



SERMON
ON THE MOUNT
MOUNT

DEVOTIONS
FOR

Lent

DEAN NADASDY

SEEING
THE CROWDS,
HE WENT UP ON
THE MOUNTAIN,
AND WHEN
HE SAT DOWN,
HIS DISCIPLES
CAME TO HIM.
AND HE OPENED
HIS MOUTH AND
TAUGHT THEM.

Matthew 5:1-2



Humility

Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

MATTHEW 5:3

Being a follower of Jesus Christ begins with humility. Christians are humble before God and humble before others. We are “poor in spirit.” In humility we confess our sin. In humility God’s grace is received. It must be this way because the kingdom is this way—ushered in by One who humbly left the throne of heaven to take a cross for our sin.

In Tolkien’s *The Lord of the Rings*, Elrond argues for the need to go into Mordor to destroy the Ring. He observes: “The road must be trod, but it will be very hard ... Yet it is off the course of deeds that move the wheels of the world: Small hands do them because they must, while the eyes of the great are elsewhere.”

“Small” hands—and small egos—do what must be done in the kingdom. He who knew no sin became sin for us (2 Corinthians 5:21). “He humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross” (Philippians 2:8).

**Lord, in my poverty of spirit, use me for the increase of your kingdom.
Amen.**

THURSDAY AFTER ASH WEDNESDAY

Godly Sorrow

Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.

MATTHEW 5:4

Out of the gate Jesus came preaching repentance. “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand,” he said (Matthew 4:17). Repentance is a godly sorrow over sin which leads to salvation (2 Corinthians 7:10). The first of Martin Luther’s 95 Theses proclaimed, “When our Lord and Master Jesus Christ said, ‘Repent,’ he willed the entire life of believers to be one of repentance.”

To repent is to turn from sin and its damages with deep grief, but it is more. To repent is to turn *from* sin *to* the cross of Jesus Christ. There we find his comfort, his strength with us. There, with his suffering and dying, sin is erased and forgotten.

In C.S. Lewis' *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader*, a bad boy named Eustace becomes a dragon, symbolic of his sinful greed. Only Aslan (God) can strip off the hard and crusty layers of his dragon skin, which he does. Eustace says, "The very first tear he made was so deep that I thought it had gone right into my heart." That is repentance, more God's doing than ours.

Show me my sin, O God, and turn me in sorrow to the cross. Amen.

FRIDAY AFTER ASH WEDNESDAY

Gentle Strength

Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.

MATTHEW 5:5

Meekness, or gentleness, is not weakness. In the Scriptures both Moses (Num 12:3) and Jesus (2 Corinthians 10:1) are described as meek. Jesus even described himself as gentle when he called weary people to find rest in him (Matthew 11:29).

It helps to know that the very word translated "meek" in the New Testament was also used to describe warhorses. The word means power harnessed for the sake of others. The same word was often used of compassionate kings. In the Passion of Christ we witness his silence and see him caring for others along the way of his suffering. That is bridled power.

Jesus knew his Scriptures. Psalm 37:11 reads, "But the meek shall inherit the land and delight themselves in abundant peace." That's what Jesus is saying. In the end, the most fulfilled in life—and the most respected—are those who bridle their power with selfless kindness.

Lord Jesus, quiet my relentless drive, and grace me with a gentleness of spirit. Amen.

A Righteous Appetite

*Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness,
for they shall be satisfied.* MATTHEW 5:6

An old nursery rhyme goes, “Robin the Bobbin, the big-bellied Ben, he ate more meat than fourscore men; he ate a cow, he ate a calf, he ate a butcher and a half; he ate a church, he ate a steeple, he ate the priest and all the people! ... and yet he complained that his stomach wasn’t full!”

Our insatiable appetites—for food, for drink, for money, for power! We are consumed by our own unfulfilled desires. We desire, but we are never satisfied. A better desire, one that fully satisfies, is the appetite for righteousness. This desire seeks to become more and more like Christ, to know him, to love him, and to be clothed in his perfect righteousness. It is the desire in faith of those who follow the Righteous One.

Lord Jesus, all that I need and all that I want is in you. Amen.

FIRST SUNDAY OF LENT

Mercy Me!

Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy.

MATTHEW 5:7

In Shakespeare’s *Merchant of Venice*, Shylock, a stereotyped Jewish moneylender, is intent on ruining his enemy, Antonio, the title character. Portia, disguised as a young male lawyer, in a Venetian court advocates for Antonio, seeking to persuade Shylock to show Antonio mercy. She argues: “The quality of mercy is not strained; it droppeth as the gentle rain from heaven upon the place beneath. It is twice blest; it blesseth him that gives and him that takes.”

The mercy shown toward others by Christians is not forced. From God, we do not receive what we deserve. Instead, we receive what we do not deserve: grace. Mercy becomes a way of life for us, an instinct for those who follow Christ. The irony of this blessing is not lost on us this Lent as we

watch One so full of mercy receive no mercy from his captors.

Mercy me, Lord. Move me this day to acts of mercy. Amen.

MONDAY, THE FIRST WEEK OF LENT

Integrity

Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.

MATTHEW 5:8

Say what we may about King David's failings, he understood and valued integrity. He sang in one of his psalms, "Vindicate me, O LORD, for I have walked in my integrity, and I have trusted in the LORD without wavering" (Psalm 26:1). As people brought forward offerings for the temple, David prayed, "I know, my God, that you test the heart and have pleasure in uprightness" (1 Chronicles 29:17).

