed to the poor. Blessed is anyone who does not stumble on account of me"* (4-6). Essentially Jesus' answer looked at the fruit of my life, looked at the God-things I am doing.

I was reminded of Jesus' inaugural moment in the synagogue of Nazareth as recorded in Luke 4:18-21. Reading from Isaiah 61, *"The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor."* ... *He began by saying to them, "Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing."*

Jesus' ministry was fulfilling these words from Isaiah!

Not only was Jesus fulfilling the words of Isaiah, He was doing the very things He gave authority to His disciples to do in chapter 10!

Matthew is painting a consistent picture of Jesus, the one who is bringing God's Good News to people. And God's Good News has application today and into eternity. As Jesus' disciples we get to continue His Good News announcing to the world (remembering yesterday's reading).

I am humbled and delighted to be God's son...

*Oh, God, thank You for this picture of Jesus as a man who sets people free. I am overwhelmed that You invite me to continue Jesus' ministry to people today. Thank You, Lord.*

*Search me, Lord, and see if there are any impediments within me that are stopping me from being the disciple and ambassador for Jesus that You long for me to be. I pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.*

### **Sunday, December 9, 2018, Sunday Worship**

*If any of my thoughts or the Bible readings spark questions send an email reply and I will do my best to answer all questions from people on the list... I will answer personal questions privately; general questions will be answered in a subsequent email installment.*

*If you are reading along with me from the Living Hope Community Church website you can send questions or request being placed on the weekly email list by emailing Lisa at [office@LivingHopeCT.org](mailto:office@LivingHopeCT.org).*

Click here for a link to my sermons on the web. Sermons are generally posted within 2 days.