

# The BeAttitudes:Renewal

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What you see is what you experience. When going to a 3D movie there is one important thing to experiencing it to its fullest potential; the glasses. In life our experience is shaped by the lenses we choose to see through and as people of faith we use Jesus. His life, ministry, posture and way of being shape our experience by shifting our perspective. How we act, react and come to any moment is found in our perspective which is usually demonstrated through our attitude. Our faith shapes and forms us like the sun does plant life. As the sun gives life it opens up and helps flourish the flowers of spring bringing out of them what resides within them. Our faith does the same. Our rootedness in the story of Jesus is essential to the attitude we bring to any moment and to any one we encounter; including ourselves. As we gather our hearts for the season of Lent I wonder what could change for you? Are you longing for some new practices to renew your life? Are you looking for some pruning to lay aside some perspectives or practices making room for new life? Would you like a new attitude about you? Join us in this renewal journey as we dig into the BeAttitudes of Jesus found in Matthew 5.

The devotional in your hands is meant for you to use on your own, with another person or in a group. It is intended to be used following every Sunday in Lent to dig deeper into the themes and pick up a practice or 2 to try for a week. With this devotional you are encouraged to spend some time in prayer, reading scripture and in conversation to grow in your faith. If you are looking for a bible to use there are many great translations out there; my favorite is 'The Message' which will be used here. There are also a lot of great bible apps though the 'Youversion' app may be the best resource with almost every translation you could want as well as studies to dig deeper. My hope is that this journey truly will be a renewal one for you as we together walk toward resurrection hope.

# Week 1

## Renewed by Quiet

**“Arriving at a quiet place, he sat down and taught his climbing companions”  
(Matthew 5:1-2 and Luke 10:38-42)**

Our world is noisy. Even in the quietest spots there are still sounds that make their way in. A few years back we went on a family trip to Mammoth Caves. These caves are vast, interconnected and of course underground. This gives them the ability to be separated from light but also sound. The problem is even when we took a moment to turn off the lights to show the darkness of it all there was still sound. The sound of dripping water, of those with us breathing and of course the interior noise that we all carry with us. So it's no wonder that Jesus in this pivotal moment of ministry with his disciples he wants to head to a quiet place. He brings them there to get away from distractions and form/inform them about what this whole thing would be about. The beatitudes are the very first portion of the Sermon on the Mount (Jesus' main teaching). So I wonder as we enter into the season of Lent and we enter this season of quiet and intentional leaning in what that might look like for you?

**Question:** Reread through Luke 10:38-42.

- What about Jesus do you need right now?
- What distractions might be keeping you from hearing/living it?

**Practice:** As we begin Lent I want you to find a quiet place; bring along a writing utensil and paper. Now write out what you are longing for from Jesus (ex: rest, hope, forgiveness, direction, love) in this season. Then pray for the energy/passion to pursue sitting at his feet for these weeks.

As Jesus begins his ministry with those willing to 'come follow me' he spends the next few chapters teaching them what discipleship would look like. His heart was to prepare them as well as encourage them for what was ahead. As we gather into this season we set aside some time to grow in our faith. As the disciples sat at Jesus' feet and Mary set aside the prep work for the meal God is calling us to the quiet places to be renewed

and find our identity/purpose/mission in the middle of it all.

**Weekly Practice:** This week may be a good one to set aside a life practice (social media scrolling, news consumption) that can be noisy and exchange it with some time reading/in God's story/on a meditative walk or another faith practice. You could also try a different one every day. Remember it's only a week and you can let it go if it doesn't fit.

**Notes:**

## Week 2

# Renewed by less

**“You’re blessed when you’re at the end of your rope. With less of you there is more of God and his rule.**

**You’re blessed when you feel you’ve lost what is most dear to you. Only then can you be embraced by the One most dear to you.”**

**(Matthew 5:3-4)**

There is an overabundance in America. We are a people who seem to crave more and many times have the resources to do just that. Companies build off of this, take advantage of it and produce products that wear out quicker. We also have more storage spaces than we can fill and each of us has totes, boxes and spaces in our homes filled with stuff. Our faith is always counter-cultural; that’s part of Jesus’ thing. His up is our down, his right is our left, his first is our last. Acts says this Jesus movement turned the world upside down. Our faith is a spring cleaning/decluttering counter to this way of being. We all carry around too much stuff; emotional, electronic, spiritually. Jesus calls us to pair it all down to essentials and to what truly matters. In this season we can be renewed by the spring cleaning/decluttering.

