

LENT 2022

Going Beyond the Sermon

Rhythms of Grace Field Guide

Are you tired? Worn out? Burned out on religion?

Come to me. Get away with me and you'll recover your life. I'll show you how to take a real rest.

Walk with me and work with me—watch how I do it. Learn the unforced rhythms of grace.

I won't lay anything heavy or ill-fitting on you.

Keep company with me and you'll learn to live freely and lightly.

Matthew 11:28-30 (The Message)

SUNDAY, MARCH 6

Keeping Company with Jesus ... THROUGH WALKING WITH HIM
MATTHEW 11:28-30

SUNDAY, MARCH 13

Keeping Company with Jesus ... THROUGH FACING FEAR
LUKE 13:31-35

SUNDAY, MARCH 20

Keeping Company with Jesus ... THROUGH CULTIVATING A NEW MIND
LUKE 13:1-9

SUNDAY, MARCH 27

Keeping Company with Jesus ... THROUGH SCANDALOUS GRACE
LUKE 15:1-3, 11B-32

SUNDAY, APRIL 3

Keeping Company with Jesus ... THROUGH OFFERING OUR RESOURCES
LUKE 19:1-10

SUNDAY, APRIL 10 (PALM SUNDAY)

Keeping Company with Jesus ... THROUGH HUMILITY
PHILIPPIANS 2:1-11

MARCH 6

By Peter Johns

KEEPING COMPANY WITH JESUS... THROUGH WALKING WITH HIM

Scripture: Matthew 11: 28-30 and Psalm 1: 1-2

Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.

Happy are those

*who do not follow the advice of the wicked,
or take the path that sinners tread,
or sit in the seat of scoffers;
but their delight is in the law of the Lord,
and on his law they meditate day and night.*

Reflection: Growing up, my relationship with the Bible was to see the text as something to be dissected. Break it down into its constituent parts (using a Greek or Hebrew Lexicon), parse every syllable for its meaning, and then reassemble it into the already pre-approved interpretation. The problem with dissection is that it kills whatever is being cut apart.

I was in my thirties when I first encountered a different approach to scripture, one that encouraged meditation and brought the scripture alive to me, a practice that had existed for centuries but one that I had never been taught as it was outside of the particular denominational traditions in which I grew up. This practice is called ***Lectio Divina*** which translates as “*divine reading*”.

The writer of Hebrews says that the word of God is alive and active. In *Lectio Divina* I am listening for the voice of God as I read the word of God. God’s Spirit interacts with my spirit. This practice may lead me deeper into Bible study, but the aim is simply to listen to God in the present moment. To read not for information, but for formation, to allow God’s Spirit to guide my reflection.

Spiritual Practice: Lectio Divina

I typically will sit somewhere quiet, spend a few moments paying attention to my breath to help me come to stillness, and then begin. I find using a fairly short passage - three or four sentences, is helpful. **The four traditional movements of *Lectio Divina* are as follows:**

Read: Slowly read a passage of scripture. As you do, listen for a word or a phrase that seems to grab your attention. Listen for the words that draw you in, trusting that God’s Spirit is gently leading you.

Reflect: Read the passage a second time, and meditate on the word or phrase. Ask yourself “How does this word or phrase intersect with my life at the moment? What is God saying to me here through this text?”

Respond: Read the text a third time. Talk to God about what you are hearing. Ask yourself ‘What kind of response do I need to make to God from what God is saying to me?’

Rest: On this final reading simply be still. Try and let yourself rest in God’s presence, trusting that God’s Spirit is working within you.

In my life God has frequently surprised me during Lectio Divina and it has helped me connect with the Bible in a deeper way.

“We have to learn to hear on every level at once if we are really to become whole. The problem is that most of us are deaf in at least one ear. We have to learn to listen to Scripture. And we have to learn to listen to life around us.”

— Joan Chittister

Using one of the scriptures on the top of the previous page, try using the process of *lectio divina* with Use the space below to record your experience.

What word or phrase caught your attention?

How does the word or phrase intersect with your life today? Why do you think that word stood out to you?

What do you think God is saying to you through this word?

Prayer:

Healer of my Soul, open my eyes and open my ears to receive the word you have for me.

Amen.

