



DEVOTIONS FOR LIFE

Aldersgate Church ~ St. Louis Park, MN

Week of February 5, 2023 (Matthew 7:1-29)

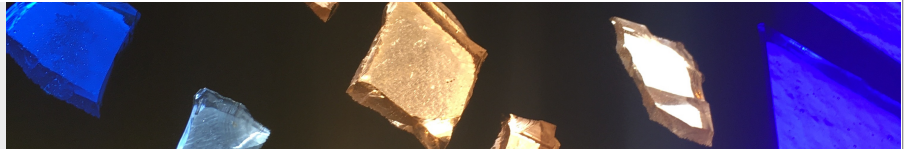
Prayer for Groups & Personal Devotion:

You love us into a new way of being, O God. From the beginning your love has transformed - from chaos into clarity, from wilderness to flourishing, from death to life. We thank you for your grace that meets us and calls us, fills us and guides us. Today we offer ourselves to you, in gratitude for your teaching, in trust that you will receive our commitment and use it for your glory.

(Add your local/personal thanksgivings here)

We know, Lord, that you know us better than we know ourselves, that you hear us before we can even ask, and when we don't quite know what to say, your Spirit intercedes for us. We come today searching, asking, knocking, on behalf of our neighbors and the world around us.

May [we all] be blessed with compassion, with a listening ear and an open heart...



Devotions for Life

Context: Last week we were in Chapter 6, which opened with words about acts of piety, and in particular prayer. It then moved into talking about where our "treasures" are, or what we really value and therefore "serve". In Chapter 7, Jesus begins to wrap things up.

The Sermon on the Mount, is, as we've said, considered by many to be Jesus' greatest teaching. But it's also not a sermon as we understand them today. It's not one coherent sermon, with one central point or call, but there is also great power in reading as such. Likely, Matthew is taking a lot of teachings Jesus gave and weaving them together. With that in mind, as we wrap up these core chapters, read the Sermon on the Mount both ways.



That is, read it as a whole. Look for the ways these individuals teachings do connect and lead to one greater whole, and wonder about it (individually and in community). But also, wrestle with each individual

...and imagination to see your image in [one another] and others. We ask your Spirit of courage and peace for those who are in the midst of the storm, for those surrounded by violence and feeling unmoored by grief.

May they be strengthened and empowered to embody your promise in this life. We ask your Spirit of truth for your church, called to be Christ's Body, to build on a firm foundation and to carry on his work. May we be honest with ourselves and with you, and choose to walk the narrow road that leads to life, that all may see your hand guiding and your love reflecting through us into this world. We ask these and all things in the name and authority of Jesus the Christ. Amen.

Compassion & Justice

This month we're raising funds for Small Sums, an organization that provides the required work items needed to start a new job for those experiencing homelessness or housing instability.

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teaching. Read the whole thing and maybe mark in your Bible (or take notes elsewhere) about those individual teachings. Then wrestle with how to live them out.

As you do so, look at these final words in the sermon, and wonder about how Jesus is summing it all up or wrapping it all up. What's the "takeaway"?

Questions for Reflection & Discussion:

1. Jesus says that "You'll receive the same judgment you give. Whatever you deal out will be dealt to you" (7:2). What do you think of the idea that God judges us in the same way that we judge others? What might this mean for your own (or your community's) relationships with others?
2. Jesus says "Ask and you will receive" (7:7), and yet many people seemingly do not receive what they ask God for. How do you understand Jesus's meaning in this verse? How would you respond to someone who has been praying and not receiving answers to their prayers?
3. In a teaching known as the Golden Rule, Jesus says, "Treat people in the same way that you want to be treated" (7:12). Reflecting on this, what are some of the ways that you would want to be treated (as an individual or as a community)? What are some concrete ways you can practice treating others the way you want to be treated?
4. Jesus says that "the gate that leads to destruction is broad and the road wide" while "the gate that leads to life is narrow and the road difficult" (7:13–14). What do you think Jesus means by this saying? In what ways have you found the gate to destruction to be broad? In what ways have you found the gate to life to be narrow?
5. Jesus invites us to build our houses on solid rock rather than on sand (7:24–27). What do you think Jesus means by this saying? In what ways have you (or your community) built your house on rock? In what ways have you (or your community) built your house on sand?