### **Question:**

- What weighs heavy on you?

**Practice:** Take a few sticky notes and write down what you are carrying (good and bad). Stick them on your mirror and pull the ones you want to get rid of off writing a plan for letting them go.

It is not easy to let go of something that feels essential to you. At times in life we have been carrying a moment of shame, guilt, pain with us for so long it simply begins to feel like it is us. In fact our whole inward being begins to be shaped by it at times letting it lead the way. Like the springs of a car being shaped by the weight it carries our lives become off balanced by the things we do not realize we’ve carried. I wonder what these 2 beatitudes do for you? Are they injecting hope into you? Are you finding them challenging or a bit scary? I totally understand. It is easier said than done to let go of what seems foundational for us and where do we even begin. Here’s the good news;

if/when you do you will find yourself embraced by the one most dear to you. One practice that may help in this process may simply be to reorient yourself with reminders of your identity as God's child. Or perhaps it's a daily letting go even if you pick it right back up because every time you do some of it has been left behind. And in this reorienting Jesus gives us the great invitation found later in Matthew where he says, 'Keep company with me and you'll live freely and lightly' (Matthew 11). And to that offer we say yes!

**Weekly practice:** Write on a rock something you've been carrying with you for a long time (regret, shame, a trauma). Now for a day carry it with you in your pocket. Then on the following day specifically leave it at home or put it somewhere you won't see it. Then answer these questions: How did it feel to leave it behind (physically, emotionally)? How would it feel to permanently leave it behind? Could you make a plan to do that, giving yourself grace when you pick it back up again?

**Notes:**

## Week 3

# Renewed by Enough

**“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. You’re blessed when you’ve worked up a good appetite for God. He’s food and drink in the best meal you’ll ever eat.”**  
**(Matthew 5:5-6)**

Contentment within oneself is like the calming of a wave tossed sea. The ability like Jesus to be asleep in the midst of the storm raging on. To find contentment in/with oneself is truly one of the best moments in life. It has a way of opening us up to life in a new way. Contentment opens us up to be in the moment, not of it. It frees us to not be searching for validation, reward or approval but be comfortable in our skin; as we are. Contentment helps find us not complacent but complete. Contentment does not mean we have given up but instead we are able to give in to the great grace of God that saturates our hearts. It is for contentment that our hearts were made and to this that all our striving had been working towards from the beginning. Finding such inner rest opens us up to feast on the food of God’s goodness because that is all we could ever want. Jesus put it this way, ‘I AM the Bread of Life. The person who aligns with me hungers no more and thirsts no more, ever’ (John 6:35). Jesus is enough, in fact he is more than enough for our inner hunger that we live with. The question we ask though is; can this actually be our reality in a world of wants where every company, social media post, product tries to get us believe we are not enough without them? The answer is; yes!

### **Question:**

- What robs you of your contentment?
- What adds to it?

**Practice:** Take a moment to write down what you feel you need more of. Write out what you have.

What Jesus is talking about is a renewal process like what the plant life goes through in spring as they come back to life. In this week can you find moments to be renewed

by finding that you have enough and you are enough? One way to find our enoughness is through our constant gaze at our belovedness. Throughout the gospels Jesus comes back to his belovedness and I believe this can renew our hearts as well. Even though we don't hear Jesus reminding himself of his belovedness he hands it off to all the people he encounters by his very presence/actions. If we heard all that came between every verse in the gospels I believe we would hear Jesus reciting this prayer, 'I am God's beloved, chosen/marked by love and God's is proud of me.' (Matthew ). And here's the thing People of God this can/is our prayer and reality as well. This can be the prayer that becomes your every inhale between every exhale.

**Weekly Practice:** Begin your day with Mary's blessing, "Good morning! You're beautiful with God's beauty, Beautiful inside and out! God be with you" (Luke 1:28) and then throughout your day remind yourself of your belovedness with Jesus'/our baptismal blessing, "You are my Child, chosen and marked by my love, pride of my life" (Luke 3:22)

**Notes:**

## Week 4

# Renewed by Others

**“You’re blessed when you care. At the moment of being ‘care-full,’ you find yourselves cared for.**

**You’re blessed when you get your inside world—your mind and heart—put right. Then you can see God in the outside world.”**

**(Matthew 5:7-8)**

We have all experienced loneliness in some form; being picked last, not invited, a loss of friendship or another form. Many modern day countries' health departments have labeled loneliness an epidemic and they are working to alleviate it in many ways. The U.S. is no different because around 50% of Americans experience measurable loneliness. Complicating this challenge is there has never been a time in history that humans seem more connected and yet we feel so disconnected. Many of us have connections found online but these leave us feeling more disconnected than we'd hope. We were meant to live life together. Connection and relationships are by design essential to the human experience.