Scripture: Luke 13: 31-35

At that very hour some Pharisees came and said to him, “Get away from here, for Herod wants to kill you.” ³² He said to them, “Go and tell that fox for me, ‘Listen, I am casting out demons and performing cures today and tomorrow, and on the third day I finish my work. ³³ Yet today, tomorrow, and the next day I must be on my way, because it is impossible for a prophet to be killed outside of Jerusalem.’ ³⁴ Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it! How often have I desired to gather your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you were not willing! ³⁵ See, your house is left to you. And I tell you, you will not see me until the time comes when you say, ‘Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord.’”

Questions for Reflection:

How would you describe the reaction Jesus has to learning that his life may be in danger?

What do you suppose allows him to respond in such a calm, unaffected manner?

How would you describe the priorities of Jesus? How are they different from those around him?

Spiritual Practice: Fasting from Social Media / Network News

The purpose of fasting is to deny ourselves a basic need. It is meant to allow us an experience of solidarity with the sufferings of Jesus; and to remind us that our relationship with Jesus takes precedence over our physical needs and the material world. The following guidelines are meant to help you as you “fast” this week.

Before you begin your fast, answer the following questions:

The reason I like to participate in social media or watch network news is:

When I hear/read something upsetting/controversial on social media or the network news, I typically respond by (feelings or actions):

If I gave both of these up for one week, I think the result would be:

Identify at least one form of social media and one form of mass media (print or broadcast) that you will give up this week (Monday through Saturday). Make a note of it here:

Prayer:

In the morning, beginning on Monday, say this prayer each day this week (adapt as you see fit):

*Gracious and loving God,
today I desire for you to guide me on how to respond to the people and situations around me.
Help me see things through your eyes today.*

If you have an “urge” to check the news or your social media, repeat the prayer and think instead about your desire to be closer to Jesus.

At the end of each day, take a few minutes to reflect on how you responded to people and situations and to pray. (Use the following prayer as a guide):

*Gracious and loving God,
thank you for walking alongside me today.
Please help me to depend more on you to fulfill my deepest needs for companionship
and to guide my priorities. Let me do your will always.*

MARCH 20

By Rachel Sciretti

KEEPING COMPANY WITH JESUS...
THROUGH CULTIVATING A NEW MIND

Scripture: Luke 13: 1-9

Now there were some present at that time who told Jesus about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mixed with their sacrifices.² Jesus answered, “Do you think that these Galileans were worse sinners than all the other Galileans because they suffered this way? ³I tell you, no! But unless you repent (*metanoia = change your mind*), you too will all perish. ⁴Or those eighteen who died when the tower in Siloam fell on them—do you think they were more guilty than all the others living in Jerusalem? ⁵I tell you, no! But unless you repent (*metanoia = change your mind*), you too will all perish.”

⁶Then he told this parable: “A man had a fig tree growing in his vineyard, and he went to look for fruit on it but did not find any. ⁷So he said to the man who took care of the vineyard, ‘For three years now I’ve been coming to look for fruit on this fig tree and haven’t found any. Cut it down! Why should it use up the soil?’

⁸“‘Sir,’ the man replied, ‘leave it alone for one more year, and I’ll dig around it and fertilize it. ⁹If it bears fruit next year, fine! If not, then cut it down.’”

Questions for Reflection:

In verses 1-5, What do you think was important to the people with whom Jesus was talking? What was their focus of attention? What do you think was important to the vineyard owner? For what was he looking? What do you think was important to the caretaker?

How do you think this parable connects to Jesus’ teaching on metanoia (changing your mind)?

What do you naturally and unconsciously look for? (who fits in, who to blame, hot-button words, your image, what’s fair, etc.?)

Can you identify a thought pattern that leads to “death”?

What would happen if you changed that pattern? Who would you be?

Teaching: What you scan for, you find. If you are looking for what's missing, you won't see what you have. If you are looking for what could be improved upon, you will miss what's perfect as it is. If you are looking for what could go wrong, you will miss what's going right. If you are looking for a polished product, you might miss a meaningful process. If you are looking for external feedback, you will miss your own inner voice of wisdom and blessing.

Changing our minds takes curiosity and honesty. By inquiring into our own behaviors, motivations, and experiences we can begin to cultivate a new mind – a mind that more closely resembles that of Christ. Cultivating a new mind requires self-awareness followed up with self-compassion, openness to change, and an intentional shift of focus. This takes practice.

