



SMALL GROUP NEWSLETTER
ST. MARY OF THE VISITATION PARISH
CAMBRIDGE, (H) ONT.

SEVENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

February 19, 2017



Introduction to the Word:

The trek to following Jesus can be lonely, long and lingering - so how do we live it abundantly. Over the last three weeks we have been looking at some of the attributes of what it means to follow Him:

- Being Salt and Light
- Dealing with Loneliness
- Walking the Path of Love

I bet you didn't even know we were doing a series. But it's true we were, because God's Word is never an isolated billboard with a random message, His word is connected and conclusive to our path. This is why being a in a small group that focusses first and foremost not on our own message but His word weekly has such a power to it – thanks for making this – His word - always a priority in your Heart to Home Group.

Two weeks ago Jesus tells His followers they are the “salt of the earth” and “light of the world.” That lights are always put in strategic places to illuminate a house. In the same way, God has put each of His followers in a strategic place to shine His light, to illuminate His ways. God has placed us strategically to be a light for others.

Likewise He calls us to Salt – a source of flavor for others. He desires for us to live in right relationship with others, God, and ourselves. Ultimately, it is living with that purpose that helps us to overcome loneliness. It is about determining that each day we will strive to see the Lord and not to miss the Lord. That our weekly examen will lead us toward a deeper understanding of how to follow Him. This Lord's Day, a bigger message is shared. This message is about the path



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of love. This is crucial to following Him and critical to developing the character to become a citizen of heaven.

Warm-Up:

Taking some time in reflection and sharing, can help us to see that we share a common experience when it comes to being hurt, and offering forgiveness in trying to love the offender. Is this easy, how has it become easier, what makes it easier.

CALL TO PRAYER (5 MINUTES)

Leader: Lord Jesus, you came to heal the wounds of sin and division, **Lord, have mercy.**
Christ Jesus, you reconcile us to God and to one another, **Christ, have mercy.**
Lord Jesus, you strengthen us to be people of forgiveness, **Lord, have mercy.**

Let us pray together our Heart to Home Prayer:

*God Our Heavenly Father, we long to make our thoughts your thoughts,
and our ways your ways. As we prepare with attentive mind and open heart
to hear your Word Lord, we long to be empowered with your Spirit
so that we may bring your Word to our families, our parish and our communities.
This, our prayer, we make through the intercession of Our Lady of the Visitation and in name of
Christ Jesus our Lord. Amen.*

SCRIPTURE REFLECTION TIME (45 minutes)

(Please select one person –not including the leader – to take a turn at reading the scripture passages below.)

FIRST READING (Leviticus 19:1-2, 17-18)

The Lord spoke to Moses: “Speak to all the congregation of the children of Israel and say to them: ‘You shall be holy, for I the Lord your God am holy. You shall not hate in your heart anyone of your kin; you shall reprove your neighbour, or you will incur guilt yourself. You shall not take vengeance or bear a grudge against any of your people, but you shall love your neighbour as yourself: I am the Lord.’” The Word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

SECOND READING (1 Corinthians 3:16-23)

Brothers and sisters: Do you not know that you are God’s temple and that God’s Spirit dwells in you? If anyone destroys God’s temple, God will destroy that person. For God’s temple is holy, and you are that temple.

Do not deceive yourselves. If you think that you are wise in this age, you should become fools so that you may become wise. For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God. For it is written, “He catches the wise in their craftiness,” and again, “The Lord knows the thoughts of the wise, that they are futile.” So let no one boast about human beings. For all things are yours –



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whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas, or the world or life or death, or the present or the future – all belong to you, and you belong to Christ, and Christ belongs to God. The Word of the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

GOSPEL (Matthew 5:38-48)

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Matthew. **Glory to you, O Lord.**

Jesus said to his disciples, “You have heard that it was said, ‘An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.’ But I say to you, “Do not resist an evildoer. But if anyone strikes you on the right cheek, turn the other also; and if anyone wants to sue you and take your coat, give your cloak as well; and if anyone forces you to go one mile, go with them also the second mile. Give to everyone who begs from you, and do not refuse anyone who wants to borrow from you. “You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbour and hate your enemy.’ But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be children of your Father in heaven; for he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the righteous and on the unrighteous. “For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? And if you greet only your brothers and sisters, what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same? Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.” The Gospel of the Lord. **Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.**

(Allow a few minutes for quiet and for a brief reflection on a meaningful word or thought)

COMMENTARY:

[You may also as a group wish to listen again to the Audio of the Lord’s Day Message](#)

We live in the most technologically connected culture in the history of the world. And yet, polls and studies show that loneliness is one of the greatest struggles and problems of our age. God created us to be in relationship with one another; yet, loneliness still affects each of us at one point or another.

God did not make us to be alone, but to be full of purpose and joy through meaningful relationships with God, other people, and even our own self. The Old and New Testaments return again and again to God’s law of love, “*You shall love your neighbor as yourself.*” But we often make the mistake from the beginning of failing to have a healthy and proper way of loving ourselves, which then gets projected onto others. This week, we reflect on how to best take care of our body and spirit in ways that reflect God’s love.

The book of Leviticus, one of the five books of the *Torah*, or Old Testament Law, is not one of the most accessible books of the Bible. It is full of laws and instructions on how sacrifices and worship were to be made to God. The laws were given to preserve proper relationships with God and one’s neighbors, and it contains one of the most quoted verses of the bible, one Jesus himself later used when summarizing the whole point of the law God had given, sometimes called The Golden Rule — “Love your neighbor as yourself.”



