

**Sermon on the Mount Daily Office**  
**Week of October 3**

**Morning**

**Intro**

Welcome to the practice of the Daily Office. In this practice we are seeking to ground our lives more deeply in God's presence as we pause each morning, mid-day, and evening for silence, scripture, and prayer. In this season, we are going to ground ourselves in Jesus's teaching in the Sermon on the Mount. How might our lives be formed if we soak in this important teaching for three months? How might our relationships reflect Jesus' words? How will our work deepen? How might we be equipped to live in the Kingdom and cultivate pockets of the Kingdom in the world?

Will you join us in this journey?

**Silence**

Let's begin in silence. Silence helps us to settle the internal and external noise and distractions that so often stand in the way of our ability to hear the Lord.

Take a deep breath.

Remember, right now, that God is personally present with you. Psalm 139 says there is no where we can go to escape God's loving presence, and it says that you are so precious to God, that the Lord's thoughts about you outnumber the grains of sand.

Take another deep breath. God is closer than the air we breathe.

Take two minutes of silence are yours to rest in the presence of the Lord.

**Scripture**

This morning, let's sit in Jesus's teaching from Matthew 5:38-48.

"You have heard that it was said, 'Eye for eye, and tooth for tooth.' But I tell you, do not resist an evil person. If anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to them the other cheek also. And if anyone wants to sue you and take your shirt, hand over your coat as well. If anyone forces you to go one mile, go with them two miles. Give to the one who asks you, and do not turn away from the one who wants to borrow from you.

"You have heard that it was said, 'Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be children of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Are not even the tax collectors doing that? And if you greet only your own people, what are you doing more than others? Do not even pagans do that? Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.

This may be the hardest teaching in the Sermon on the Mount. How do we love our enemies, people who disagree with us, people who hurt us, people who are difficult or just plain annoying? How do you typically respond to people who are difficult? How do you act toward them? What is your attitude toward them in your heart?

As we seek to love our enemies, it may be helpful to remember God loves them. Even those who have hurt us the most are loved deeply by the Lord.

Is there any one that comes to mind for you this morning, someone you would consider an enemy. Someone who has hurt you, or always seems to disagree with you. Maybe it is someone who holds different political beliefs. Who comes to mind this morning?

In a moment, we are going to pray using our imagination. This may be a new kind of prayer, and it may even feel a little uncomfortable. That is okay. Just remember that God created our imagination, and the purpose of this prayer is simply to get in touch with God's love for our enemies.

Jesus, guide our imagination in prayer this morning.

Close your eyes, and picture the person who came to mind. Where are they? In your imagination, what are they doing? Give yourself some space to consider this question.

Now imagine Jesus is in the scene with them. Where is Jesus? What is he doing? How is Jesus showing his love for the person you identified? Take time to imagine the scene.

Will you read this passage one more time this morning? As you do, hold this image in your mind. How might this knowledge, that even those who are difficult are deeply loved by Jesus, help you to love them too.

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Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit. Amen.

### **Mid-day**

We pause now in mid-day. How have you lived in the teaching of Jesus today? How is it echoing through your day?

### **Silence**

Let's allow the hurry, anxiety, and distractions of the day to settle now as we let go and entrust it all to the one who is with us and loves us more than we can possibly understand.

Take a deep breath. Remember what Paul says, “In God we live and move and have our being.”

Take another deep breath.

Take two minutes of silence to rest in the presence of the Lord.

### **Prayer**

Now will you join me in this prayer written by Fran Pratt?

God, we acknowledge that, at some point in our lives, we all harbor hatred in our hearts.

Forgive us, oh God.

We all, at some point, render unjust judgements on others.

Forgive us, oh God.

Instead of loving our enemies, we have hated them.

Forgive us, oh God.

Instead of welcoming the stranger, we have shunned them.

Forgive us, oh God.

Instead of listening to the voices of those who are different from us, we have silenced them.

Forgive us, oh God.

We have sat silently by while others gave way to hatred.

We have hated and been hated.

We have forgotten that all humanity is our kin.

We have not loved our neighbor as ourselves.

We have hated those who've hurt us

Those with whom we disagree politically or theologically

Those whose color, ethnicity, appearance, gender or orientation is different from ours.

Those whose sins are different from ours.

Those whose customs are different from ours.

Those whom we perceive as dangerous.

Scour our hearts free of hatred

Fill us full of love instead -

Lovingkindness from your heart.

Let no injustice remain among us.

Rescue us from the walls that divide us,

And bring us back to Holy Communion.

Amen

## **Evening**

### **Silence**

Tonight, we pause to rest in the peace and strength of Christ as we continue living in the Sermon on the Mount.

Let us first pause in silence, so we might be grounded in the loving presence of God.

Take a deep breath.

Remember Jesus promised to be with us always.

Take another deep breath.

Paul writes, "God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us."

Take two minutes of silence to rest in the presence of the Lord. In this space, rest in this truth. Jesus did not die to *make* you loveable. He died *because* he loves you.

### **Prayer**

Today, we have considered Jesus's teaching to love our enemies and pray for those who persecute us. Tonight, we will specifically intercede for those with whom we struggle. Who will you pray for tonight? It may be the same person who came to mind this morning, or it may be someone else. Who do you consider to be an enemy? Is it someone who has hurt you? Maybe it is someone with whom you disagree, perhaps a political opponent. Or perhaps it is someone who is difficult or just plain annoying?

Begin your prayer remembering that even they are the beloved of God. God demonstrated his love for them in this: when they were still our enemies, Christ died for them.

Take a moment now to pray for them in love. C.S. Lewis wrote, "Love is unselfishly choosing for another's highest good." As you pray, do not seek your highest good, instead seek *their* greatest good in prayer.

Jesus, it is hard to pray for our enemies. If we are honest, it feels good to hold onto our grudges, to consider ourselves above those who have hurt us, disagree with of, or simply annoy us. In our prayer, please change our hearts. Help us to love our enemies the way you love them. Please use our prayers for them to transform our hearts, that they may know you through our love. Amen.