



In our final reading of this series, we turn to one of the most challenging teachings shared by Jesus. In the coming months, we will each continue to educate ourselves on the different platforms and ideas presented by the varying candidates running for an elected office. We will seek in our own way to make wise decisions, to vote for great leaders, and by God's grace we pray, to participate in this process in a way that models the grace and love we have received in Christ. We believe we bear that responsibility as those called to be "the salt of the earth" and "the light of the world."

At the same time, we realize that our higher calling is to a different "platform," a way of life captured in these words from Luke 6. They are the most audacious, controversial and revolutionary ideology ever presented in human history. We recognize that we live in a crazy world. We believe that Jesus is the only answer to that chaos. These words represent his politics and the ultimate allegiance for all those who have committed their lives to him. May we be those people, sons and daughters of God fully devoted to seeing our fervent prayer fulfilled for God's kingdom to come into our lives, and through us, into the entire world. May God bless and guide you as you follow Jesus this day and every day of your life.

GPS for Families

GrowPrayStudy.org/family

During times of stress, children sense our discomfort and anxiety. Even if you do not discuss it with them or you think you are hiding it from them, they know something is wrong. God created all of us with this intuition, or sixth sense, so we can become alert to situations that are bad for us.

If there is something going on that is causing you stress, talk about it with them in simple terms. Tell them you are worried about something, but you know God will help you through it. Ask them to pray with you about it. Then teach your kids and yourself to stop worrying.

Read Matthew 6:25-34. Read from a children's Bible if you have young children. These verses remind us that it is pointless to worry. Instead we should pray and focus on God. He knows what we need and will provide for us, just as he provides for the birds. If God cares and provides for the birds, how much more will he care for us?

To remind yourselves about this, make some bird feeders to hang in your yard. Find pinecones on the ground or at a craft store. Cover them in peanut butter and roll them in birdseed. Tie or hot glue a string to the top and hang them in trees or shrubs outside. Pay attention to the birds that visit your feeders, and remind each other that God loves you even more than the birds.

MESSAGE "Christians and Democracy"

SCRIPTURE 1 Timothy 2:1-8

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"Pray for all people, including kings and everyone in authority . . ." (vs. 1)

"Our purpose is to live a peaceful life in godliness and dignity." (vs. 2)

"God wants all people saved and living in His truth." (vs. 3-4)

1. The Church is not a political party.
 2. Jesus is not on the ballot.
 3. Do not be like a horse or a mule whose movement must be controlled by bit and bridle. (*Psalm 32:9*)
 4. Use your freedom to serve one another. (*Galatians 5:13*)
 5. To whom much is given, much is required. (*Jesus in Luke 12:48*)
- In a democracy, ignorance is not bliss.
 - Every ballot in every election has blood on it.
 - Every ballot in every election has come from God's providence.

PRAYER FOR THE WEEK

Lord, we live in your world. Your word reminds us that you have called us to be "the light" in this world and "the salt of the earth." In spite of our differences and in the midst of our struggles, help us to be living witnesses of your grace and love. We pray today, Lord, for your kingdom to come into our lives that we may be used to bring your kingdom into the world. AMEN.

Each week of this series we have started here with words from James. We have made note of the fact that discussions of politics often feel very polarizing and divisive, causing some of us to avoid them all together. Yet, our calling still remains to be the “salt of the earth” and the “light of the world.”

In our first reading of this series, we said we want to wrestle with the question, “Is there a better way?” As you have reflected on these words from James, what insight have they provided you as you have considered the “better way”?

You might paraphrase James’ words by saying that “if righteousness is our intended destination, anger will not take us there.” Do you believe this to be true? If so, in what ways can you commit to “redirect” anger in order to stay on the right path?

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The prophet Micah was given a difficult task, to prophecy about the impending destruction of Israel. God’s vision had been corrupted by the greed and sin of Israel. The people of God were meant to live in a way that reflected the heart and character of God. Somewhere along the way, Israel had forgotten that. In today’s reading, Micah is reminding the people “what is good and what the Lord requires.”

What three things does Micah list as the good things which God requires? What does this list tell us about God’s character and what God values?

Take a moment today to consider some of the concrete ways you can live your life with a commitment to justice, mercy and humility. Is there an area in your life where God might challenge you to grow in humility, mercy and commitment to justice? What would that be?

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The time of Jeremiah’s ministry is described as “a period of storm and stress when the doom of entire nations — including Judah itself — was being sealed.” Though the exact date of his death remains unknown, it is believed that Jeremiah lived to see a portion of his prophecy fulfilled in the Babylonian conquest of Judah, which sent a large number of the Israelites into exile in 586 BC.

In yesterday’s reading, we highlighted Micah’s instructions to “walk humbly with God.” Jeremiah strikes a similar tone by warning against boasting in “wisdom, strength of riches.” Why does God emphasize humility so strongly throughout the scriptures?

In verse 24, Jeremiah says that if we boast, it should be that we “understand and know” God. If God is as Jeremiah describes him in the second half of verse 24, how well would you say you know and understand God?

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In all four gospels, John the Baptist “prepares the way” for the coming of Jesus. In Luke 3, Jesus is baptized by John. And in the opening verses of chapter 4, Jesus enters the desert, where according to verse 2, “for 40 days he was tempted by the devil.” In Luke’s Gospel, the ministry of Jesus officially begins in the 14th verse of chapter 4. Returning to his hometown of Nazareth, Jesus read these words from the prophet Isaiah and proclaimed, “Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.”

In the last two days of our reading, we have looked at the words of the prophets and the challenge they presented to the nation of Israel. Both Micah and Jeremiah highlighted God’s allegiance to justice, mercy, righteousness and humility. How do you see that reflected in the way Jesus describes the beginning of his own ministry?

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