

Daily Walk on the Rock



Date: October 8, 2023

Text: Jonah 3:10-4:11, Matthew 20:1-16

**Theme: Believing Is Seeing!
Depth Perception**

Day 1: Monday-It's Not Fair! How often have we heard someone say, "It's not fair!?" Perhaps it's a child who thinks another received something bigger or better, or an adult who feels cheated out of a much-deserved promotion, or a person who watches an unethical neighbor prosper, or a diligent student who fails a test, while another, who didn't study, gets the top grade... Does God view fairness from our perspective? If not, is that fair? Read the book of Jonah. Why doesn't Jonah want the people of Nineveh to repent? Why does Jonah resent it when the vine dies? Pause and consider your views of fairness, justice, grace, and God's eternal perspective. Pray for a teachable spirit.

Day 2: Tuesday -We Sing, 'Amazing Grace'; Do We Believe It?

Most of us have sung Newton's "Amazing Grace," but do we really believe we're saved by grace, or do we live as if it is about our own worth or merit? Do we attempt to add our "goodness" to what Jesus has done as we ponder our salvation? How does our response to the question affect our view of ourselves, God, and others? Do we sometimes allow the thought that we deserve God's generosity and grace but another doesn't to creep into our thinking? Do we put limits on God's grace by measuring it against our understanding of fairness? Read Jonah 3:10-4:11 and Matthew 20:1-16. Pray for an enlarged vision of God's generosity, forgiveness, mercy, and grace.

Day 3: Wednesday—Do We Major in the Majors?

Jonah is concerned that the Israelites will disapprove of God's mercy toward their enemy, Assyria, of which Nineveh is the capital; Jonah also rues the loss of his comfort (the vine). Those who labored all day in the vineyard resent others receiving full pay for only a few hours work (*Matthew 20*). Read Luke 14:1-24. What concerns the Pharisees? Do Jesus' words in 14:11 help clarify Matthew 19:30 and 20:16? What do you learn about God's priorities and God's desire to bless people whom others might deem unworthy (*Luke 14:21*)? What does Jesus consider to be of utmost importance (*Luke 19:10*)? Pray you will have the same passions Jesus has.

Day 4: Thursday—"For God So Loved the World"; Do We?

Meditate on John 3:16; Romans 5:8; and 1 John 4:9-10. Now read Genesis 12:3; 22:18; 28:14. In the call of Abram (Abraham), we see God's intentions to bless the world through Abraham's off-

spring (the Jewish people, and ultimately Jesus). Yet Jonah didn't want God to bless the people of Nineveh, and some laborers took offense at the landowner's (God's) generosity (*Matthew 20*). Are we ever like the pouting prophet or resentful workers? Do you know some who need to know God's love? Using Paul's prayer in Ephesians 3:14-19, pray for them.

Day 5—Think of the Harvest!

Our theme texts remind us how precious people are to the Lord. Jonah, the prophet who reluctantly announces that God will show mercy if the people repent, is precious; so are the Ninevites. The laborers who toil all day are precious, and so are those who work only an hour. And, yes, it's mixing metaphors (or parables), but consider that, in Scripture, the harvest often refers to people. Read Matthew 9:35-38. Many laborers are needed to share the story of God's goodness, love, and grace. What happens if we fix our eyes on the Master and on the harvest and forget ourselves and our silly notions of self-worth? Read Colossians 3:23-24 and Hebrews 12:1-3 and pray.

Day 6: Saturday-How Good Are We at Rejoicing with Others?

Do we live our lives comparing, or are our hearts big enough to re-joice when others are blessed, regardless of our own circumstances? Do we resent the one who comes to Jesus on his/her deathbed or after a life of debauchery and/or cruelty, if we ourselves have served the Lord since our youth? Do our hearts overflow with amazement and joy as we see God's abundant goodness, grace, and love toward others, or do we dwell on the need for things to be fair according to our standards? Read Jonah 3:10-4:11; Matthew 20:11-15; Luke 15:25-32; John 21:17-23; Romans 12:15a; and 2 Corinthians 6:4-10. Pray you will rejoice in the things that make God's heart glad.

Day 7: Sunday—"Take Me, Je-sus, Way beyond Me, Jesus"

If we have attitudes of gratitude and are overwhelmed at God's extravagant grace in our own lives, won't we be filled with joy at the thought that others might also experience God's radical mercy and generosity?! We mustn't guard God's gifts, as if we deserve them; we must share them with abandon, passion, and great love. Read our theme texts and then sing/pray Handt Hanson's lyrics: "Take me, Jesus, way beyond me, Jesus; I will love you, Jesus, when I serve the ones you love." Worship Jesus; he loves you so much.

LifeGroup Study

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**Theme: Believing Is Seeing!
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Belong

Put your hand in front of your face. Now focus on your fingers. Now focus on the horizon. Now try to focus on both at once. Our eyes simply cannot focus on near and far at the same time. Most of the time, those things right in front of us cloud our vision of the bigger picture; the far horizon. We react to those things that are right in front of us and sometimes they seem unfair. Both texts for today contain bitterness and resentment that come from only seeing part of the picture.

Discuss...

- *Name some of those things that are “right in front of us” that cloud our vision of the bigger picture.*
- *What are you focused on right now that is occupying your primary time and energy?*

Believe

Read **Jonah 3:10-4:11**. Jonah is bitter for two reasons. First, he would now look like a failure as a prophet because the judgment he proclaimed would not come to pass. From the beginning Jonah knew that God, in his infinite mercy, would relent and forgive if the Ninevites repented. From Jonah’s perspective he had traveled over 600 miles for nothing. Second, Jonah would now be considered a traitor by his fellow Israelites who longed to see their Assyrian adversaries deep fried in the oil of God’s hot and holy wrath.