Spiritual Practice: Examen

Examen is an old word that refers to the practice of reflecting on the day. Generally, there are two questions that invite us to look into the many moments that fill our days. Our answers to these questions give us a glimpse into our inner lives - motivations, energy, our focus of attention.

Through the practice of examen, Jerry Webber says “we are seeking to be aware of how we are moving in concert with the flow of God’s Spirit . . . and to be aware of the ways in which we are moving counter to the flow of God’s Spirit. In both movements, we are seeking to give ourselves more fully to God, in order to move more intentionally in alignment with God’s design for the world.”

These questions can be asked alone in a time of quiet reflection or recorded into a journal or daily planner. Examen can also be experienced with others – with your family around the dinner table, with your partner as you go to bed, or over the phone with a parent or child living across the miles.

Examen at the end of the day:

Close your eyes. Take some deep, cleansing breaths. Place your hand on your heart and invite the Holy Spirit to help you see with the eyes of your heart. Then ask yourself these questions...

When did I feel life draining from me today? When did I feel most alive today, most myself?

You might want to reflect further on what comes up for you. Get curious and ask some more questions that peel back the layers. Record what rises in your journal.

Variations of the Examen:

When did I sense God’s presence today? When did I feel far away from God’s presence?

When did I not take care of myself? When did I take care of myself?

When did I not trust? When did I grab control and push my way through?

Over time you might see some patterns that arise. This can provide insight into how you can begin to “change your mind,” or shift your focus of attention to that which gives life rather than taking life.

Prayer: (Turn this Scripture into your prayer)

So here’s what I want you to do, God helping you:

Take your everyday, ordinary life—your sleeping, eating, going-to-work, and walking-around life—and place it before God as an offering. Embracing what God does for you is the best thing you can do for him. Don’t become so well-adjusted to your culture that you fit into it without even thinking.

Instead, fix your attention on God. You’ll be changed from the inside out.

- Romans 12:1-2, The Message

MARCH 27

By Matt Russell

**KEEPING COMPANY WITH JESUS...
THROUGH SCANDALOUS GRACE**

Scripture: Luke 15: 1-3, 11b-32

Now all the tax collectors and sinners were coming near to listen to him. And the Pharisees and the scribes were grumbling and saying, “This fellow welcomes sinners and eats with them.” Then he told them this parable....

Then Jesus said, “There was a man who had two sons. The younger of them said to his father, ‘Father, give me the share of the property that will belong to me.’ So he divided his property between them. A few days later the younger son gathered all he had and traveled to a distant country, and there he squandered his property in dissolute living. When he had spent everything, a severe famine took place throughout that country, and he began to be in need. So he went and hired himself out to one of the citizens of that country, who sent him to his fields to feed the pigs. He would gladly have filled himself with the pods that the pigs were eating; and no one gave him anything.

But when he came to himself he said, ‘How many of my father’s hired hands have bread enough and to spare, but here I am dying of hunger! I will get up and go to my father, and I will say to him, “Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; I am no longer worthy to be called your son; treat me like one of your hired hands.”’ So he set off and went to his father.

But while he was still far off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion; he ran and put his arms around him and kissed him. Then the son said to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; I am no longer worthy to be called your son.’ But the father said to his slaves, ‘Quickly, bring out a robe—the best one—and put it on him; put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. And get the fatted calf and kill it, and let us eat and celebrate; for this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found!’ And they began to celebrate.

Now his elder son was in the field; and when he came and approached the house, he heard music and dancing. He called one of the slaves and asked what was going on. He replied, ‘Your brother has come, and your father has killed the fatted calf, because he has got him back safe and sound.’ Then he became angry and refused to go in. His father came out and began to plead with him. But he answered his father, ‘Listen! For all these years I have been working like a slave for you, and I have never disobeyed your command; yet you have never given me even a young goat so that I might celebrate with my friends. But when this son of yours came back, who has devoured your property with prostitutes, you killed the fatted calf for him!’ Then the father said to him, ‘Son, you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours. But we had to celebrate and rejoice, because this brother of yours was dead and has come to life; he was lost and has been found.’

Questions for Reflection:

How are seemingly irretractable resentments let go of?

How do we create practices of connection when we have been taught capacities that divide?

How do we move from reaction to being receptive?

These questions get at the heart of the *practice of deep listening*.

