

UPSIDE-DOWN *Blessing*

Lent with the Beatitudes of Jesus



**Blessed Are *the*
Broken**



**Blessed Are *the*
Hungry**



**Blessed Are *the*
Pure in Heart**



**Blessed *in*
the Fire**

— JOIN US THIS LENT —

Upside-Down Blessing: Lent with the Beatitudes of Jesus

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Welcome.

I'm Pastor Rob, and I'm grateful you're here as we begin this Lenten journey together—our “**Upside-Down Blessing**” walk through the Beatitudes.

In the Beatitudes, Jesus has a way of turning our world right-side up by flipping our assumptions upside down. He names the places we often call weakness—brokenness, hunger, mercy, purity of heart, even hardship—and He calls them **blesed**. Not because pain is good, but because **He is near**, and His kingdom comes to us in the places we least expect.

As part of **South Lake Church**, this is who we strive to build disciples of Jesus:

- **Engaging** in relationship with our Heavenly Father
- **Growing** in relationships with one another

- **Sharing** the love of Jesus throughout our community

So as you read, reflect, and pray through these days of Lent, know this: you're not meant to do this alone. A relationship with Jesus—and relationships with others in His Church—are a big part of how God strengthens us, especially in seasons like this. We're here for one another.

If you'd like to learn more about South Lake, we'd love you to join us:

- Website: www.southlakelc.org
- Facebook: Engage Grow Share
- YouTube: SouthLakeLC

Wherever you're starting from, my prayer is simple: **may this be a blessing to you**—deepening your relationship with Jesus and strengthening your relationships with others.

May God meet you with His mercy and His upside-down blessing this Lenten season.

In Christ,
Pastor Rob

What is Lent?

Lent is the Church's **40-day journey of repentance and renewal** that prepares us to walk with Jesus to the cross—and then celebrate the victory of Easter.

Those “40 days” echo the biblical pattern of 40: a season of testing, training, and trust (especially Jesus’ own wilderness fasting). And here’s a key detail many people miss: **Sundays aren’t counted** in the 40, because every Sunday is a “little Easter”—a weekly celebration of the resurrection even while we’re still in a penitential season.

Why does the Church “do” Lent?

Not to earn God’s love. Not to prove we’re serious. Not to perform religion.

We keep Lent because we *need* it.

Lent is the Church’s pastoral wisdom that says:

“Slow down. Tell the truth. Come back to Jesus.”

- We tell the truth about sin, grief, idols, and self-reliance (repentance).
- We come back to Jesus where He promises to meet us (Word, prayer, worship, confession, the Lord’s Supper).
- We learn again that blessing doesn’t come from climbing higher—but from Christ coming down to carry us.

That’s the “upside down” part: in the kingdom of God, the places the world calls “losing” are often the very places Jesus meets us with His mercy.

Why Ash Wednesday starts the journey the way it does.

Our Ash Wednesday Gospel reading (Matthew 6:1–6, 16–21) is Jesus aiming straight at the temptation to “do religion to be seen.” He calls us back to **secret repentance before the Father**—real honesty, not religious image-management.

Lent begins by saying: *Don't pretend.*

And Jesus follows that with something even better: *Come close.*

Over these 40 days: the goal, the purpose, and the hope

The goal

To be formed by Jesus—not just informed about Him.

The purpose

To let the Holy Spirit do a deep, gentle work:

- exposing what we cling to for life (and why it keeps failing us),
- leading us to repentance without despair,
- and returning us to the steady promises of Christ.

The hope

Not that we'll “fix ourselves,” but that **Jesus will meet us and keep us**—and that His blessing will start to reframe how we see our life, our pain, our relationships, and our calling.

The “Upside Down Blessing” journey: a new theme each Sunday

Our Lent plan is intentionally mapped as **5 Sundays, 5 themes**, grouping the Beatitudes so we stay anchored in Jesus’ words while pairing each week with a companion Gospel story.