Among other things this passage highlights God’s generous mercy and our human tendency toward bitterness and resentment...despite the fact that we, ourselves, are beneficiaries of that same generous mercy. How ironic that of all the people in this story Jonah is the one who most needs to repent! At the very point that we most struggle to love and extend mercy we are in the greatest need of God’s infinite love and mercy. The problem here is not the abundant source but our limited receptivity.

Discuss...

- *When have you felt like a failure? Looking back, was that an accurate assessment?*
- *How do we limit our receptivity to God’s infinite love and mercy?*

Read **Matthew 20:1-16**.

Context: This parable is found only in Matthew. It grows out of Jesus’ encounter with the rich young man, and especially Peter’s reaction (19:27). The introductory word “for”, as well as the proverbial phrase, “The last will be first and the first will be last” (19:30 and 20:16) connect this story to the entire previous chapter in

which Jesus promises that all who follow him will receive back all that they have sacrificed, will reign with him in power and will inherit eternal life. This is an important backdrop to this parable.

Notes on the parable:

• The practice of hiring day workers in a vineyard was common in Jesus’ day. The work day normally ran from 6 a.m. to 6 p.m. The promised wage was generally a denarius. In this case the landowner hired people at 6 a.m., 9 a.m., noon, 3 p.m. and 5 p.m. To Jesus’ hearers this scenario would likely emphasize the urgency of the harvest, which may or may not be an important element in this story. In any event, the expectation of the listeners would have been that the workers’ wages would have been pro-rated.

• The expression, “are you envious?” in verse 15 literally says “Is your eye evil because I am good?” This is an idiomatic phrase which bespeaks envy, covetousness and greed. An evil eye ultimately points to an ungrateful heart. This is important because it points to the “heart” of the parable...the gratitude of our hearts. Peter made it clear that his motivation for following Jesus and serving was the hope of reward (19:27). While Jesus makes it clear that discipleship will indeed be rewarded, the parable of the workers in the vineyard emphasizes that gratitude, not the hope of reward, is the proper motivation. The “first” who expect much will be last, and the “last” who expect little, but are grateful to be included, will be first.

Become

Consider this:

- We’ve been blessed to be a blessing.
- We’ve been loved to love others.
- We’ve been given mercy to extend mercy.
- We’ve been forgiven that we might forgive others.
- We’ve been given power to empower others.
- We live in abundance so that we might live out of abundance.

This week, live this way.

Prayer...

Lord God, make us a blessing to others. Show us how to extend mercy and forgiveness. Empower us to live in your abundance and share that abundance with others in Jesus’ name. Amen!



St. Paul Lutheran Church

“Your Refuge from the Storm”



Deuteronomy 6:7 is a call for parents/grandparents/adults to talk about faith issues throughout the day. We have a chance to be facilitators of intentional connect conversations with our children. Here is what the verse says about faith matters...

“Impress them upon your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up.” -Deut 6:7



Mealtime

...when you sit at home...

A little thought/talk time for mealtime when you are sitting together.

Verse:

God’s grace has saved you because of your faith in Christ. Your salvation doesn’t come from anything you do. It is God’s gift. - Ephesians 2:8

Finish the phrase:

- God’s gift of grace is good because...
- I am saved because...
- I show how grateful I am for God’s free gift of grace when...
- If Jesus were here with us, he would say...

Prayer:

Dear Jesus, thank you for being so generous with me. I know there is nothing I could ever do to deserve your priceless gift of grace. Help me to share your gift of grace with other people. I love you, Jesus. Amen!



Drivetime ...along the road...

Key Verse:

So the last will be first and the first will be last. - Matthew 20:16

Questions:

- Why do you think Jesus shares his gift of grace equally with everyone who looks for it?
- Do you think Jesus loves one person more or less because of their place in line?
- Do you think Jesus loves one person more or less because of how smart they are, how hard they work, or how many friends they have?

Prayer:

God, thank you for sharing your gift of grace equally with everyone who looks for it; for loving each of us no matter what. We pray that you would help us see the world like you do, so the last will be first and the first will be last. In your name we pray. Amen!



Nighttime

...when you lie down...

Question:

- What do you think God’s gift of grace looks like?
- Think of a favorite gift you have received, what was it?
- What would have happened if you had not opened the gift?

Read:

1 Peter 4:9-11

Say:

It’s important to us that you know you that we have received the gift of God’s grace and God wants us to open it (realize that) so that we are aware of God’s love always and also to tell others about it as well.

Night Time Prayer:

Thank you God for the gift of your grace in our lives. We know that we have sinned against you by some of the things we have said and done. We are sorry. Thanks for your grace that frees us up to move on. Amen.

Parents are the #1 influence in the lives of their children. 6:7 is a tool to help families engage in those meaningful conversations. St. Paul Church, Kodiak, Alaska

Morningtime

...when you get up...

Have you ever been excited about the free prize you get in a box of cereal? There probably wasn’t anything you did to deserve it. It was there waiting for you, no matter what. This morning, close your eyes, imagine God’s most precious gift of grace – free for you, believing Jesus bought and paid for it. Open your eyes, and see! The free gift of God’s grace makes all of us right with him. Christ Jesus paid the price to set us free.
Read: *Romans 3:24*

ConnectTip:

People usually talk when they have a need (ie. hungry, money, concern, favor). 6:7 suggests we talk when we have an opportunity. Faith and Values are shared in the midst of the conversations.