

Sermon on the Mount Daily Office
Week of September 6

Morning

Intro

Welcome to the practice of the Daily Office. In this practice we are seeking to ground our lives more deeply in God's presence as we pause each morning, mid-day, and evening for silence, scripture, and prayer. In this season, we are going to ground ourselves in Jesus's teaching in the Sermon on the Mount. How might our lives be formed if we soak in this important teaching for three months? How might our relationships change? How will our work deepen? How might we be equipped to live in the Kingdom and cultivate pockets of the Kingdom in the world?

Will you join us on this journey?

Silence

Let's begin in silence. Silence helps us to settle the internal and external noise and distractions that so often stand in the way of our ability to hear the Lord.

Take a deep breath.

Remember, right now, that God is personally present with you. Psalm 139 says there is no where we can go to escape God's loving presence, and it says that you are so precious to God, that the Lord's thoughts about you outnumber the grains of sand.

Take another deep breath. God is closer than the air we breathe.

Take two minutes of silence to rest in the presence of the Lord.

Scripture

Jesus begins the Sermon on the Mount with a teaching called The Beatitudes. In the first beatitude, Jesus says "for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." Another way to translate this phrase is "the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these." And when Jesus brackets the Beatitudes with the same statement, "the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these," he is using a Jewish literary device that communicates all the Beatitudes are describing the same thing.

In the Beatitudes, Jesus is describing the *kind* of people who live in the Kingdom of the heavens. It is important that we remember the Kingdom of Heaven is not a future location where we live after we die. *In Jesus*, the Kingdom has come. It is just one chapter earlier in which Jesus declares the Kingdom of the Heavens is at hand, or near.

Read the Beatitudes now. As you read, pay attention to the kind of people Jesus says live in the Kingdom. What do you notice?

When Jesus saw the crowds, he went up the mountain; and after he sat down, his disciples came to him. Then he began to speak, and taught them, saying:

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

"Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.

"Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.

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

"Blessed are the merciful, for they will receive mercy.

"Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.

"Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.

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

“Blessed are you when people revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

What did you notice about who lives in the Kingdom?

Do you notice any similarities between the poor in spirit, those who mourn, the meek, those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, the merciful, pure in heart, peacemakers, and those who are persecuted because of Jesus?

Pause and reflect.

Who is not mentioned in the Beatitudes? Are you surprised by any types of people who are not mentioned?

Notice Jesus doesn't declare, “Blessed are the successful. Blessed are those who achieve great things. Blessed are those who do many good works for my sake. Blessed are those with great power or influence. Blessed are the popular.” Would you consider this morning what kind of people you have believed are blessed? Does it align with Jesus's teaching?

Pause now and reflect.

Listen now to the Holy Spirit. Does the Spirit have anything to say to you in what you are noticing this morning? Do you have any questions you want to ask the Father? Is Jesus extending any particular invitations to you this morning.

One more time, pause and listen.

Read the passage one final time this morning. As we move through our days, let's keep The Beatitudes on our minds. What might God have to say to us as we reflect on Jesus's teaching throughout the day?

When Jesus saw the crowds, he went up the mountain; and after he sat down, his disciples came to him. Then he began to speak, and taught them, saying:

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

“Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.

“Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.

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“Blessed are you when people revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Mid-day

We pause now in mid-day. How have you lived in the teaching of Jesus today? How is it echoing through your day?

Silence

Let's allow the hurry, anxiety, and distractions of the day to settle now as we let go and entrust it all to the one who is with us and loves us more than we can possibly understand.

Take a deep breath. Remember what Paul says, "In God we live and move and have our being."

Take another deep breath.

Take two minutes of silence to rest in the presence of the Lord.

Prayer

Now will you join me in this prayer based on the Beatitudes?

God of the prophets,
God of Christ:
we are reminded today
that your blessings do not necessarily follow the logic of the world.

The world believes that the rich are blessed,
but Jesus reminds us that it is the poor who are blessed, the poor in spirit
and the materially poor as well.
We pray for a more just world
in which all have enough and none are left behind.

Though we fear death and avoid its inevitable arrival, Jesus tells us that those who mourn are blessed. Help us to experience the truth of this mystery; bring healing and wholeness to those who are sick; and comfort those of us who have lost loved ones.

While people covet power,
Jesus blesses the meek;
instruct us, O God, in the ways of humility;
help us to stand in solidarity with the oppressed and marginalized; show us your presence in the faces of those the world forgets.

Give us a hunger and thirst for righteousness;
fill our hearts with love, overflowing with mercy; make our hearts pure, and give us a vision of your glory.

In a society divided by race, gender, class, ideology, and so many other labels we alone have created,
remind us that we are created in your image,
each of us a beautiful reflection of you,
each of us your beloved child.
Help us then to end our conflicts and wars,
help us to be peacemakers and agents of reconciliation.

Gracious God,
you have so richly blessed us with life,
with love and joy,
with hope in the midst of despair.
Help us to be the salt of the earth.
Help us to be the light of the world,
sharing with others that which we have received,
boldly proclaiming the good news of your love,
finding the seeds of your kingdom within us
and letting your way grow in our lives and throughout the world.
Amen.

Evening

Silence

Tonight, we pause to rest in the peace and strength of Christ.

Let us first pause in silence, so we might be grounded in the loving presence of God.

Take a deep breath.

Remember Jesus promised to be with us always.

Take another deep breath.

Paul writes, "God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us."

Take two minutes of silence to rest in the presence of the Lord. In this space, rest in this truth. Jesus did not die to *make* you loveable. He died *because* he loves you.

Prayer

Tonight, let's continue to soak in The Beatitudes, reading each one and mulling it over, chewing on it, contemplating the Beatitude.

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

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“Blessed are the merciful, for they will receive mercy.

“Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.

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

Jesus, we want to live with you in your Kingdom, but we confess that we often assume the strong, powerful, the successful, and the popular are the ones who live in the Kingdom. Forgive us for our mistaken assumptions. Please help us to live with a humble posture, to let go of striving for the Kingdom in our own power, but to trust in the good work of your Holy Spirit. Amen.