Lent 1 — Blessed Are the Broken

- Beatitudes: Matthew 5:3–5
- Companion Gospel: Luke 18:9–17
- Big idea: *The kingdom doesn’t open for the impressive; it opens for the empty-handed.*

Lent 2 — Blessed Are the Hungry

- Beatitude: Matthew 5:6
- Companion Gospel: John 6
- Big idea: *Our cravings can’t save us... and Jesus feeds what the world can’t fill.*

Lent 3 — Blessed Are the Merciful

- Beatitude: Matthew 5:7
- Companion Gospel: Matthew 18:21–35
- Big idea: *Mercy isn’t ignoring evil; it’s releasing the debt because God released yours.*

Lent 4 — Blessed Are the Pure in Heart

- Beatitude: Matthew 5:8
- Companion Gospel: John 15:1–15
- Big idea: *Purity isn’t you scrubbing yourself holy; it’s Jesus keeping you close and making you clean.*

Lent 5 — Blessed in the Fire

- Beatitudes: Matthew 5:10–12
- Companion Gospel: John 15:18–16:4
- Big idea: *The heat is real, but so is the promise: you are not abandoned—you belong to Jesus.*

So, each Sunday “turns the page” to a new angle of Jesus’ upside-down blessing—because Jesus isn’t giving generic optimism. He’s telling the truth about this world, and then He’s giving Himself to us inside it.

A simple daily rhythm for the readings (easy to share)

If you want a daily practice that's realistic (and actually life-giving), try this:

1. **Read** the day's Scripture (slow, not rushed).
2. Ask: **"Where is Jesus overturning my definition of 'blessed' today?"**
3. **Pray** a short, honest prayer. (Our notes even include brief "Prayers of the Day" for each theme.)
4. Choose one small step: **repent, receive, or show mercy** to someone.

That's it. This is a *walk*, not a sprint.

A blessing to share with others.

May this Lent be a guide and a joy in your faith and your walk.

May the Lord make you comfortable sharing it—not as "look how spiritual I am," but as "look how faithful Jesus is."

Because the point of the Beatitudes isn't to hand you a spiritual scoreboard.

It's Jesus saying: **"I see you. I'm here. And in Me, even this—yes, even this—can be blessed."**

Prayer

Lord Jesus, as we walk these forty days, turn us from performing to trusting, from self-protecting to repenting, from chasing substitutes to receiving Your life. Teach us Your upside-down blessing, the kind that meets us in weakness, cleanses us by grace, and gives courage in the fire. Keep us close to You and let Your mercy overflow through us to our neighbor. In Your holy name, Amen.

Day 1, Ash Wednesday: Hidden Before the Father

Scripture

Matthew 6:1–6, 16–21 (focus: vv. 3–4, 6, 19–21)

“Your Father who sees in secret will reward you.” (Matthew 6:4, ESV)

ESV Bible

Devotion (200–350 words)

Ash Wednesday starts with something visible, ashes on a forehead... and Jesus immediately points to what's **invisible**, the heart before the Father. That's the upside-down blessing right out of the gate. The world says, “Be seen, be impressive, curate your holiness like a highlight reel.” Jesus says, “Come close, in secret, with the truth.”

Repentance is not a performance. It's not spiritual makeup that covers the mess. It's bringing the mess into the light of God's mercy. Jesus names three “holy things” people love to turn into applause machines: giving, praying, fasting. He doesn't cancel them, He rescues them. He pulls them out of the marketplace and brings them back into the living room of the Father's care.

Ashes tell the truth, “I am dust.” That sounds grim until you remember whose hands touch dust. The Father “sees in secret,” which means you don't have to defend yourself, spin yourself, or hide yourself. You can be poor in spirit before the One who is rich in mercy. You can be empty-handed, and that is exactly how the Kingdom opens.

And notice where Jesus lands, “Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.” Lent isn't spiritual self-improvement; it's a treasure re-location. Your heart follows what you trust. Jesus is gently, firmly, turning your heart back toward Him.

Prayer

Father, You already see what I try to hide. Today I stop pretending. Lead me into honest repentance, not to earn Your love, but because Your love is already chasing me. Teach me to give, pray, and fast without needing to be noticed. Set my treasure where Christ is and steady my heart there. Amen.

Blessings for you

May you be freed from performative faith and find quiet joy in being known by your Father.

