Weekly Bible Reading- August 2020
Sermon on the Mount – "Blessed are peacemakers, for they will be called children of God."

As August continues, our congregational Bible study will focus on Jesus' words in what has been called the greatest sermon that was ever given – the Sermon on the Mount – found in Matthew chapters 5, 6 and 7. We are so thankful that the Holy Spirit led Matthew to record these teachings in the gospel message. But reader beware! These words are counter-cultural and when we apply them to our lives, they are truly "a two edge sword" that will cut deeply into our self-centered sinfulness. When we do, we can truly be comforted (5:4) filled (5:6), see God (5:7), and be called children of God (5:9). Read through the sermon (all three chapters) each week in August and consider how Christ is speaking to you. Then focus for a few moments on the weekly thoughts:

//August 9-15// Meek and merciful peacemaker, you are indeed blessed. Matthew 5:3-11

- Since we were children, we've heard about the "Be attitudes". In Latin, each of the eight verses begins with the word "beati" which is translated as "blessed" or in some English translations as "happy" or "rich". But some of these "attitudes" challenge what we would think of as being blessed, happy, or rich. Which ones are most challenging to you?
- What does it look like for a follower of Christ to be "poor in spirit", to mourn, to be meek? (vs. 3-5) How are the blessings fulfilled?
- Do you hunger and thirst for righteousness? How is that reflected in the way you live?
- Peacemakers are blessed by being called children of God. Who will call peacemakers children of God? God? Other Christians? The world? John Chapter 1 says that to all who believe and receive Christ he gave the right to become children of God (John 1:12-13). If you are a Christian - a child of God – you are called to be a peacemaker… and its your God-given right to be a peacemaker. Are there any changes in your life that need to be made for you to be called a child of God?
- Pray that you and the other Christians in your life would be peacemakers. Consider how you can spur one another on to accomplish this.

//August 16-22// You are the Salt and Light of the Earth Matthew 5:13-16, 5:21-26, 5:43-48

- Christ called those who heard his words the salt of the earth. How can you be salt of the earth? Have you lost your saltiness?
- In John 8:12, Jesus says that HE is the light of the world and that whoever follows him will have the light of life. When he says that WE are the light of the world in the sermon on the mount (Matthew 5:14), we are called to point to him by our good deeds. Is your light burning? Don't let Satan puff it out! What are your good deeds that cause others to glorify your Father in heaven?
- Murder is sin – no doubt, but in verses 21-22 Jesus teaches that our hateful attitudes and careless, spiteful words toward others are sinful also. It seems like there has been a lot of name calling lately. Those names and words reflect our attitudes toward each other. Do you need to repent of some of your words and attitudes? Do you need to forgive others for words that they have used?
- We are called even to love our enemy (verse 43-45). Without a doubt this is one of the hardest teachings of Jesus. How can we do this? Jesus says to love and pray for those who persecute us. So much can be accomplished with prayer. Verse 45 tells the result of our love and prayers – "that you may be children of your Father in heaven." Remember the beatitude "Blessed are the peacemakers for they will be called children of God." (5:9) Genuine love for others (even our enemies) and prayer – much prayer – has to be at the center of our becoming peacemakers.
- Pray for those who are hardest for you to love right now. Are you being called to reconciliation?

//August 23-29// When you pray, say "Our Father…" Matthew 6:9-15

- As Christians we are called to prayer and given such a beautiful example in the heart of the Sermon on the Mount. Its known as the Lord's Prayer and if you don't have it memorized, spend time this week learning it. In just a few dozen words, Jesus teaches us to:
    - Praise God and pray for His kingdom
    - Ask for His will to be done
    - Ask for our sustenance

- Ask for forgiveness of our sins and acknowledge that we forgive others.
- Ask for deliverance from temptation and evil.

Christ says "this is how you should pray". This prayer may be prayed word for word, as an example, or as an outline. Memorizing the words will help you in each of these ways.

- Our relationship with our Father is a very personal one and our prayers are very personal, but the Lord's prayer is written with plural pronouns. An anonymous poem was written about this:

You cannot pray the Lord's Prayer and even once say "I."
You cannot pray the Lord's Prayer and even once say "My."
Nor can you pray the Lord's Prayer and not pray for one another,
And when you ask for daily bread, you must include your brother.
For others are included ... in each and every plea,
From the beginning to the end of it, it does not once say "Me."

So, in the example prayer we are called to pray with and for each other. "Our Father…give us…forgive us…lead us…deliver us." Perhaps your cupboard and refrigerator are full, and you aren't worried about your daily bread today – but others aren't as fortunate. As we pray for others, we should be attuned to whether we are called to be a blessing to them. Practice praying through the Lord's prayer focusing on the Lord's will and on others.

- Forgiveness of others is a core principle taught in the Lord's prayer (v12). Jesus goes on to explain how important forgiveness is (v15-15). Who are hardest for you to forgive? Do you need to have a forgiving heart toward someone or some group of people?
- Pray using the Lord's prayer (word for word, as an example, or as an outline) each day this week.

//August 30-September 5// Removing a Plank and a Rule that is Golden Matthew 7:1-5, 7-12

- Matthew 7:1-5 records Jesus' very practical teaching on judging others, cautioning that with the "measure you use, it will be measured to you." Romans 3:10 reminds us that none of us are righteous. A more modern proverb says that whenever we point a finger toward others, we have three fingers pointing back at us. What does it mean to you that you should first remove the plank from your own eye?
- Are we allowed to remove the speck from someone else's eye? Verse five implies that if we do so, we need to do it with the attitude that we have a plank in our own that needs to be dealt with. Then we will see clearly to remove the speck from our "brother's" eye.
- Verses 7-11 is Jesus' classic encouragement to pray. "Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened." Do you need to be in prayer? Trust God to answer in the way that is best. And remember the Lord's prayer (Matthew 6:9-13) to ask for His will to be done.
- Its so interesting that immediately following the encouragement to pray, Jesus states what is known as the Golden Rule: "So in everything, do to others what you would have them do for you…" (v. 12) This is certainly a reminder to ask God to help you do this. Do you treat others the way you would want to be treated when…
  - You (they) have let others down and forgiveness is needed.
  - You (they) fall short in the decisions they've made.
  - You (they) need to be listened to without criticism.
  - You (they) are being treated unfairly.
- How do Jesus' teachings on judging others, on praying, and on treating others according to the golden rule contribute to our calling to be peacemakers?
- Pray, pray, pray (Ask, seek, knock) this week for God to show you the plank that should be removed from your life, for guidance to lovingly help a brother with his speck, and for His help in our loving others and treating others as we would have them treat us.