



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

EIGHTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

February 26, 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 few 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
- Living the Way of Stewardship

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.

Three 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 be 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.

Last week, the message was about the path of love. This is crucial to following Him and critical to developing the character to become a citizen of heaven. It spoke to us about the importance of



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

refueling often to make sure that our path of love is modelled on Christ as the example. This week the path becomes a Way of Life – and this way is called Stewardship.

Warm-Up:

The only things we can keep are the things we freely give to God. What we try to keep for ourselves is just what we're sure to lose. C.S. Lewis

What does the above quote from CS Lewis mean?

CALL TO PRAYER (5 MINUTES)

Leader: Lord Jesus, you call us to put our confidence in you. **Lord, have mercy.**
Christ Jesus, you lead and guide us into battle with evil. **Christ, have mercy.**
Lord Jesus, you give us the victory over sin and death. **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 (Isaiah 49:14-15)

Zion said, “The Lord has forsaken me, my Lord has forgotten me.” Can a woman forget her nursing child, or show no compassion for the child of her womb? Even these may forget, yet I will not forget you. The Word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

SECOND READING (1 Corinthians 4:1-5)

Brothers and sisters: Think of us in this way, as servants of Christ and stewards of God’s mysteries. Moreover, it is required of stewards that they be found trustworthy. But with me it is a very small thing that I should be judged by you or by any human court. I do not even judge myself. I am not aware of anything against myself, but I am not thereby acquitted. It is the Lord who judges me. Therefore do not pronounce judgment before the time, before the Lord comes, who will bring to light the things now hidden in darkness and will disclose the purposes of the heart. Then each one will receive commendation from God. The Word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**



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

GOSPEL (Matthew 6:24-34)

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

Jesus taught his disciples, saying. “No one can serve two masters; for a slave will either hate the one and love the other, or be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth. “Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? “Look at the birds of the air; they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? And can any one of you by worrying add a single hour to their span of life? “And why do you worry about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they neither toil nor spin, yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not clothed like one of these. But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you – you of little faith? “Therefore do not worry, saying, ‘What will we eat?’ or ‘What will we drink?’ or ‘What will we wear?’ For it is the Gentiles who strive for all these things; and indeed your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But strive first for the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. “So do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will bring worries of its own. Today’s trouble is enough for today.” 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](#)

Jesus tells us in the Gospel from Matthew today that “*No one can serve two masters. He will either hate one and love the other, or be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and riches.*”

Jesus is asking for a decision on our part! He wants us in His ‘camp,’ on His ‘side,’ ‘under His banner’. But, this is not as easy as it looks. To follow Jesus means not only an intellectual assent, it means a day-to-day living-out of our faith. We cannot be like those who said, “*We ate and drank with you, and you taught in our streets!*” But he will say, “*I do not know where you come from; go away from me, all you evildoers!*” (Luke 13:26). Our faithful following of Jesus must be in our very fibre, giving witness to who we are in relation to Him. He is our Lord, and we belong to Him. We share with Him in the life of grace He won for us through His suffering, death, resurrection, and ascension

Isaiah and Matthew affirm for us this imagery of belonging and yet go one step further by sharing God’s loving care for each one of us: “I will not forget you.” We are not “*forgotten*”. This profound image that God reveals through Isaiah – the love between a mother and her child -



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

speaks volumes from our own experience as mothers, and as children. We know we are loved; there is an unconditional bond that exists between mother and child. So it is with God!

The Second Reading, from the First Letter of Saint Paul to the Corinthians (4:1-5), speaks to us of our part in this relationship. Paul tells us, as he told the Corinthians, that we are “*servants of God ... stewards of the mysteries of God*”. This reality is acquired through God’s grace. To be His servant and steward implies that we acknowledge Him as the source from which all comes. The image of a “*steward*” is indeed deeply biblical, and rich in meaning.

In the Church today, with the development of the theology of Stewardship, this takes on greater significance. We have been blessed. We have been gifted. God calls us to use well and wisely our time, talents, and treasure in the building up of the Kingdom. Thus with confidence we will be “*found trustworthy*.” If we recognize God as the source from which all comes, and if we truly believe that He will provide, then our faithful service and stewardship give us the confidence reflected in Paul’s letter, that God is with us. We have nothing to fear. We give of what we have because we know from where it comes, and we also know that the same giver (God) to whom we are returning our time, talents and treasures, will also continue to provide for us (take care of us). Therefore we do not need to give into worry or fear.

Our readings for this Sunday leave us secure that God is with us and that He WILL NOT FORGET US. This confidence is reflected throughout the Gospel. Jesus knows our human needs: *what you will eat or drink, or about your body, what you will wear*”. He tells us to look at the birds of the sky, the wild flowers, and the grass of the field. His examples almost embarrass us to acknowledge that we indeed have nothing to worry about. He repeats, “*Do not worry about tomorrow; tomorrow will take care of itself*.” Jesus asks us to “*seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things will be given you besides*.” If we seek to do the Father’s will, as Jesus did, we will be blessed and saved. In our own personal lives grace and goodness will triumph. Let us be found as good stewards and give generously of our time, talents and treasures.

*(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)*

1. (Matthew) Do I try to serve two Masters? Do I recognize the tension within me in feeling attracted to both service of God, and of riches? How do I experience my trust and confidence in God in times when I am confronted with difficulties and trials, disappointments and worries?
2. (Isaiah) Have I ever felt forsaken and forgotten? By whom?
What about in my relation to God? Have I felt forsaken and forgotten? How did I come to be the person of faith I am today?



SMALL GROUP NEWSLETTER
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3. (1 Corinthians) How do I feel about the image of being a “steward”? What negative, and positive, elements come to my mind? Am I truly willing to be a “steward”?

Intercessions:

Leader: Our response: Lord Hear us

For our Holy Father, all bishops and priests, may the Lord continue to grand them every blessing they need to continue their important ministry. We pray to the Lord.

For the many caring stewards here in our parish who give generously of their time, talent and treasure in response to God’s gifts, and for growing awareness in all toward generosity in the support of our parish family. With gratitude for their stewardship, we pray to the Lord.

For each of us as we prepare for the Season of Lent to begin this coming week. May these upcoming 40 days be a time of blessing for ourselves, our families and our parish. We pray to the Lord

For the young people of our parish; those who celebrated their First Reconciliation this weekend, those preparing for Confirmation and for all youth who continue to search and seek the Lord. May we be encouraging examples of faith for them. We pray to the Lord

For our parish community, that we may follow the example of Mary and Elizabeth by serving the Lord and one another in humility and fidelity to the invitation of God by being a family of faith who welcomes others and continue to be a home with something for everyone. We pray to the Lord.

For those who are sick in body, mind or spirit, for those who have died, and for all living and deceased members of the parish, 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



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

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.

Your discipleship and stewardship are essential to the building-up of the kingdom of God! With the grace of God this will be a week of grace, and strengthening of your ties and loyalty to Jesus Christ.

Lent is hours away. 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?
- ✓ Consider signing up for Tuesday Night Together and be together as group for this activity.

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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