Blessings for others in your life

May those you love feel God's gentle invitation to come out of hiding and into His mercy.

Day 2: The Treasure Shift

Scripture

Matthew 6:19–21

“Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”
(Matthew 6:21, ESV)

ESV Bible

Devotion (200–350 words)

Jesus doesn't just tell you what to do, He tells you what's happening inside you. Your heart is always moving toward something like a magnet toward metal. The world says, “Store up security, collect control, prove your worth.” Jesus says, “Watch your treasure, because your treasure is steering your heart.”

That's the upside-down blessing, Jesus isn't trying to take good things away, He's trying to keep good things from becoming gods. Money can be a gift, but it makes a lousy savior. Reputation can be useful, but it cannot resurrect you. Comfort is sweet, but it cannot cleanse your conscience.

This is where Lent gets practical. If your heart is anxious, ask, “What treasure am I trying to protect?” If you're defensive, ask, “What treasure feels threatened?” If you're exhausted, ask, “What treasure am I chasing?” Jesus isn't scolding you; He's shepherding you.

And this already connects to the Beatitudes. “Blessed are the poor in spirit,” the empty-handed ones, because they aren't clutching treasures that can rot. They're open to a Kingdom that cannot be stolen. In a world that praises the self-made, Jesus blesses the surrendered. The rich thing in the Kingdom is not your storage, it's your Savior.

Try one small “treasure shift” today. Give quietly. Forgive first. Turn off the doom-scroll and pray for one person by name. Not to be seen. Just because Jesus is better treasure than whatever's been eating your heart.

Prayer

Jesus, You know what my heart chases. Show me where my treasure has drifted. Loosen my grip on what can't last. Teach me to trust Your Father's care more than my own control. Re-center my heart on You. Amen.

Blessings for you

May you find your heart settling as Christ becomes your truest treasure.

Blessings for others in your life

May the people around you be blessed by your generosity that asks for no spotlight.

Day 3: The Fast That Tells the Truth

Scripture

Matthew 6:16–18

“Your Father who sees in secret will reward you.” (Matthew 6:18, ESV)

ESV Bible

Devotion (200–350 words)

Fasting is a strange, beautiful protest. The world says, “Stuff the ache, numb the hunger, distract the pain.” Jesus says, “Bring the hunger into God’s presence, let it teach you.” Not because hunger is holy in itself, but because it exposes what you’ve been using as comfort.

Jesus’ warning is almost funny, in a tragic way, “Don’t look miserable on purpose.” We humans can turn anything into a stage, even repentance. But Jesus wants your fasting to be a secret conversation with the Father, not a public announcement of your discipline.

Here’s the upside-down blessing, fasting is not God’s way of loving you more, it’s God’s way of helping you **want Him** more. It’s a way of saying, “Lord, I’ve been feeding on things that don’t satisfy.” That connects straight into the Beatitudes, “Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness.” Jesus blesses hunger, not hunger for applause, but hunger for God’s rightness, His restoring goodness.

If you fast today, notice what rises up. Irritation. Restlessness. Old grief. Anxiety. That’s not proof you’re doing it wrong; it might be proof you’ve uncovered a deeper thirst. Don’t shame yourself, bring it to the Father who sees. And if you’re not fasting from food, fast from something that keeps you numb constant noise, endless news, the reflex to clap back.

Your Father isn’t impressed. He’s present. That’s better.

Prayer

Father, I confess how easily I reach for quick comfort. In my hunger, meet me. Let my fasting become a simple “yes” to You. Fill what’s empty with Christ Himself. Teach me to desire what is good and true. Amen.

Blessings for you

May you discover that your deepest hunger is an invitation, not a condemnation.

Blessings for others in your life

May those you love to be drawn to Christ, the One who satisfies without shaming.

Day 4: The Door Closed, the Heart Open

Scripture

Matthew 6:5–6

“Go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret.” (Matthew 6:6, ESV)

ESV Bible

Devotion (200–350 words)

Prayer can become performance so fast. The world trains us to curate words, craft an image, and manage impressions. Jesus offers an escape hatch, “Shut the door.” Not because public prayer is bad, but because private prayer is where honesty grows legs.

