

# Daily Readings

Please note: The series of sermons for this month has been called *The Invitation: Making Life Matter*. Each week we deal with a different aspect of the discipleship growth process. We believe being a disciple of Jesus Christ makes life matter. This week we deal with the irresistible invitation to respond to the call of Jesus Christ. These passages deal with the Biblical development of radical generosity. The daily readings allow us to dig deeper.

**Monday November 1 – Read Genesis 4.** The story of Cain and Abel is a somewhat disturbing passage. Cain becomes jealous to the point of killing his brother over the favor that God shows Abel because of his offering. Abel gives an unblemished lamb, while Cain gives a grain offering. The assumption here is that God favors the gift of Abel because of it is the best and first of the flock, while Cain's offering seems to be just part of what is left over from the harvest. Both are gifts yet one has a shows a greater value to God because it comes from the heart as sacrifice. This passage is seen as an example of offering to God our gifts off the top before anything else is done. Giving here is a matter of faith. God cares for his creation and will not leave the faithful wanting. It is also foreshadows the controversy that has followed believers over the issue of giving generously. Is your gift the last check you write or the first? Do you give out of what is left over? Do you resent discussions about giving?

**Tuesday November 2 – Read Genesis 14.** In Genesis 14:18-20, Abraham gives the first recorded tithe (10%) to the priest and king of Salem. It was customary to give 10% of the spoils of war to the king as a tribute. Abraham gives his 10%, but dedicates it to God instead of the king. The priest responds with a special blessing and tribute to Abraham for his devotion to God. Have you ever given 10% of your income or a windfall to the work of God? Would you consider it a blessing to give sacrificially?

**Wednesday November 3 – Read Genesis 28.** This is the first record of a promise to give 10%. In verses 20-22, Jacob says, *"All that you give me, I will give you ten percent."* While at first it seems to be a "deal" that Jacob is trying to with God, when we take the passage together with Jacob's whole life, we see this as an act of faith. Jacob has seen how God is blessing his life; even though he does not necessary deserve such blessing. The affirmation is a response to the blessings. How has God blessed your life? Have you responded with generosity or self concern?

**Thursday November 4 – Read Leviticus 27:30-32 and Malachi 3:8-10.** The Leviticus passage is Moses' codifying the practice of giving 10% to God as a law of the people of God. Malachi warns of the dangers of withholding the 10% as a curse. He compares it to stealing from God. This chapter also includes the only instruction to test God with our gifts, so that God may *"open the windows of heaven."* Does knowing this law, hearing this warning and finding this promise make a difference in how you give? Have you ever shared this passage with another Christian? Have you ever been part of a discussion of these passages?

**Friday November 5 – Read Matthew 6:19-22 and 2 Corinthians 6-15.** In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus says, *"Where your treasure is there your heart will be also."* Then Paul says in his second letter to Corinth, *"You will be enriched in every way for your generosity."* Each of these passages speaks to our need to give. These passages point to the condition of the heart and the size of the sacrifice, not the size of the gift. The genius of the Biblical standard is that no matter what our condition or social status we are all equal before God by the measure of our heart. This is why the Biblical standard was a proportion – ten percent rather than a quoted amount. Where is your heart? Is your generosity large enough for you to be enrich by your gifts?



## STUDY GUIDE & DAILY READINGS

Sunday, October 31, 2010

### The Invitation — Making Life Matter

RSVP (Week 5 of 5)

**John 21:15-17 — The Word from the Bible (New Revised Standard Version)**

*When they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon son of John, do you love me more than these?" He said to him, "Yes, Lord, you know that I love you." Jesus said to him "Feed my lambs." A second time he said to him, "Simon son of John, do you love me?" He said to him, "Yes Lord; you know that I love you." Jesus said to him, "Tend my sheep." He said to him the third time, "Simon son of John, do you love me?" Peter felt hurt because he said to him the third time, "Do you love me?" And he said to him, "Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you." Jesus said to him, "Feed my sheep."*

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#### Scriptural Basis

**John 21:1-25 (edited and revised from the Interpreter's Concise Commentary)**

The above passage comes from a longer passage set at the Sea of Tiberias that includes a miracle catch of fish, the recognition of resurrected Jesus by John, the restoration of Peter's relationship with Jesus, and the prediction of the martyrdom of Peter. The story may well be a completion of the unfinished and unfulfilled promise of Mark 14:28; 16:7 of an appearance to the disciples in Galilee.

