

# Sermon on the Mount Bible Study

## Lent, 2021

### Waupun United Methodist Church

Wednesday, March 10  
Session 3 – Prayer and Fasting

Music – “Just a Little Talk with Jesus”

#### OPENING PRAYER

**Heavenly Father, as we pray and fast during this season of Lent, help us to do so in true humility and repentance. We ask that through these spiritual disciplines we might grow stronger in faith and in the knowledge of your Word. Help us to serve you by serving others. Hear our prayer in Jesus’ name. Amen.**

#### INTRODUCTION

Many people choose to fast in some way during the season of Lent, perhaps giving up a particular food, such as meat, or fasting on certain days. Fasting is a spiritual discipline that reminds us of Jesus’ sacrifice for us. Whether we fast or not, Lent is certainly a season for repentant prayer. We may take extra time for personal devotions or attend special worship services. These Lenten practices may help us to focus on all that our Savior has done for us.

Discussion – Have you given up anything for Lent? Have you ever? Did that work for you?

#### *Prayer and Promise*

Review 1 Samuel 1

Numbers 6:1-8

**6** Then the LORD said to Moses, <sup>2</sup>“Give the following instructions to the people of Israel. “If any of the people, either men or women, take the special vow of a Nazirite, setting themselves apart to the LORD in a special way, <sup>3</sup>they must give up wine and other alcoholic drinks. They must not use vinegar made from wine or from other alcoholic drinks, they must not drink fresh grape juice, and they must not eat grapes or raisins. <sup>4</sup>As long as they are bound by their Nazirite vow, they are not allowed to eat or drink anything that comes from a grapevine—not even the grape seeds or skins. <sup>5</sup>“They must never cut their hair throughout the time of their vow, for they are holy and set apart to the LORD. Until the time of their vow has been fulfilled, they must let their hair grow long. <sup>6</sup>And they must not go near a dead body during the entire period of their vow to the LORD. <sup>7</sup>Even if the dead person is their own father, mother, brother, or sister, they must not defile themselves, for the hair on their head is the symbol of their separation to God. <sup>8</sup>This requirement applies as long as they are set apart to the LORD.

Discussion – What was involved in the vows of a Nazirite?

1 Samuel 2:1-10

**2** Then Hannah prayed:

“My heart rejoices in the LORD!

The LORD has made me strong.

Now I have an answer for my enemies;

I rejoice because you rescued me.

<sup>2</sup>No one is holy like the LORD!

There is no one besides you;  
there is no Rock like our God.

<sup>3</sup>“Stop acting so proud and haughty!

Don’t speak with such arrogance!

For the LORD is a God who knows what you have done;

he will judge your actions.

<sup>4</sup>The bow of the mighty is now broken,  
and those who stumbled are now strong.

<sup>5</sup>Those who were well fed are now starving,  
and those who were starving are now full.

The childless woman now has seven children,  
and the woman with many children wastes away.

<sup>6</sup>The LORD gives both death and life;  
he brings some down to the grave but raises others up.

<sup>7</sup>The LORD makes some poor and others rich;  
he brings some down and lifts others up.

<sup>8</sup>He lifts the poor from the dust  
and the needy from the garbage dump.

He sets them among princes,  
placing them in seats of honor.

For all the earth is the LORD’s,  
and he has set the world in order.

<sup>9</sup>“He will protect his faithful ones,  
but the wicked will disappear in darkness.

No one will succeed by strength alone.

<sup>10</sup> Those who fight against the LORD will be shattered.

He thunders against them from heaven;  
the LORD judges throughout the earth.

He gives power to his king;  
he increases the strength of his anointed one.”

Luke 1:46-55

<sup>46</sup> Mary responded,

“Oh, how my soul praises the Lord.

<sup>47</sup> How my spirit rejoices in God my Savior!

<sup>48</sup> For he took notice of his lowly servant girl,  
and from now on all generations will call me blessed.

<sup>49</sup> For the Mighty One is holy,  
and he has done great things for me.

<sup>50</sup> He shows mercy from generation to generation  
to all who fear him.

<sup>51</sup> His mighty arm has done tremendous things!  
He has scattered the proud and haughty ones.

<sup>52</sup> He has brought down princes from their thrones  
and exalted the humble.

<sup>53</sup> He has filled the hungry with good things  
and sent the rich away with empty hands.

<sup>54</sup> He has helped his servant Israel  
and remembered to be merciful.

<sup>55</sup> For he made this promise to our ancestors,  
to Abraham and his children forever.”

Discussion

How are these prayers of praise similar? How do they differ?

According to each prayer, what mighty things has the LORD done and what has the LORD done for his people?

## *Prayer and Fasting*

Matthew 6:5-8

<sup>5</sup>“When you pray, don’t be like the hypocrites who love to pray publicly on street corners and in the synagogues where everyone can see them. I tell you the truth, that is all the reward they will ever get. <sup>6</sup>But when you pray, go away by yourself, shut the door behind you, and pray to your Father in private. Then your Father, who sees everything, will reward you.

<sup>7</sup>“When you pray, don’t babble on and on as the Gentiles do. They think their prayers are answered merely by repeating their words again and again. <sup>8</sup>Don’t be like them, for your Father knows exactly what you need even before you ask him!

Discussion

What instruction does Jesus give us concerning prayer in these verses?

Why do we pray, if the Father already knows what we need before we ask?