Spiritual Practice: Deep Listening

This practice is a threshold to repair relationships, is crucial in seeing ‘new ways’ (metanoia) and is often the hardest work when it comes to the community Christ came to establish. **Deep Listening involves listening, from a deep, receptive, and caring place in oneself, to deeper and often subtler levels of meaning and intention in the other person.** It is listening that is generous, empathic, supportive, accurate, and trusting. Trust here does not imply agreement, but to trust that whatever others say, regardless of how well or poorly it is said, comes from something true *in their experience*.

It is **cultivating an empathic pause** that tells the impulsive reactivity in the backseat of the car that it cannot keep driving the response! Deep Listening is an ongoing practice of **suspending self-oriented, reactive thinking and opening one’s awareness to the unknown and unexpected.** This is often where God abides and is the place of repair, healing and hope.

Deep Listening focuses first and foremost on *self-awareness* as the ground for listening and communicating well with others. This may seem paradoxical—paying more attention to ourselves in order to better communicate with others—but without some clarity in our relationship to ourselves, we will have a hard time improving our relationships with others. A clouded mirror cannot reflect accurately. We cannot perceive, receive, or interact authentically with others unless we have insight into what is going on within ourselves.

The next time you begin to feel caught in a reaction to another person try to ask yourself:

- *What is happening right now? What am I feeling right now?*
- *Is there anything underneath this reaction (fear, desire to control...)?*
- *What am I believing about this person? What could I be missing in this persons experience?*

Prayer:

You who brooded over the chaos, brood over my life today.

Search me, show me and reveal in me those patterns that are keeping me stuck in reactivity.

Teach me how to soften, to surrender and to be open to others.

Scripture: Luke 18: 18-30

A certain ruler asked him, “Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?”¹⁹ Jesus said to him, “Why do you call me good? No one is good but God alone.²⁰ You know the commandments: ‘You shall not commit adultery; You shall not murder; You shall not steal; You shall not bear false witness; Honor your father and mother.’”²¹ He replied, “I have kept all these since my youth.”

²² When Jesus heard this, he said to him, “There is still one thing lacking. Sell all that you own and distribute the money^[a] to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; then come, follow me.”²³ But when he heard this, he became sad; for he was very rich.²⁴ Jesus looked at him and said, “How hard it is for those who have wealth to enter the kingdom of God!²⁵ Indeed, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of God.”

²⁶ Those who heard it said, “Then who can be saved?”²⁷ He replied, “What is impossible for mortals is possible for God.”

²⁸ Then Peter said, “Look, we have left our homes and followed you.”²⁹ And he said to them, “Truly I tell you, there is no one who has left house or wife or brothers or parents or children, for the sake of the kingdom of God,³⁰ who will not get back very much more in this age, and in the age to come eternal life.”

Questions for Reflection:

What stood out to you in the passage?

What types of resources do you think the ruler had?

Why do you think the ruler was sad? And what kind of conversations do you think he had after this encounter with Jesus?

Spiritual Practice: An Inventory of Resources

The goal of this practice is to take an inventory of the resources, financial and other, that we have at our disposal. It can be done annually, perhaps with the new year, or when something in life shifts that might change your resources. Take some time to reflect on a few of the questions.

- It is easy to judge the ruler, but is there anything that you would not be willing to give up?
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- Where do you spend most of your time and passion? Where do you spend most of your money? What might that communicate on the surface? What does that communicate at a deeper level to you and others?
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- Do you depend more on your own ability to or take care of yourself than you trust in God?
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- God might not call you to give away all your money, but are you willing to give up anything and everything if he called you to?
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After thinking about the questions, make a list of different types of resources that you have (financial, gifts or talents, etc.) and then how you use those resources without judgment towards yourself.

What might God be stirring in you? Calling you to?

Prayer: (from *Every Moment Holy*)

As if our security could ever rest anywhere outside of you, Oh God.

So guard our hearts against that lie.

Let us learn to view money and all material things as an arena in which to learn and practice a more faithful stewardship,

And as a means by which to invest in things eternal-but never as an ends in themselves.

Where we have stumbled in our stewardship... grant us conviction and vision, and better wisdom, that we would more faithfully steward these resources.

Where we are faithfully tending to the needs of many within our spheres of responsibility, give us peace and, O Lord, give us even joy.

Teach us what it would mean to begin to live more generously towards those whose needs are greater than our own.

For we have you, and in having you we have all things,

And you are teaching us,

The slow vocation of trust.