Closing a door is a small act of faith. It’s you saying, “God is real enough to speak to when no one is watching.” That’s upside-down blessing, because the world says, “real life is what people see,” and Jesus says “real life is what the Father sees.”

What happens behind that door? You can finally stop editing. You can admit, “Lord, I’m angry,” or “I’m afraid,” or “I feel numb,” or “I keep replaying the same sin.” And you can hear, again, that repentance is not you crawling toward God, it’s God opening His arms to you in Christ.

This sets you up for the weeks ahead. “Blessed are the poor in spirit,” means you can come in poverty, not pretending to be rich. “Blessed are those who mourn,” means you can grieve without being told to hurry up and get over it. The Father’s secret place is where Jesus turns the world’s “keep it together” into His “come as you are.”

Try this: two minutes, door closed, phone down. Say one honest sentence to God. Then sit in silence. If silence feels loud, that’s okay. Your Father sees, and you’re not alone there.

Prayer

Father, teach me to pray without pretending. Help me shut the door on noise, and open my heart to You. Meet me in my weakness with Christ’s strength. Give me simple words, and even better, give me Your peace. Amen.

Blessing for you

May you find courage to be honest with God, and relief that you don’t have to perform.

Blessing for others in your life

May the people around you be drawn into prayer because they see peace growing in you.

Day 5: Gathering Up, The Secret Place is Where You're Re-made

Scripture

Psalm 139:23–24 (supporting reference: Matthew 6:6)

“Search me, O God, and know my heart.” (Psalm 139:23, ESV)

ESV Bible

Devotion (200–350 words)

Before we step into the first “Blessed are...” week, we gather the first days of Lent into one simple request: “Search me.” That’s not a dare to a harsh God, it’s an invitation to a loving Father. The world says, “Never let anyone see your cracks.” Jesus says, “Let the Father see everything, because He heals what He sees.”

Psalm 139 doesn’t pretend. It admits we have anxious thoughts, hidden motives, tangled habits. And it asks God to lead us in the “everlasting way,” not the exhausting way. This is the upside-down blessing of Lent, you don’t get cleaned up to come to God, you come to God to be cleaned up.

Notice the connection to Jesus’ secret place in Matthew 6. The room with the door shut is not a shame corner, it’s a workshop. God is not looking for reasons to reject you, He’s looking at you through Christ, the One who was rejected for you. That changes repentance completely. Repentance becomes a return, not a punishment.

So take stock, gently. Where have you been “seen” by people and still felt unknown? Where have you been hiding from God, even though He already knows? Where do you need the courage to be poor in spirit, empty-handed, honest?

This week, don’t aim for grand spiritual fireworks. Aim for truth. One confession. One quiet prayer. One act of generosity that nobody can clap for. That is where the Father meets you.

Prayer

Lord, search me with mercy, not with condemnation. Show me what I’ve been hiding, and help me bring it to You. Lead me away from the habits that shrink my soul. Plant my feet in Christ’s forgiveness. Teach me to live honestly in Your love. Amen.

Blessing for you

May you experience God's searching as safety, because Christ has already secured you.

Blessing for others in your life

May those you love be protected from shame, and welcomed into honest grace.

Sermon Sunday Carryover 1 (Lent 1): Blessed Are the Broken

Beatitudes (Matthew 5:3–5), Companion Gospel: Luke 18:9–17

ESV Bible

Context (simple):

In Luke 18, Jesus tells a story about two men praying, one sounds impressive, the other sounds desperate. The shock is that the desperate one goes home right with God. Then Jesus puts a child in the center, not as a cute accessory, but as a living picture of receiving, not achieving.

Takeaways for the week

- God is not impressed by polished prayers, He welcomes honest ones.
- “Empty-handed” is not a spiritual flaw, it’s the posture of faith.
- Mourning isn’t failure, it’s telling the truth about loss and sin.
- Meekness isn’t weakness, it’s strength that doesn’t need to shove.
- Jesus opens the Kingdom to those who stop pretending they earned it.