Jesus understood integrity. His words were aligned with his actions. Three times he said he would go to Jerusalem to suffer, die, and then rise (Mark 8:31; Mark 9:31; Mark 10:33-34), and that is exactly what he did. He set his heart like a flint (Luke 9:51). He was resolute, determined, steadfast.

In moments of integrity, when our hearts refuse to be compromised, Jesus promises that we will "see God." We will know God more clearly, follow God more nearly and love God more dearly.

Lord, test me and know my heart that I may walk in integrity and see you. Amen.

TUESDAY, THE FIRST WEEK OF LENT

Peacemakers

Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.

MATTHEW 5:9

She stood up at a meeting at church, calm and collected. She had listened well. She proposed a course of action that brought the two sides together.

It was quiet for a few moments after she sat down. There were smiles of assent. After the meeting, an old family friend grabbed her hand and said, “You remind me of your dad.”

When Christians make peace, when we reconcile those in conflict, we are blessed to resemble God, who in Christ reconciled the whole world to himself (2 Corinthians 5:19). Peacemaking can be difficult, even dangerous, but it runs in our family. We follow Jesus, who made peace through his blood on a cross (Colossians 1:20), the ultimate Son of God.

Lord, give me courage to pay the price for peace. Amen.

WEDNESDAY, THE FIRST WEEK OF LENT

Persecution

*Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake,
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. MATTHEW 5:10*

Some estimates say that one in ten of the 2.2 billion Christians in the world face some degree of restriction, discrimination or persecution. Jesus said that Christians can expect suffering for their faith and will be blessed when it happens. Just as sure as Christians are blessed to be merciful and busy making peace, they are blessed to “suffer for righteousness’ sake.” Such is the kingdom.

Someone once asked an Ethiopian Christian immigrant what must happen in North America for the church to grow again. Without hesitation he said, “The church will not grow in North America until Christians here embrace suffering for the sake of Christ. Most of you will not even be inconvenienced for your faith.”

The apostle Paul wrote that a goal of his life was to know Christ and to “share his sufferings” (Philippians 3:10). If we would follow the One who suffered for us, we must embrace suffering as a blessing, even a joy.

Lord Jesus, how blessed I will be if ever I suffer for you! Amen.

Salt

You are the salt of the earth. MATTHEW 5:13

What makes you salty? A salty character or salty language are surely not Christ-like virtues. When we describe people as “the salt of the earth,” we usually mean that they are simple, down-to-earth folks, worthy of our respect. Jesus may have something more in mind.

Jesus says that to be the salt of the earth, we must not lose our tastiness. In other words, we are meant to stand out, to be different, to season what is bland and even unsavory. To call us salt marks us as valuable to the world for the changes we can bring just as he is valuable to the world for repentance and hope.

The *you* here, by the way, is plural. The church’s impact in the world is corporate. One grain of salt is not enough on its own. We are salt together in him who makes us worth our salt.

Use me this day, Lord, to salt my corner of the earth. Amen.

Light

You are the light of the world. MATTHEW 5:14

Impressionist painter Claude Monet, like most artists, was fascinated by light. He would return to the same scene several times, when the light varied—at morning, midday, dusk, etc. At harvest in 1891, for instance, he returned to paint the same haystacks nine times, showing how light can change the subject.

Jesus, the light of the world, changes us in a myriad of ways at different times in our lives. We live in the shadow of his cross. In him there is no darkness at all. He calls us “the light of the world.” Our light is a derived light, a reflection, but light nonetheless. Like the stars (Philippians 2:15), we may shine more brightly in one moment than in another. We do shine, though, with his light. Our persistent little lights will not be

hidden. We light the way for the kingdom in an otherwise dark world.

Jesus, cast your light upon me, and I will shine for you. Amen.

SATURDAY, THE FIRST WEEK OF LENT

Law

*Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets;
I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them.* MATTHEW 5:17

I once listened to a docent at the Art Institute of Chicago explain the background and meaning behind Grant Wood's well-known painting, *American Gothic*. The painting shows a tight-lipped woman and a farmer with a pitch fork standing in front of a farmhouse. Ever since, I see meaning in the painting I had never seen before. She made it make sense. It is like understanding a poem for the first time or "getting" a joke or solving a puzzle.

Jesus makes the Old Testament make sense. He brings meaning to the scapegoat of the Day of Atonement, who bears our sins, and to the suffering servant of Isaiah 53. He fills Psalm 22 with meaning when he says from the cross, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" The Old Testament may be old but not obsolete. The Law and the Prophets testify to him (Luke 24:44).

Lord, you fill holy history and my life with meaning. Amen.

SECOND SUNDAY OF LENT

A Better Righteousness

*For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes
and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.* MATTHEW 5:20

"I could never be good enough" is how he described his childhood to his support group. "I struggled to do everything my parents expected, and I failed again and again," he said. "I feared their punishment, but even more



SERMON ON THE MOUNT

These devotions for each day of Lent by well-known preacher Dean Nadasdy will take the reader through some of the most familiar teachings of Jesus from his Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5-7 and relate them to the events surrounding his life, death and resurrection. These devotions powerfully reveal that the cross itself becomes the ultimate sermon on the mount for our journey through this sacred season.



This book, along with many other *Creative Communications for the Parish* products, is available on [amazonkindle](#) and [nook](#)

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