Scripture: Philippians 2: 1-9

If then there is any encouragement in Christ, any consolation from love, any sharing in the Spirit, any compassion and sympathy, make my joy complete: be of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility regard others as better than yourselves. Let each of you look not to your own interests, but to the interests of others.

Let this same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus:

*Though his state was that of God,
yet he did not claim equality with God
something he should cling to.*

*Rather, he emptied himself,
and assuming the state of a slave,
he was born in human likeness.*

*He was being known as one of us,
Humbled himself obedient unto death
Even death on a cross.*

For this God raised him on high....

Questions for Reflection:

There are two parts to this passage. In the first paragraph, the Apostle Paul is urging this faith community to live in *harmony*. This harmony has specific qualities. As you think about your place in the Chapelwood community, which of these qualities come easy to you? Which are more challenging?

In the second part of this passage, the Apostle Paul uses an ancient Christian hymn that describes *how* to practice communal *harmony* – it requires an inner posture of *humility*. What does humility mean to you? How is humility different than self-deprecation? What is true humility? What is false humility?

Teaching: The Apostle Paul suggests Christ embodied humility because he practiced “self-emptying.” With Christ, what he emptied himself of was any claim to what was rightfully his. He did not “cling” to anything. According to Paul, it is this very gesture of non-clinging and self-emptying that allowed the Incarnation to happen.

The same is true for us. The only way to incarnate or embody the love and grace of God in this world is through some **practice of surrender and self-emptying**. We too need to let go of what we think we are “owed.” Sometimes we cling to certain obsessive thoughts (perhaps what we think somebody did to us) or oppressive emotions (such as anger, envy, fear, or sadness). These, if not acknowledged and worked through, can both damage us and our relationships with others – disrupting both inner and outer harmony.

Like Christ, if we are to practice a humility that encourages harmony, it is important for us to develop a daily practice that grounds us, one that uses our whole body - breath and body, emotions and mind. In *Centering Prayer and Inner Awakening*, Cynthia Bourgeault discusses an appropriate and powerful spiritual practice – “The Welcoming Prayer.” Developed in line with the teaching of Fr. Thomas Keating and Centering Prayer, it was originally called “Open Mind, Open Heart” practice. Essentially, this spiritual practice facilitates the letting go of a “thought” before it becomes a “passion” (in the language of the desert father Evagrius). It is somewhat based on the spiritual classic *Abandonment to Divine Providence* (also known as *The Sacrament of the Present Moment*) by Jean Pierre de Caussade.

Spiritual Practice: The Welcoming Prayer

1. *Focus and Sink In.* Feel the sensation of the upset in your body. Where is it affecting you? Stomach, heart, back, shoulders, etc.? Don't try to change anything, just be present. Don't repress it or disassociate from it. Be present to it in your body.
2. *Welcome.* While you are in the midst of your upset (frustration, anger, pain, despair, etc.), begin gently saying “Welcome _____.” (e.g. welcome frustration, or welcome pain, etc.). This creates an “atmosphere of inner hospitality.” The goal is not to get rid of the upset but rather not to let it chase you out of Presence. Welcoming anchors us in the Now. “What you are welcoming is the physical or psychological content of the moment only, not a general blanket condoning of a situation.” Welcome the feeling, not the experience that triggers it for you.
3. *Let go.* The first two steps are the primary work of the Welcoming Practice, so don't rush to this third movement. “Stay with them (first 2 steps) – rather like kneading a charley horse in your leg - going back and forth from 'focusing' and 'welcoming' until the knot begins to dissolve of its own accord.” When you are ready to let go, there are two ways to do it.

Here is the short way:

Say something like, “*I let go of my anger*” or “*I give my anger to God.*”

Here is the full litany:

Here is the full litany:

Welcome, welcome, welcome.

I welcome everything that comes to me today because I know it's for my healing.

I welcome all thoughts, feelings, emotions, persons, situations, and conditions.

I let go of my desire for power and control.

I let go of my desire for affection, esteem, approval and pleasure.

I let go of my desire for survival and security.

I let go of my desire to change any situation, condition, person or myself.

I open to the love and presence of God and God's action within.

Amen.

*Going Beyond the Sermon is a ministry of Grow Ministries,
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Source material is quoted throughout. The sermons are streamed online and worship is in person at 8:30 a.m., 9:45 a.m., 11:15 a.m. in the Sanctuary of our Greenbay campus. Go to www.chapelwood.org for details.

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