Prayer

Jesus, break the spell of self-righteousness over us. Teach us to pray like the tax collector, honest, needy, trusting. When we mourn, comfort us with Your promises. When we feel small, remind us that Your Kingdom belongs to receivers, not achievers. Make us meek like You, strong enough to be gentle. Amen.

Day 6: The Only Prayer Some Days Can Manage

Scripture

Luke 18:13

“God, be merciful to me, a sinner!” (Luke 18:13, ESV)

ESV Bible

Devotion (200–350 words)

Some prayers come out polished. Others come out like a cracked whisper. Jesus says the cracked whisper is not disqualified. In fact, it’s often the truest thing you can say.

The tax collector doesn’t bargain. He doesn’t list his resume. He doesn’t promise to do better next week. He stands at a distance, eyes down, and asks for mercy. That’s “poor in spirit” in real life, empty-handed, no leverage, no spin. And Jesus calls that blessed.

The world says, “If you mess up, fix your image.” Jesus says, “If you mess up, come to Me.” That’s the upside-down blessing, because everything in us wants to earn our way back into feeling okay. But mercy isn’t wages, it’s a gift.

Here’s the hard honesty, you and I love Pharisee prayers more than we admit. Not because we want to be villains, but because we want to feel safe. Control feels safer than mercy. But control collapses when the heart is truly broken. Mercy holds.

So if today is messy, let your prayer be small and real, “Lord, have mercy.” That is not spiritual laziness, it is faith leaning on Christ. And from that mercy, new obedience can grow. Not to impress God, but because you’ve been loved by Him.

Prayer

Lord, I bring You what I actually am, not what I pretend to be. Have mercy on me. Quiet my need to justify myself. Give me faith to receive Your forgiveness through Christ. And let mercy reshape how I treat others today. Amen.

Blessing for you

May you find that one honest sentence to God is enough to open the door to grace.

Blessing for others in your life

May those you love be spared the burden of pretending, and discover God’s mercy is real.

Day 7: A Clean Heart, Not a Better Mask

Scripture

Psalm 51:10–12

“Create in me a clean heart, O God.” (Psalm 51:10, ESV)

ESV Bible

Devotion (200–350 words)

David doesn’t ask God for a makeover, he asks for a miracle, “Create.” That word matters. You can rearrange habits, but you can’t manufacture a new heart. Only God does creation.

That’s the upside-down blessing, the world says, “Fix yourself.” Jesus says, “Bring yourself.” The Beatitudes begin here, “Blessed are the poor in spirit,” not because poverty is fun, but because it’s honest. A poor spirit stops pretending it can pay its own debt.

Psalm 51 is the prayer of someone who knows sin is not just a bad day, it’s a deep sickness. Yet notice what David believes about God, he believes God is the kind of God who creates, renews, restores, and sustains. He asks for joy again. Not shallow cheer, real joy that comes from forgiveness.

If you’re broken today, don’t settle for a better mask. Ask for a clean heart. That’s not self-hatred, it’s hope. You’re saying, “Lord, do what I cannot.” And in Christ, God has already answered. Jesus took your uncleanness to the cross, and He offers you His righteousness like clothing you didn’t sew.

So today, let repentance be specific. Name one sin honestly. Then name one promise of God stubbornly. That’s how mourning becomes comfort, and weakness becomes the place where grace moves in.

Prayer

Father, create in me what I cannot produce. Forgive my sin, and cleanse my heart through Jesus. Restore joy where shame has been loud. Uphold me with Your Spirit today. Help me live from Your mercy, not my performance. Amen.

Blessing for you

May you receive forgiveness as a fresh start, not as a vague concept.

Blessing for others in your life

May those you love see God’s mercy in you, and believe He can restore them too.

Day 8: Poor in Spirit, Rich in the Kingdom

Scripture

Matthew 5:3

“Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” (Matthew 5:3, ESV)

ESV Bible

Devotion (200–350 words)

Jesus starts His blessings with a category no one puts on a vision board, “poor in spirit.” The world says, “Blessed are the confident, the crushing-it, the spiritually impressive.” Jesus says, “Blessed are the empty.”

Why? Because the empty have room. Room for mercy. Room for grace. Room for a King. If you’re full of yourself, there’s no space for Jesus. If you’re honest about your need, the Kingdom is already coming toward you.