I am guessing that part of what led you to GPS was the aspect of a community to connect with. The desire to belong is central to the human experience and one we all long for. In Community we find purpose, meaning and connection. Community is also one of the best ways to teach us about our faith in the diverse ways it is expressed. The very act of caring for others whether that is in a bible study/small group, during/after a service, serving/worshiping together are truly life giving. Whenever we extend care we encounter one another but we also encounter God in human form. Each person made in God's image and bearing that beauty in a unique way glorifies God. What joy, what beauty and what life giving properties we find as we gather/serve together.

### **Question:**

- When has being a part of a community been life giving?
- When has a community taught you something; what has it taught you?

I know not all of us are people people. No matter our social make up (extrovert/introvert) we need community. Being a part of a community renews and has

the power to refresh our lives in a way that few other things can. We live into our purpose as we live into community with others. Our experiences gain power as we share life with others allowing what we go through to encourage/strengthen another. We truly need one another and this is no more apparent than in Paul's usage of the body imagery to explain communities of faith. Paul writes, "The way God designed our bodies is a model for understanding our lives together as a church; every part dependent on every other part." (1 Corinthians 12:25) We need each other and your gifts are needed and necessary to help God be seen and to use the gifts God has given to you.

**Weekly practice:** Spend some time to reflect on the people in your life. Who in your life do you need to go deeper with? Who could you reconnect with? And who might be in need that you could serve? This could be a friend, neighbor, GPS member or someone you haven't talked to in a while. Pick one person this week and see what comes of it.

**Notes:**

## Week 5

# Renewed by Our Call

**“You’re blessed when you can show people how to cooperate instead of compete or fight. That’s when you discover who you really are, and your place in God’s family. You’re blessed when your commitment to God provokes persecution. The persecution drives you even deeper into God’s kingdom.”  
(Matthew 5:9-10)**

Group projects can be some people’s favorite thing and then they can be the worst possible scenario for others. Sometimes the hesitancy to join a group can be that those in the group won’t pull their weight. I mean no one wants someone else to take credit for the work that you did. The hesitancy can also be that there are feelings of competitiveness within the group that makes it hard to work together. We can make a group project into a group competition. Another challenge when working in a group can be how we bring our feelings of inadequacy. At times our sense of not being enough and another being better at something colors the whole thing causing an inability to work together. And then there are of course disagreements that can make working together almost impossible. Disagreements might be as simple as what to pick as a project and all the way to foundational understandings of life. Disagreements and even past hurts can keep others from working together or simply being able to coexist. Paul tries to help one church keep their focus when he writes, ‘You are Christ’s body—that’s who you are! You must never forget this. Only as you accept your part of that body does your “part” mean anything’ (1 Cor. 12:27). Our meaning/purpose begins to make sense as we learn to play our part. Finding our place is part of our call and it renews us to help others find theirs alongside us.

### **Question:**

- What part has God given you to play in the body? (read 1 Corinthians 12 to help you find it)
- Is there someone God is encouraging you to cooperate with rather than compete?

Finding our part within the body gives us purpose and meaning. Along with finding our part to play we know that living into the gospel story will come with push back from the world. The push back was found throughout the stories of Jesus’ life whenever it was not received. This push back to sharing God’s story could be in response to an invitation to worship, an offer of forgiveness, a word of critique on the 9

injustice we find in the world, our diverse/complete inclusion of all into the body and so much more. Wherever you might feel the push back from sharing God's story we must remind ourselves that living into our roles of sharing Jesus' story is counter-cultural. His acts of love counter that of self love/hate, his acts of forgiveness counter to revenge, his works of patience counter to being results oriented, how he engaged/understood others counter to our external judgement in our culture. Jesus' whole life, in fact even his death, was counter-cultural as he rose from the grave going against death's undefeated record. In the story of Jesus we get our marching orders; one that goes against the grain calling us to go upstream rather than with it.