Jesus has already prepared the breakfast of bread and fish before the fish are brought in by the disciples. It is John, who is believed to be the beloved disciple and author of this gospel that first recognizes the Lord, as it was John who was first to believe in the Resurrection. The number of fish, a hundred and fifty-three, has inspired many attempts at symbolic interpretation. Jerome, for example, declared it the total of species of fish, and Augustine discovered it is the sum of the numbers 1 to 17, which in turn is the sum of the symbolic numbers 10 and 7.

In verses 15-17, the three-fold question and answer correspond – by way of restoration – to the three-fold denial of Peter before the Crucifixion (13:38; 18:17-18, 25-27). It is also a reaffirmation of Peter's call, with that of other disciples, to follow Jesus. We can assume that in sharing this exchange, John is recognizing Peter's leadership in the apostolic band of disciples. He receives his commission, as representative of all the apostles, to shepherd the Lord's flock. He also receives the promise that he too, like his Lord the Good

Shepherd, will lay down his life for the sheep. Verse 18 has generally been taken as a reference to the tradition that Peter suffered martyrdom, probably by crucifixion in the persecution of Nero, A.D. 64.

In verses 20-25, Peter's love is equated with that of the disciple John. Here John insinuates that there will always be disciples that love the Lord, share that love with others and receive the love of the Lord in return. Sooner or later, the summons of Jesus comes to every disciple — to follow Jesus, to live their life for Christ and to bear witness to him.

### ***The RSVP***

Peter was the most passionate, and yet most flawed of the disciples. He was the first to recognize Jesus as the Son of God. Yet, in the Garden of Gethsemane, Peter shows his weakness as he falls asleep when Jesus seems to need him the most. At the trial of Jesus, Peter denies Jesus just as Jesus had predicted and warned at the Last Supper. There is nothing special about Peter, except the call of Jesus on his life. Neither is there anything special about us except the call of Christ that comes to anyone who believes. Like the disciples, who have easily slipped back to their old way of life as fishermen after the Easter story, we too easily slip back into old patterns of behavior away from God. Yet, God can and does use any of us, if we only say, ***“Lord, you know all things, you know I love you.”***

Jesus command to Peter to “feed my sheep” is a call to radical devotion to the Lord's work in this world. Jesus calls us away from the world into a life for others. This life for others does not happen without dedication and effort. We call it the five-fold promise – to support the church with our prayers, our presence, our gifts, our service and our witness. Each part of the promise leads to a total life with Christ. In a way, it is our way to respond to the call of Christ with the answer, ***“Lord, you know all things, you know I love you.”***

For most Christians, the hardest of this promise is the call to radical generosity. The Bible spells out a formula based on giving 10%. We respond well to the call to worship, pray, study the Bible and share our testimony in word and deed, but when it comes to giving our means, we balk. For the past four weeks, we have looked at spiritual development in terms of worship, growth and service. Now is the time to look at the final piece of answering the call – giving.

### ***The Discipline of Generosity (from Irresistible Invitation by Maxie Dunham, page 288)***

**The discipline of generosity – the actual giving of money – is essential for spiritual growth. Because the acquiring and holding aspects of our being are so tenacious, generosity must begin with the giving of ourselves. That's what much of this study has been all about. Paul captured this concept succinctly in Second Corinthians 8:5. It is, I believe, the heartbeat of generosity in all things: *“They gave themselves first to the Lord and then to us in keeping with God's will.”***

**Committing time and energy to the family of faith comes easily to some of us, but when the offering plate is passed, our comfort turns to denial. We may believe the church doesn't really need our money, but that misses the point. As Christians, we need to give. Giving keeps things in perspective.**

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## **Prayer Focus**

Trietsch is a praying church. This morning, as you worship, one of our prayer volunteers is praying for everyone in each section of our worship center. We believe that prayer changes lives and hearts for good and for God. We invite you to join these volunteers by praying for those persons around you. We believe these prayers will have an immediate impact on those for whom you are praying. ***Remember... someone is praying for you. Have a great week!***

The following is to guide you in your prayers this week. John Wesley, founder of Methodism, used this prayer with all of his ministers to signify their commitment to the task of ministry. It is often used as a prayer of recommitment of your life to Christ.

### **Wesley Covenant Prayer**

**by John Wesley**

I am no longer my own, but yours.

Put me to what you will, rank me with whom you will;

put me to doing, put me to suffering.

Let me be employed by you or laid aside by you,

enabled for you or brought low by you.

Let me be full, let me be empty.

Let me have all things, let me have nothing.

I freely and heartily yield all things

to your pleasure and disposal.

And now, O glorious and blessed God,

Father, Son and Holy Spirit,

you are mine, and I am yours. So be it.

And the covenant which I have made on earth,

let it be ratified in heaven.

Amen.

***Invite someone to worship this week. You will be glad you did.***

***God is doing great things through the ministries of Trietsch.***