This is upside-down blessing with both hands. Jesus isn’t romanticizing weakness. He’s naming reality. Every one of us is spiritually bankrupt before God, we just vary in how good we are at denial. “Poor in spirit” is the person who stops denying and starts receiving.

If you feel like you bring nothing to God today, congratulations, you’re closer to the truth than you think. The Kingdom does not open by résumé, it opens by repentance. That’s why the tax collector in Luke 18 goes home justified, he came empty-handed.

So let Jesus reframe your poverty. Your lack is not the end of the story. It’s the doorway. The King gives the Kingdom, He doesn’t sell it. Christ’s righteousness is not a trophy for the best, it’s clothing for the naked.

Prayer

Jesus, I confess my spiritual poverty. I cannot impress You, and I’m tired of trying. Give me the faith that receives Your Kingdom like a gift. Let Your grace be enough for me today. Teach me to live open-handed. Amen.

Blessing for you

May you feel relief in not having to be the hero of your salvation.

Blessing for others in your life

May the people around you be welcomed by your humility, and pointed to Jesus’ generosity.

Day 9: God Lives With the Contrite

Scripture

Isaiah 57:15

"I dwell... with him who is of a contrite and lowly spirit."
(Isaiah 57:15, ESV)

ESV Bible

Devotion (200–350 words)

If you asked, "Where does God live?" most people would point up. Isaiah says something more surprising. Yes, God is high and holy, and He chooses to dwell with the contrite and lowly. That's upside-down blessing in one sentence, the highest God moves toward the lowest heart.

The world avoids brokenness. We hide it, medicate it, rebrand it, or laugh it off. Jesus walks straight into it and calls it blessed. Not because pain is good, but because God meets you there. He revives the spirit of the lowly. He brings life where you feel like you're running on fumes.

This is also the "meek" blessing beginning to show itself. The meek are not the loudest in the room, they're the ones who don't need to shove their way to the front because they trust God's care. And God says, "That's where I dwell."

So today, instead of hiding your contrition, offer it. Contrition is not wallowing, it's honesty that turns toward God. It's saying, "Lord, I am not okay, but I'm bringing my not-okay to You." And He says, "I will be with you."

That's not sentiment, it's covenant love. The Holy One comes close in Christ, who took on our lowliness. He doesn't despise the bruised reed. He binds it up.

Prayer

Holy God, You are high above all things, and yet You come near to the lowly. Meet me in my contrition today. Revive what feels crushed in me. Teach me meek trust instead of frantic control. Hold me close in Christ. Amen.

Blessing for you

May you sense God's nearness especially where you feel most undone.

Blessing for others in your life

May those you love experience comfort that is stronger than their shame.

Day 10: Power That Shows Up in Weakness

Scripture

2 Corinthians 12:9–10

“My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.” (2 Corinthians 12:9, ESV)

ESV Bible

Devotion (200–350 words)

Paul wanted the thorn gone. God gave grace instead. That’s not the answer most of us request, but it might be the answer we most need.

The world treats weakness like a defect. Cover it, correct it, conquer it. Jesus does something startling, He moves into it. “My power is made perfect in weakness.” Not in your spotlight moments, but in your limp. In your limits. In your “I can’t.”

This connects to the Beatitudes like a spine connects ribs. “Blessed are the poor in spirit,” because they can finally stop pretending they’re strong. “Blessed are the meek,” because they don’t have to win every room. God’s grace meets you where you are not enough.

And the upside-down blessing is this, your weakness can become a pulpit. Not a stage for attention, but a testimony to Christ. When you endure with faith, when you repent and return, when you keep loving with a bruised heart, you are living proof that Jesus is carrying you.

Paul even says something that sounds wild, he will boast in weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon him. That’s not denial, it’s a reframe. Weakness is no longer a dead end, it’s the place where Christ’s sufficiency becomes tangible.

So today, name one weakness you’re tempted to hide. Then hear Jesus’ promise, “My grace is sufficient.” That’s not a slogan. It’s the crucified and risen Christ speaking.

