

Sermon on the Mount Daily Office
Week of September 20

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

In this next section of the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus demonstrates the difference between an internal righteous and an external righteousness. He affirms the law, before expanding our understanding of sin and righteousness. These are not only external but they are internal realities.

When we understand sinful and righteous behavior is rooted in our internal lives, it becomes clear that sanctification is more than trying hard. We cannot become like Jesus through behavior modification. The gospel is not the good news of sin management. Instead, Jesus invites us to become the *kind* of people who can obey his teaching. The gospel is the good news that we can be formed *by* Jesus to be *like* Jesus.

This is why Dallas Willard once said we shouldn't try to not sin; we should seek to become the kind of people who do not want to sin.

Read Matthew 5:17-32 this morning. What stands out to you in the text this morning? What is the Holy Spirit shining a light on? What is Jesus inviting you to give your attention to today?

"Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. For truly I tell you, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished. Therefore, anyone who sets aside one of the least of these commands and teaches others accordingly will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever practices and teaches these commands will be called great in the kingdom of heaven. For I tell you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law, you will certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven.

"You have heard that it was said to the people long ago, 'You shall not murder, and anyone who murders will be subject to judgment.' But I tell you that anyone who is angry with a brother or sister will be subject to judgment. Again, anyone who says to a brother or sister, 'Raca,' is answerable to the court. And anyone who says, 'You fool!' will be in danger of the fire of hell.

"Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother or sister has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to them; then come and offer your gift.

“Settle matters quickly with your adversary who is taking you to court. Do it while you are still together on the way, or your adversary may hand you over to the judge, and the judge may hand you over to the officer, and you may be thrown into prison. Truly I tell you, you will not get out until you have paid the last penny.

“You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall not commit adultery.’ But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart. If your right eye causes you to stumble, gouge it out and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to be thrown into hell. And if your right hand causes you to stumble, cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to go into hell.

“It has been said, ‘Anyone who divorces his wife must give her a certificate of divorce.’ But I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, makes her the victim of adultery, and anyone who marries a divorced woman commits adultery.

What stood out to you in the Gospel reading this morning? How do you sense the Holy Spirit inviting you to respond?

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 Thomas a Kempis?

O Lord, my God,
to me you are everything good.
Remember me because I am nothing,
I have nothing, and I can do nothing.
You alone are good, just, and holy.
You can do all things,
you accomplish all things,
you fill all things.
Remember your mercies,
and fill my heart with your grace.
You do not want your works to be done in vain.
Do not turn your face away from me.
Do not withdraw your consolation,
lest my soul become as a thirsty land to you.
Teach me, O Lord, to do your will.
Teach me to live worthily and humbly in your sight.
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.

Remember the words of Paul at the start of Romans 8, “Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.” And his words at the end of the same chapter, “For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

Take two minutes of silence to rest in the presence of the Lord. In this space, rest in this truth that nothing, absolutely nothing can separate you from the love of God.

Prayer

Tonight, we will offer prayers of confession. For some of us, confession is not a familiar form of prayer, and for most of us it can be an uncomfortable prayer. For 2000 years, Christians have been offering prayers of confession as we are taught in James 5:16. These prayers are not for the purpose of beating ourselves up or clothing ourselves in shame. They are honest and humble prayers. They help us to acknowledge who we are in relation to God.

Let’s begin by noticing what we have to confess. How did you miss the mark today? How did you fall short of Jesus’s teaching? How was your response to God’s love inadequate today? Will you confess these in the loving presence of Jesus now?

Now let’s consider what may have been beneath our sin today. Is there some desire or unresolved pain behind it? Perhaps it was your desire for achievement, control, power, or esteem, or maybe you are seeking the fruit of God’s presence—love, joy, or peace—someplace other than God. Take some time to reflect on the interior reality behind your actions?

Take a moment now to have a conversation with God about what you are noticing.

Finally, will you close your eyes and receive this assurance of your forgiveness from Psalm 103

The Lord is compassionate and gracious,
slow to anger, abounding in love.
He will not always accuse,
nor will he harbor his anger forever;
he does not treat us as our sins deserve
or repay us according to our iniquities.
For as high as the heavens are above the earth,
so great is his love for those who fear him;
as far as the east is from the west,
so far has he removed our transgressions from us.

Amen