

## Daily Reflection on Scripture Week of January 8 New Year's Message



Three ways Jesus calls us to follow him: **by acting** - actually getting up and walking with him; **by following his way** - by doing what he asks us to do; and **by example** - being as he was – practicing simplicity, compassion, forgiveness and peace. A primary way Jesus taught his followers these things was in small community groups. The same is true for today's church. Church is about people coming together in small, medium and large groups to study his words and his life and to talk about how to live into to his call and then apply it in everyday life. This week we will reflect on ways Jesus invites us to follow him and ways we can see ourselves embodying his love and how community helps us do that.

If you would like to receive the Sacred Pause on your phone, text "crossroads" to 41411.

### Sunday, January 8, 2017

*Luke 19:1-6 He entered Jericho and was passing through it. A man was there named Zacchaeus; he was a chief tax collector and was rich. He was trying to see who Jesus was...so he ran ahead and climbed a tree to see him...when Jesus came to the place he looked up and said to him 'Zacchaeus, hurry and come down; for I must stay at your house today.'* So, he hurried down and was happy to welcome him.

**Reflection:** Nobody could have been more surprised than Zacchaeus that Jesus called out to him while he was sitting in the tree. First as a tax collector he was considered a great sinner; second, he had to wonder how did Jesus know who he was? But Jesus knows who we are and calls us from strange places like trees, so to speak, to 'come down so he can stay with us'. And we know that he continually calls out to us even though we sometimes come up short being his follower. Daily we are called to come from wherever we are and follow the ways of Jesus. This is one way how God meets us in our everyday lives. When we do come down and share a meal with others we are invited to see Jesus in the face of the other and in so doing the relationship changes.

**Sacred Pause:** Today as you share a meal with someone remember that in the face of the other is the face of God. Take a moment to thank God for the other.

### Monday, January 9, 2017

*Matt 4:18-20 As Jesus walked by the sea he saw two brothers, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea - for they were fishermen. And he said to them, follow me and I will make you fish for people.*

**Reflection:** Part of our Christian discipleship requires that we spread the 'good news' - the incredible news of God's unconditional love. While some think this means only evangelizing with words, asking others to become Christians, in many ways Jesus is saying we 'fish for others' when we model his way of life and do what he asked us to do. Peter and the other disciples that he called began to understand that, as a group, a small group that sat at Jesus' feet and listened to his teaching. Then they showed the world that they were followers of Jesus by the way they banded together and evangelized with their love for one another and with their hands serving the needs around them.

**Sacred Pause:** Today share the good news of God's unconditional love and if you have to, use words. Use your hands to serve – that's good news with skin on

## **Tuesday, January 10, 2017**

*Mark 10:21 ...go sell what you own, and give the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven, then come, follow me.*

**Reflection:** We know Jesus would not want all of us to give up everything - family, job, home and walk off and follow him. That would be irresponsible. But we can take the heart of this teaching seriously if not literally and consider what we own and why we own it, and consider just how much we really need to live. There's a difference between material poverty and spiritual poverty. In many cases and places in the world the materially poor are the most spiritually rich. Yet rich or poor, Jesus is clear, to be his follower we must wrestle with what role all of our possessions and property play in our lives. Jesus does not call us to material poverty but he does call us to spiritual maturity. And sometimes we need others to help us look at the role material possessions play in our lives. We all struggle with it and when we come together to share our stories we find support for the journey.

**Sacred Pause:** As followers of Jesus we must wrestle with what role possessions play in our everyday lives. How do they help or hinder your spiritual growth?

## **Wednesday, January 11, 2017**

*Matt 5:14-16 'you are the light of the world...let your light so shine before others that they may see your good works and give glory to God in heaven'.*

**Reflection:** A most important and transformational way to follow Jesus is to serve others. The Gospels are full of references to Jesus calling people to see him in others, especially those who have less than we do, or those who suffer, or those who mourn. Every time Jesus taught, on a mountain or plain, in a synagogue or in somebody's house, he stressed that to serve others is to serve him. As we move through our days we are always invited to look for God in the faces of others. And sometimes that might be in the face of a spouse, a child, a friend, or a foe. When our light shines, then we see through the darkness and see the real heart and soul of a person. A great way to 'trim our wicks' to shine brightest is in community where we wrestle with the challenges that we all face, and then commit to pray for one another.

**Sacred Pause:** As you move through the day and meet others you are invited to look for God in their faces. Look for the good in family, friends and foe.

## **Thursday, January 12, 2017**

*Luke 6:27-31 But I say to you that listen, love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you.*

**Reflection:** Oh boy, here Jesus is asking us to do a very difficult thing. In this world enemies seem to be everywhere, in our families, in the office, in the neighborhood, extending to the far reaches of the earth. Sometimes abuse can come from even those that say they love us the most. In such cases it is hard to follow Jesus to that place of loving those who hurt us. Yet he set the example for us by forgiving his own offenders, those who arrested and crucified him. Why? Because love always wins over hate. He gave his very life for that one truth. And yes it is true nothing this good ever comes easy. But when it does come it sets us free from the cancer of hatred that eats away at our soul. Maybe that is why Jesus doesn't give us much 'wobble room' on this one. He loves us too much to see us suffer the damning effects of hatred toward anyone. So he invites us to come and follow his way of forgiveness. Talking about such challenges in a small group is one way to find strength to face the great challenge to love our enemies.

**Sacred Pause:** Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you. Remember, love wins over hate.

## **Friday, January 13, 2017**

*Matt 20:26-28 'but whoever wishes to be great among you must be your servant and whoever wishes to be first among you must be your slave'*

**Reflection:** When were we ever taught that being number one wasn't important? We always strive to win; we always want to be first: in the race, in the class, at work and in the neighborhood. Even the disciples wanted to be first. Today's scripture is Jesus' response to the ambition of the mother of two of his disciples, the Zebedee brothers. Even in this small group of disciples there was some jockeying for position. But Jesus tells us that when it comes to following him, it's the other way around. He tells us that the first are last and the last are first, meaning those that serve others and don't seek attention, and don't pursue being first are ironically #1. This is a hard teaching for us who have been taught that only winners count. This is why in small groups we say everyone's voice counts because as we follow the ways of Jesus we are all #1; we all have something invaluable to contribute.

**Sacred Pause:** The first shall be last and the last shall be first. Those who serve, don't seek attention and don't pursue being first are ironically 1<sup>st</sup>.

**Saturday, January 14, 2017**

*Matt 7:12 In everything do to others as you would have them do to you; for this is the law and the prophets*

**Reflection:** Our work this week of trying to understand how to follow Jesus has been hard work. We have seen how Jesus calls us to be counter-cultural – live by the rule of love and not hate. Yet if there is one thing that can unite us it is the words of today's scripture. Here we find a universal principle - one that most people respect – treat everybody the way we would want to be treated. That is what compassion looks like. Every faith tradition has the 'golden rule' as part of their way of knowing and being in relationship with God and others. That is what the Kingdom of God looks like. A microcosm of the Kingdom is seen in our smaller communities where we succeed and fall short in the practice of the 'golden rule'. Yet together we can help one another follow in the ways of Jesus.

**Sacred Pause:** Want to be successful? Treat others as you would have them treat you. That is what compassion looks like. It is the golden rule of life.