

## Sermon on the Mount Daily Office Week of September 27

### **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 be more like Jesus? 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 in 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**

Let's sit in Matthew 5:33-37 this morning.

"Again, you have heard that it was said to the people long ago, 'Do not break your oath, but fulfill to the Lord the vows you have made.' But I tell you, do not swear an oath at all: either by heaven, for it is God's throne; or by the earth, for it is his footstool; or by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the Great King. And do not swear by your head, for you cannot make even one hair white or black. All you need to say is simply 'Yes' or 'No'; anything beyond this comes from the evil one.

In this passage of the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus is encouraging plain speech. This teaching goes beyond vows and oaths, Jesus is addressing a tendency to add religious language to what we say in order to give it weight. It is a way of spinning the truth and embellishing what is true in order to make ourselves look good or convince people to our way of thinking.

In *The Divine Conspiracy*, Dallas Willard writes, "The essence of swearing or making oaths is to try to use something that, though impressive, is irrelevant to the issues at hand to get others to believe you and let you have your way." Whether we are trying to convince someone of a belief or position or we are trying to promote an image of ourselves, Willard continues, "This is wrong... We are making use of people, trying to bypass their understanding and judgment to trigger their will and possess them for our purposes. It is manipulation, or as we say it in our culture, it is spin. And Jesus says, this is evil. Instead of

honoring and loving others with truthfulness, the intent is to get one's way by verbal manipulation of the thoughts and choices of others."

Jesus is inviting us to speak simply in this passage. A literal translation of verse 37 is "Let your word stand for itself. Yes, yes. No, no"

Take a moment to contemplate how in your life you are tempted to embellish your speech to make yourself look better? How do you seek to control your reputation with the words you use or the stories you tell?

And in your life, how are you tempted to manipulate words to convince others of your position? How do you belittle or dehumanize an opposing viewpoint? How do you inappropriately attach God or scripture to your opinions?

Noe read this passage one more time this morning. As we move through the day, let's keep this in mind. How is God inviting us to plain speech today?

"Again, you have heard that it was said to the people long ago, 'Do not break your oath, but fulfill to the Lord the vows you have made.' But I tell you, do not swear an oath at all: either by heaven, for it is God's throne; or by the earth, for it is his footstool; or by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the Great King. And do not swear by your head, for you cannot make even one hair white or black. All you need to say is simply 'Yes' or 'No'; anything beyond this comes from the evil one.

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 written by Stanley Hauerwas?

Lord of all life, we come before you not knowing who we are. We strut our stuff, trying to impress others with our self-confidence. In the process we hope to be what we pretend. Save us from such pretense, that we might learn who we are through trust in you to make us more than we can imagine. Help us, Augustine-like, to reread our lives as confession of sin made possible by your love. Bind up our wounds and our joys so that our lives finally make sense only as a prayer to you. Amen.

## **Evening**

### **Silence**

Tonight, we pause to rest in the peace and strength of Christ as we continue living in the Sermon on the Mount.

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 reflect on our day. As we begin, let's review the day with gratitude. As you think back on your day, for what are you grateful? Take a moment and name your gratitude.

Now let's look back on the day and consider when we followed Jesus's teaching to speak plainly.

When did you allow your yes to be yes and your no to be no?

When did you let your words stand for themselves?

Take a moment to recognize these moments of your day.

As we continue reviewing the day, when did you not speak plainly?

When did you use spin in your speech? When did you embellish or even stretch the truth?

When did you attempt to control your reputation through the words or stories you told?

When did you twist words to convince others of your position? Perhaps you belittled an opposing viewpoint or stretched scripture to support your opinion.

Take a moment to notice these moments of your day.

Now let's choose one moment from today and have a conversation with God. You may choose a moment when you spoke plainly or one when you did not. Speak to the Lord and listen.

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