Prayer

Jesus, I hate feeling weak. I want control and competence. But You promise grace that is enough, even here. Teach me to stop hiding my limits and start trusting Your strength. Let Your power rest on me today. Amen.

Blessing for you

May you discover that weakness is not the absence of God, it’s often the address where He meets you.

Blessing for others in your life

May those you love be strengthened as they see Christ sustaining you in real life.

Day 11: Blessed Are Those Who Mourn

Scripture

Matthew 5:4 (supporting reference: Psalm 34:18)

“Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.” (Matthew 5:4, ESV)

ESV Bible

Devotion (200–350 words)

Mourning is not fashionable. The world prefers quick fixes, fast distractions, and “good vibes only.” Jesus looks at mourners and calls them blessed. That’s upside-down blessing so pure it almost sounds offensive, until you realize what Jesus is promising, comfort.

Mourning in Lent includes sorrow over sin, yes, but it’s bigger than that. It’s grief over what sin has done, to you, to others, to the world. It’s sorrow over relationships that fracture, bodies that break, hopes that disappoint. Jesus doesn’t rush you past it. He meets you in it.

Comfort in Scripture is not a pat on the head. It’s strength given to the weak. It’s God coming near. It’s the Father sending the Son, and the Son sending the Spirit. Comfort has a name, Jesus.

If you’re mourning today, you don’t have to pretend you’re fine. That pretending is exhausting and lonely. Instead, you can pray like the tax collector, honest and needy. You can grieve like someone who knows God is not disgusted by tears.

The upside-down part is this, your mourning becomes a place of blessing because it becomes a place of meeting. Christ the Man of Sorrows knows grief from the inside. And He promises that grief does not get the last word.

Prayer

Lord Jesus, meet me in my mourning. Hold what hurts, and don’t let me numb it into bitterness. Comfort me with Your presence and Your promises. Teach me to lament honestly and hope stubbornly. Amen.

Blessing for you

May you be comforted by Christ, not rushed, not minimized, truly held.

Blessing for others in your life

May those you love receive patient compassion, and discover that God is near to the brokenhearted.

Day 12: Gathering Up, Receiving Like a Child

Scripture

Luke 18:15–17

“Whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it.” (Luke 18:17, ESV)

ESV Bible

Devotion (200–350 words)

We end the week where Jesus ends the scene, with children. Not because children are morally perfect, but because they're receivers. They don't negotiate. They don't present credentials. They don't say, “I'll accept your love once I deserve it.” They just reach.

That's what “poor in spirit” looks like when it grows legs. Receiving. And it's what the Pharisee in Jesus' story cannot do, because his hands are full of himself. The tax collector can receive because his hands are empty.

So gather it up, this week wasn't about learning to hate yourself. It was about learning to stop lying to yourself. Brokenness is not the goal, Jesus is. Repentance is not a stunt, it's a return. Mourning is not a trap, it's the path to comfort. Meekness is not being a doormat, it's trusting God enough to stop shoving.

The world says, “Earn it.” Jesus says, “Receive it.” That's the upside-down blessing that keeps you sane. You do not climb into the Kingdom. You are carried in by the King.

So as we head into hunger next, hold this, you are not loved because you're strong. You are loved because Christ is good.

Prayer

Father, teach me to receive Your Kingdom like a child. Empty my hands of pride and self-protection. When I'm broken, hold me. When I'm tempted to perform, pull me back to grace. Let my life rest in Christ's mercy. Amen.

Blessing for you

May you receive God's love with open hands, and stop trying to earn what Christ has already won.

Blessing for others in your life

May those you love be freed from pressure, and learn the joy of simply receiving Jesus.

Sermon Sunday Carryover 2 (Lent 2): Blessed Are the Hungry

**Beatitude (Matthew 5:6), Companion Gospel: John 6
(Bread of Life)**

ESV Bible

Context (simple):

John 6 begins with full stomachs, a crowd fed by Jesus, and it ends with a deeper hunger exposed. People want a miracle dispenser, Jesus offers Himself. He refuses to be a vending machine Messiah, because He came to be the Bread.

