

Walking in the *Foot Prints* of Jesus

A Discipleship Journey



Sermon on the Mount

Week 28

Strawberries & Cream...or Worms?

Matthew 7:12

Opening Prayer:

The Call

The call to us at a time when great pieces of the future crumble in life is not so much to faith as it is to hope. Depression is the seedbed of hopelessness, the loss of surety that life must still somehow be full of good, however impossible it is to remember it, to see it, to trust it at this moment.

Hope does not tell us that soon life will be the same again as it was before the loss. No, hope tells us that the pieces are there for us to put together, if only we will give ourselves to the doing of it.

When Jesus dies on the cross something entirely different rises. And that something is the call to us to make the best in life live again.

The 12th station of the cross brings us face to face with the finality of defeat. Some things don't have a happy ending in life. They just grind on until loss becomes the new normal.

Sometimes we fail...

Sometimes we're beaten...

Sometimes we're lost...

Sometimes we're abandoned by the very people we love most in life and
who we thought also loved us...

Sometimes we learn that there's no going back to things that once were,
but are no more.

The question with which the 12th station confronts us is an awesome one. Am I able to accept the daily deaths of life, both the great ones and the small, knowing that death is not the end of life, only it's passing over to something new in me? Hopefully, I learn from Jesus who gave up himself, his mission, his life in ways that all seemed totally wrong, that the deaths I died may bring new life to the world around me as well.

When we take hold of life with all its deaths and all its resurrections, life becomes an eternal hotbed of creation given into the hands of the creature so that creation can go on creating.

Reflection

For the last several months, we have been reflecting on the core of Jesus' teachings as preached in the Sermon on the Mount. In this next passage, Jesus sums it all up in two sentences:

Do unto others whatever you would have them do to you. This is the law and the prophets.
Matthew 7:12

The Christian life that Jesus calls us to is not just an individual value-system or life-style, but a community affair. It involves relationships, and often relationships with people with whom we don't always get along. Relationships bring great blessing into our lives, but they can also produce throbbing head-aches. Known as The Golden Rule, this passage has the power to transform even the most difficult relationships.

As with so many of Jesus' teachings, it might seem obvious that we are to treat others as we would like to be treated, but in reality, it can be difficult to put this into practice. One place to start might be by asking, "What is it I like? What are the things that are helpful to me or encourage me? How would I like to be treated in that situation?" Perhaps we can begin introducing those things into our relationships. Another way of looking at this might be: you don't like unkind things said about you? Well, don't say unkind things about others. You don't like people who are difficult, who make your life difficult or constantly put you on edge? Well, don't let your behavior be such that you become difficult for others.

Taking this teaching one step further, we might recognize that everyone is different and what is helpful to us may not be helpful to another. With that awareness, The Golden Rule becomes The Platinum Rule: "Do unto others as *they* would want done to *them*." (*Dave Kerpen, The Art of People*). When we follow The Platinum Rule, when we make every attempt to do what the other person wants done, we can be assured of an even better outcome:

Personally, I am very fond of strawberries and cream, but I have found that for some strange reason, fish prefer worms. So, when I went fishing, I didn't think about what I wanted. I thought about what they wanted. I didn't bait the hook with strawberries and cream. Rather, I dangled a worm...in front of the fish and said: "Wouldn't you like to have that?"

~Dale Carnegie, How to Win Friends and Influence People

Jesus gives clear instructions which offer the power to transform relationships. The whole purpose and the real spirit behind the entirety of Jesus' teaching and the law and the prophets is that we are to love our neighbor as ourselves, that we are to love one another. It is as simple and as challenging as that.

Reflection Question: What is one more thing I can do to live by The Golden Rule?

Closing Prayer

Speak to Jesus about what is on your heart, then rest in silence for a few moments listening for His response.