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This verse assumes that our ability to love other people will match our ability to love and care for ourselves. But often this is exactly what's lacking — a proper sense of love and care for our own body and soul. Your ability to love others will rise and fall along with your ability to love yourself. This is why it is never good to enter a day materially hungry (ie missing a meal) and so in our spiritual life hunger can make us cranky, angry or isolated from God and others.

This is why each of us in our lives needs to refuel...otherwise we run on empty and the weights and worries of life - well - begin to irk us! Being in the proximity and following the example of God's love is key here. But the Love of God is not a sentiment - it is a willing of the good of the other to be in the image of God. It is not just about living our life so that we have the character of God, it's not just about us looking for moments to be light and salt for us - it is looking at the person in front of us and desiring them to continue to have the branding of God in their life and loving them in a way in which we don't expect to receive and count the cost.

Jesus calls us in our lives, our passions, our livelihoods, friendship, our work - everything in us - that it should be about love, but a love that in turn makes us holy - set apart. For the ways of this world are often reward, the ways of God focus on redemption. But He calls us not to try this alone - because He knows its not possible. That when we try it alone -without Him - we will run on empty after a while, our own fuel will run out, and what was interesting will be mundane and eventually we will even question the journey.

But if we refuel with Him - we get His grace to help us move on. This refueling is found in the perfect example of love – The Eucharist. This is why nothing replaces the Mass. So come often to be refilled because without the Eucharist - your life sooner or later will be running on empty.

*(Allow about 5 – 10 minutes for the participants to react to the **Commentary** to identify a newly discovered insight or idea.)*

Questions for Reflection and Discussion: (15-20 minutes)

- a) What is the relationship between how God acts, and how God's people are called to act?
- b) What positive ways are people called to live this teaching of Jesus? Would toleration of one's enemies be sufficient? If not, what practical things would be needed to fulfill this teaching?
- c) Might forgiveness involve a process? How might this look in our lives?
- d) Is it difficult to imagine that one might have an "enemy," or be an "enemy" to another?
- e) What keeps people from coming to Mass? How can we eliminate these barriers as a parish community and strive to be more welcoming. Speak here generally and then specifically (what can you do). Share some of these answers with our Pastoral Team.
- f) For Lent our parish is holding special activities – what activities will your group do?



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- g) What activities will you invite others (not in your group) to come and be a part of during Lent? If we love only those who love us – “Do not even the Gentiles do the same?”

Intercessions:

Leader: Our response: Lord Hear us

For our Holy Father, all bishops and priests, may the Lord continue to grant them every blessing they need to continue their important ministry as Shepherds of God’s people. We pray to the Lord.

For the Lord’s blessing and grace to touch the hearts of those who are discouraged and disheartened in life; may God increase their faith and inspire others to be a source of support and help. We pray to the Lord.

For our brothers and sisters throughout the world - The needy, afflicted and oppressed - especially in our parish missions in Haiti, Jerusalem and Kenya. May they know the love of Christ through the efforts of those who minister to them. We pray to the Lord.

For couples preparing for Marriage and for those living out the call to Married Life. May the Lord strengthen their bond of commitment and love. We pray to the Lord.

For those visiting our parish, those re connecting with faith, and all of us as a family of faith, may we continue to welcome and support each other in our walk of faith. We pray to the Lord

For those who are sick in body, mind or spirit: May they know God’s healing presence in their lives. For those who have died, and for the intentions written in our parish book of prayer. We pray to the Lord.

Leader: Let us seek the intercession of the Patroness of our Parish as we pray: [Hail Mary](#)

Closing Activity and Prayer (15-20 minutes)

(This time is reserved for quiet prayer as well as for an action-response to the communal reflections. You may wish to create and add petitions of prayer at this time. This time also intent to provide moments to connect and “outreach” to the larger community.)

GROUP PRAYER/ ACTION:

GROUP PRAYER COMMITMENT

Please consider offering a **Holy Hour in our Adoration Chapel** – either as a group or individually –for the intentions of Pastor, our Pastoral Team, in their work to build up our parish.



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Take some time to reflect on relationships that need forgiveness. In particularly difficult cases, we might ask God to grace us with the desire to forgive. In less difficult cases, we might think of ways to begin to forgive, especially to ask for the grace to pray and to grow in love for our enemies.

Last week you were asked to committ to the “Nightly Examen” mentioned in our message this Lord’s Day – where did I see God today? Where did I miss God’s presence today? How did that go?

Lent is not far off. Discuss as a group your plan for service, prayer, action during the upcoming Lenten Season.

GROUP ACTION:

- ✓ Is your small group helping with our commitment to aide St Patrick Parish, Hamilton and their downtown outreach? Remember any of these items can be placed in the Adoration Chapel Hallway – mark them “Hamilton.”
- ✓ What activities will you invite others (not in your group) to come and be a part of during Lent? If we love only those who love us – “Do not even the Gentiles do the same?”

Let us pray (together)

*Lord Jesus Christ, we offer you our continued praise
for revealing to us on the cross that you truly are the Lord of Glory.
Grant us the wisdom to believe this in our minds and feel it in our hearts,
so that we may courageously proclaim it to the world.
We pray this through Christ our Lord. Amen.*

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