

Sermon on the Mount Daily Office
Week of October 25

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 reflect Jesus' words? 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

This morning, let's sit in Jesus's teaching from Matthew 6:19-34

"Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moths and vermin destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moths and vermin do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

"The eye is the lamp of the body. If your eyes are healthy, your whole body will be full of light. But if your eyes are unhealthy, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light within you is darkness, how great is that darkness!

"No one can serve two masters. Either you will hate the one and love the other, or you will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money.

"Therefore, I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothes? Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they? Can any one of you by worrying add a single hour to your life?

"And why do you worry about clothes? See how the flowers of the field grow. They do not labor or spin. Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these. If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will he not much more clothe you—you of little faith? So do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. Therefore, do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.

What do you care about most? What is at the top of your list? What we treasure, defines our lives? It might be money, or perhaps it is what you eat or what you wear? Are you concerned about what people say about you, or do you find yourself caught up with worried about what you have? Maybe you find yourself anxious over accomplishments.

Author Henri Nouwen says we are strongly tempted to believe we are what we do, what we have, or what people say about us. These concerns can divide us, leading us to try and serve to masters. God *and* achievements or success. God *and* money or possessions. God *and* our reputation or the esteem of others. When these rise to the top of our list of concerns, they produce anxiety. No amount of success, possessions, or reputation will ever be enough to satisfy our hearts true desire.

The life we long for in our most true desires is a life of love, joy, and peace. This is the fruit of life in the Kingdom of God, in other words a life lived in God's presence. This is why Jesus teaches to seek first his Kingdom, it is here that we will find all that we truly desire.

This morning, would you consider what you are seeking first? Is it the Kingdom, or is it something else? Take a moment now and listen. What is God bringing to mind. Are you most tempted to believe you are what you do, your accomplishments and successes... what you have, your money, possessions, and experiences... or what people say about you, your reputation or your platform?

If your prayer thus far has focused on these three categories, what you do, what you have, and what people say about you, transition now to listen more specifically. How do you seek accomplishments and success, possession and experiences, or reputation and platform? What are you tangibly seeking? Is it a title or position, some specific accomplishment? Maybe some specific object, a home or car, or maybe an experience with food or a vacation? Or is it your reputation with a particular group of people, or maybe your image on social media? Keep in mind, the object of our concern is not necessarily something bad or wrong, but it poses a problem when we place it in a position *before* God's Kingdom.

I invite you to allow this time to be the *start* of your prayer today. Would you continue to listen today? Notice when your emotions peak today? When do you find yourself sad or angry, excited or filled with joy. What might God be revealing to you about what you are seeking first?

Holy Spirit, guide us as we listen today. 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

What have you noticed today? Has the Spirit shown you what you are seeking in your life? If we are listening, we will likely find ourselves seeking other things ahead of the Kingdom. So will you join me today in this prayer of confession?

Most merciful God, we confess that we have sinned against you in thought, word, and deed, by what we have done, and by what we have left undone. We have not loved you with our whole heart; we have not loved our neighbors as ourselves. We are truly sorry and we humbly repent. For the sake of your Son

Jesus Christ, have mercy on us and forgive us; that we may delight in your will, and walk in your ways, to the glory of your Name. 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

As you have listened in prayer throughout the day, what have you heard from the Lord. Has anything risen to the surface, any concerns that you are putting before the seeking God's Kingdom?

Tonight, we will take a moment and pray a prayer of surrender with our bodies. Let's begin with our hands held open, palms facing up. Would you consider tonight what God has brought to mind for you today? What are you seeking first? What do you place above the Kingdom of God? Remember, this is not necessarily something bad or wrong. It only poses a problem when we place it in a position *before* God's Kingdom.

Imagine what you are seeking in your hands now. Feel the weight of it in your hands. You might even close your fists as if you are clinging to it.

When you are ready, I invite you to turn your hands over palms facing down, as a symbol of your desire to surrender. The object of your concern may not be something bad, so it is helpful to remember exactly to whom you are surrendering. Take a moment, to offer it to God, the one who made you and loves you. The one who is strong enough and good enough to carry our concerns. With your hands facing down, offer a prayer of surrender to the Lord now.

Lord, we surrender the objects of our concern to you tonight. We leave it to you. We release the desire to prove ourselves worthy of love through what we do, what we have, and what people say about us. We receive the truth of our belovedness from you. Thank you for living us as you do. Amen.