



Series: Everyday Faith

Sermon: Faith in the Mirror

Proverbs 3:1-5

My child, do not forget my teaching,
but let your heart keep my commandments;
for length of days and years of life
and abundant welfare they will give you.
Do not let loyalty and faithfulness forsake you;
bind them around your neck,
write them on the tablet of your heart.
So you will find favor and good repute
in the sight of God and of people.
Trust in the Lord with all your heart,
and do not rely on your own insight.

Monday: Read Matthew 6:9-13

Prayer is often considered the cornerstone of spiritual disciplines because it ushers us into perpetual communion with God. To pray is to change. Mother Teresa said, “I used to believe that prayer changes things, but now I know that prayer changes us, and we change things.” Prayer is the path God most often uses to mold and shape our hearts and minds, bringing us closer to the heartbeat of God. The disciples asked, “Lord teach us to pray,” reminding us that prayer is something we learn, it takes practice. It is a discipline to speak to God and to listen for God. Over time, prayer becomes a rhythm that shapes how we see God, one another and our world. How do you pray? In what ways do you feel prayer connects you to God? What and who might be changed if we pray deeply, fervently, and without ceasing?

Prayer: Lord, hear our prayers. Amen.

Tuesday: Read Matthew 6:16-18

Fasting is the most concrete and viscerally embodied of the spiritual disciplines, and its intersection of the physical and the spiritual produces uniquely potent, perceptible, senses-arousing effects that bridge the often too-wide gap between body and soul. Throughout time, saints of the church practiced fasting, hungry enough for God’s leading that they wanted to say it with the hunger of their bodies and not just the hunger of their hearts. When we intentionally shift our focus to God, fasting “provides physical sensations that point to spiritual realities.” The hunger of stomach is designed to put us in touch with the hunger of soul. Fasting can help us reclaim the connection between mind, body, and spirit, centering us in the reality of God.

Prayer: May I hunger and thirst for you, O God. Amen.

Wednesday: Read Matthew 6:25-33

We live in a fast-paced, hectic, consumer-driven world, and our need for security leads us into an insane attachment to things. Affluence and ambition become our measure of success. The modern hero is the one who purposefully becomes rich rather than the one who voluntarily becomes poor. Yet, Jesus paints a different picture of success. One where rich rulers must give away possessions and farmers are foolish for hoarding grain. One where we are called to receive what we have as a gift from God, to trust that we will have what we need, and to share our provisions and possessions with anyone in need. Jesus invites us to seek God’s Kingdom in and through a simple life, as he reminds his followers, “where your treasure is, there will your heart be.” When our treasure and our heart belong to God, we are reflections of God’s Kingdom in the world. Simplicity sets us free to receive the provision of God as a gift that is not ours to keep and can be freely shared with others. What clutters your life? How might you let go of it? What might you be willing to give away? In what ways might you reorient your time, energy and money to relationships instead of material things?

Prayer: Lord, give me today my daily bread. Amen.

Thursday: Read John 13:3-5

The last shall be first. Whenever there is trouble over who will be greatest there is trouble over who will be least. This is hard for us. Most of us know we will never be greatest, just don’t let us be the least. Jesus lived out servanthood before the disciples, then called them to the way of service. More than any other way the grace of humility is worked out in our lives through true service. The quiet, self-less, hidden work is not a list of things that we do or even a code of ethics, but a way of living. And we discover as we serve our neighbor in small, seemingly insignificant ways, we possess a deeper well of compassion, grace, and love for one another. In what ways do you serve others? How do you practice the service of being served? How might God be calling you to serve in new ways?

Prayer: Jesus, open my eyes to those I might serve today. Amen.

Friday: Read James 5:16

Confession is a difficult discipline for us because we all too often view our Christian community as a fellowship of saints before we see it as a fellowship of sinners. We feel that most everyone else has advanced so far into holiness that we are isolated and alone in our sin. We cannot bear to reveal our own failures and shortcomings to those around us because we imagine that we are the only ones who miss the mark over and over. We hide and pretend that we are something or someone we are not. The disciple of confession brings an end to pretense. God calls us to be a Church that can openly confess its frail humanity and know the forgiving and empowering graces of Christ. What does it mean to you that the people of God are first a fellowship of sinners? How might that change your perception of confession? How might the discipline of confession draw you deeper into relationship with God? With fellow believers?

Prayer: Jesus Christ, Son of the Living God, have mercy on me, a sinner. Amen.

Saturday: Read Philippians 4:4-5

Paul reminds us to set our minds on all the things in life that are true, honorable, just, pure, lovely, and gracious. God has established a created order full of excellent and good things, when we fill our lives with those things, giving thanks to God, we experience joy. Joy produces energy. Joy makes us strong. Celebration is the result of a consciously chosen way of thinking and living. When we choose to live this way, the healing and redemption of Christ fills our lives. Celebration gives us the chance to laugh at ourselves, to gain perspective, to be humbled, to feel renewed, to appreciate the fullness of life, and the love and grace of God and one another – and it saves us from taking ourselves too seriously. Celebration gives us the strength to live in all the other disciplines. How do you practice celebration? Where and when do you find joy? In what ways might you be more intentional about the act of celebration?

Prayer: Good and Loving God, fill me with your joy, that my joy might be complete in you. Amen.