**Question:**

- Where have you felt the push back from your faith?
- Where/to whom is God calling you to share the story?

**Weekly practice:** What is the call that God has given you? In what way can you live it out this week? How might you be bold with the story of Jesus for the sake of the world? Maybe there is a cause you are passionate about; find a local organization to connect with it/ask Pastor how GPS might get involved in it together.

**Notes:**

# Palm Sunday

## Renewed by Celebration

**“Crowds went ahead and crowds followed, all of them calling out, ‘Hosanna to David’s son!’  
‘Blessed is he who comes in God’s name!’ ‘Hosanna in highest heaven!’”  
(Matthew 21:8-9)**

Collective celebrating is a beautiful thing especially when it has been years in the making. I remember when the Chicago Blackhawks first won the Stanley cup after over 50 years of waiting. We lived in the suburbs at the time and the whole area was buzzing with excitement. Once they won there was a parade unlike it that the city had not seen in years. There was communal joy through the collective experience causing shared celebration. This type of celebration has a way of focusing our attention helping us to gather from various backgrounds. It is truly renewing and no matter where we find ourselves it draws us into it. On Palm Sunday we hear the parade gaining momentum finding that people joined all along the parade route to celebrate what Jesus had done in their lives. They were not only celebrating Jesus they were celebrating one another and the beloved community that Jesus had created with his healing, forgiveness and love. The group celebrating back then and right now comes from all walks of life and affiliations. It was and is profound if we step back and see the whole picture of what God is up to.

### **Question/practice:**

- What has God done for you/in your life to celebrate today?
- Write out your celebrations/your hosannas and offer them up to God.

This week we reflect on God’s goodness but we also spend time on the final moments of Jesus’ life and our celebration is soon mixed with grief and disbelief at the cruelty poured out onto Jesus. The week is literally split up emotionally as Monday through Wednesday we are in celebration but Thursday begins to remind us through the last supper/Jesus’ parting words. And of course we find Friday hits us square between the eyes as Jesus is lifted up on a cross. Friday is that shift in emotion holding us with celebration and grief, hopes and broken dreams wondering what might be next and if God is truly in every moment of life.

**Weekly practice:** Read the story of Jesus and his parade (Matthew 21:1-11) as well as his last supper, trial and death (Matthew 26-27). How does it feel to hold these emotions together?

**Notes:**

# Easter

## Renewed by Hope

**“There is nothing to fear here. I know you’re looking for Jesus, the One they nailed to the cross. He is not here. He was raised, just as he said.”  
(Matthew 28:6)**

We are people of Hope. Hope truly is in our DNA; it is mixed into the soil of our souls. As you hear once again the story of Hope found in the gospel, let it fertilize the soil of your soul. The true renewal of our souls is found in that the same spirit that lived in Jesus lives in us. Jesus said, “But you know him already because he has been staying with you, and will even be in you!” (John 14:17) and Paul wrote, “When God lives and breathes in you (and he does, as surely as he did in Jesus)...With his Spirit living in you, your body will be as alive as Christ’s!” (Romans 8:11). This is our reality; the very story we just heard on Easter Sunday is alive in us and is daily doing the work of resurrection.

The resurrection story is one of renewal from the inside out. Just as Jesus spoke outside Lazarus’ grave when it felt like hope was lost, “I am right now Resurrection and Life” (John 11). With those words and with that resurrection renewal Lazarus came out of the grave. Can you hear this renewal of hope for yourself? Can you hear it for your relationships, your regrets, your stuck spots, your everything? And can you hear this story for the story of our world?

**Weekly Practice:** Take a moment to read and celebrate this story recognizing the spirit of resurrection renewal that resides within you. (Matthew 27:57-28)

**Notes:**

# Final Thoughts

**“God authorized and commanded me to commission you: Go out and train everyone you meet, far and near, in this way of life...I’ll be with you as you do this”  
(Matthew 28:18-20)**

You have spent 6 weeks with the theme of renewal. Now it’s time to take a moment to reflect on and plan how you might take some of what you gained into the next season of your life. Here is when the work continues and we find that renewal is a life long process of God bringing resurrection throughout our lives.

## Question

- What practice has stuck with you or you would like to keep up?
- What insights did you gain as the weeks went on?
- What were some areas of renewal that you experienced?
- How did this study help you to see God, others and yourself differently?