Matthew 6:16-18

<sup>16</sup>“And when you fast, don’t make it obvious, as the hypocrites do, for they try to look miserable and disheveled so people will admire them for their fasting. I tell you the truth, that is the only reward they will ever get. <sup>17</sup>But when you fast, comb your hair and wash your face. <sup>18</sup>Then no one will notice that you are fasting, except your Father, who knows what you do in private. And your Father, who sees everything, will reward you.

Discussion – What does Jesus teach concerning this way of praying?

Isaiah 58:3-8

<sup>3</sup>‘We have fasted before you!’ they say.

‘Why aren’t you impressed?’

We have been very hard on ourselves,  
and you don’t even notice it!’

“I will tell you why!” I respond.

“It’s because you are fasting to please yourselves.

Even while you fast,  
you keep oppressing your workers.

<sup>4</sup>What good is fasting  
when you keep on fighting and quarreling?

This kind of fasting  
will never get you anywhere with me.

<sup>5</sup>You humble yourselves  
by going through the motions of penance,

bowing your heads  
like reeds bending in the wind.

You dress in burlap  
and cover yourselves with ashes.

Is this what you call fasting?

Do you really think this will please the LORD?

<sup>6</sup>“No, this is the kind of fasting I want:

Free those who are wrongly imprisoned;  
lighten the burden of those who work for you.

Let the oppressed go free,

and remove the chains that bind people.  
<sup>7</sup> Share your food with the hungry,  
 and give shelter to the homeless.  
 Give clothes to those who need them,  
 and do not hide from relatives who need your help.  
<sup>8</sup> “Then your salvation will come like the dawn,  
 and your wounds will quickly heal.  
 Your godliness will lead you forward,  
 and the glory of the LORD will protect you from behind.

Discussion – What kind of fasting did God want from the people of Israel?

Joel 2:12-13

<sup>12</sup> That is why the LORD says,  
 “Turn to me now, while there is time.  
 Give me your hearts.  
 Come with fasting, weeping, and mourning.  
<sup>13</sup> Don’t tear your clothing in your grief,  
 but tear your hearts instead.”  
 Return to the LORD your God,  
 for he is merciful and compassionate,  
 slow to get angry and filled with unfailing love.  
 He is eager to relent and not punish.

Discussion – Is fasting enough? What else is helpful to turn to the LORD?

### *Pray Without Ceasing*

1 Thessalonians 5:12-24

<sup>12</sup> Dear brothers and sisters, honor those who are your leaders in the Lord’s work. They work hard among you and give you spiritual guidance. <sup>13</sup> Show them great respect and wholehearted love because of their work. And live peacefully with each other.  
<sup>14</sup> Brothers and sisters, we urge you to warn those who are lazy. Encourage those who are timid. Take tender care of those who are weak. Be patient with everyone.  
<sup>15</sup> See that no one pays back evil for evil, but always try to do good to each other and to all people.  
<sup>16</sup> Always be joyful. <sup>17</sup> Never stop praying. <sup>18</sup> Be thankful in all circumstances, for this is God’s will for you who belong to Christ Jesus.  
<sup>19</sup> Do not stifle the Holy Spirit. <sup>20</sup> Do not scoff at prophecies, <sup>21</sup> but test everything that is said. Hold on to what is good. <sup>22</sup> Stay away from every kind of evil.  
<sup>23</sup> Now may the God of peace make you holy in every way, and may your whole spirit and soul and body be kept blameless until our Lord Jesus Christ comes again. <sup>24</sup> God will make this happen, for he who calls you is faithful.

Discussion

What does it mean to pray “without ceasing?”  
 How can our day-to-day, moment-to-moment behavior reflect our awareness that God cares for us?  
 What is God’s faithful promise to us?

Psalm 50:7-11

- <sup>7</sup> “O my people, listen as I speak.  
Here are my charges against you, O Israel:  
I am God, your God!
- <sup>8</sup> I have no complaint about your sacrifices  
or the burnt offerings you constantly offer.
- <sup>9</sup> But I do not need the bulls from your barns  
or the goats from your pens.
- <sup>10</sup> For all the animals of the forest are mine,  
and I own the cattle on a thousand hills.
- <sup>11</sup> I know every bird on the mountains,  
and all the animals of the field are mine.

Discussion

What kind of offering does the LORD want from his people?  
What does he promise?

### **1 Thessalonians 5:14-18**

And we urge you, brothers [and sisters], admonish the idle,  
**Encourage the fainthearted, help the weak,**  
Be patient with them all.  
**See that no one repays anyone evil for evil,**  
But always seek to do good to one another and to everyone.  
**Rejoice always, pray without ceasing.**  
Give thanks in all circumstances;  
**For this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.**

### **CLOSING PRAYER – The Lord’s Prayer**

**Our Father in heaven:**

**May your holy name be honored;**

**may your Kingdom come;**

**may your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.**

**Give us today the food we need.**

**Forgive us the wrongs we have done, as we forgive the wrongs that others have done to us.**

**Do not bring us to hard testing, but keep us safe from the Evil One.**

Good News Translation (GNT)

### **FASTING AND GIVING**

The Lord told his people to fast by sharing their bread with the hungry, “Share your food with the hungry, and give shelter to the homeless. Give clothes to those who need them, and do not hide from relatives who need your help” (Isaiah 58:7). During Lent, commit yourself to donate nonperishable food items to a community food bank or maybe you’re the one to organize an ongoing food collection at your church or organization or in your family. Now is the time to start if you’re not already doing it.

### **CLOSING MUSIC – Song of Hope (Canto de Esperanza)**