Takeaways for the week

- Hunger is not always a problem, it can be a compass.
- Jesus doesn't just give gifts, He gives Himself.
- The world offers "full," Jesus offers "satisfied."
- Righteousness is not self-made goodness, it's God's restoring rightness.
- Real hunger learns to pray, "Lord, give me You."

Prayer (4–6 sentences)

Jesus, You know what we crave. Expose the false breads we keep chewing. Give us hunger for righteousness, for Your restoring goodness. Feed us with Your Word, steady us with Your promises. Make our desire for You stronger than our desire for comfort. Amen.

Day 13: Hungry for What's Right

Scripture

Matthew 5:6

"Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied." (Matthew 5:6, ESV)

ESV Bible

Devotion (200–350 words)

The world tells you to avoid hunger. Stay full, stay entertained, stay distracted. Jesus blesses hunger, not because emptiness is fun, but because hunger can be holy when it aims at the right thing.

Notice what Jesus doesn't bless, hunger for applause, hunger to win, hunger to be right on the internet. He blesses hunger for righteousness, for God's "rightness," His restoring work that sets things straight. That hunger shows up when you're tired of your own sin. It shows up when injustice grieves you. It shows up when you want your home, your church, your city to reflect God's goodness. Here's the upside-down blessing, the world says, "If you're hungry, you're failing." Jesus says, "If you're hungry for God, you're alive." Spiritually numb is far more dangerous than spiritually hungry. Hunger means you haven't given up.

But hunger can also make you frantic. That's why Jesus adds a promise, "You shall be satisfied." Not by your effort, but by His provision. That points ahead to John 6, where Jesus says He is the Bread. Hunger for righteousness is ultimately hunger for Christ, because He is God's righteousness given to you.

So today, name your hunger. What do you want God to make right? In you? In your relationships? In your habits? Bring that hunger to Jesus instead of trying to feed it with quick substitutes. He doesn't shame hunger, He fulfills it.

Prayer

Jesus, I confess I hunger for the wrong things. Reorder my desires. Give me hunger for Your righteousness, Your restoring work in me. Teach me to bring my cravings to You instead of numbing them. Satisfy me with Yourself. Amen.

Blessing for you

May you feel holy hunger rising, and recognize it as Jesus drawing you closer.

Blessing for others in your life

May those you love find their restless cravings met by Christ's steady love.

Day 14: Bread That Doesn't Run Out

Scripture

John 6:35

"I am the bread of life, whoever comes to me shall not hunger." (John 6:35, ESV)

ESV Bible

Devotion (200–350 words)

We're professional snackers. Not just with food, with everything. A little affirmation, a little shopping, a little scrolling, a little entertainment. Snack, snack, snack, and still we're hungry.

Jesus steps into that pattern and says something outrageous, "I am the bread of life." Not "I have bread." Not "I will point you to bread." He says He is the Bread. That's upside-down blessing because the world says satisfaction comes from stacking experiences, Jesus says satisfaction comes from receiving a Person.

The crowd in John 6 wants the miracle again, more loaves, more fish. Jesus goes deeper. He's not being difficult, He's being kind. He's refusing to let them settle for gifts when the Giver is standing there.

And this ties straight to the Beatitude, hunger and thirst for righteousness is ultimately hunger and thirst for Jesus, because righteousness is not just a moral score, it's a relationship made right by God. Christ doesn't just feed your appetite, He reconciles your heart. So if you feel hungry today, don't shame yourself. Hunger is part of being human in a broken world. The question is where you take it. Do you take it to quick fixes that leave you emptier, or do you take it to Christ, who stays? Try a simple practice, when you reach for a "snack," pause and pray, "Jesus, be my bread." Then take one small step toward Him, read a psalm, call a friend to reconcile, confess a sin, and do a quiet act of love. Let your hunger become a path.

Prayer

Jesus, be my bread today. When I reach for quick comfort, interrupt me with Your presence. Feed me with Your Word and Your promises. Make me satisfied in You, even if my circumstances don't change yet. Amen.

Blessings for you

May you taste the steadiness of Christ when everything else feels like cotton candy.

Blessings for others in your life

May those you love to be rescued from false comforts and find true nourishment in Jesus.

Day 15: Come Without Money

Scripture

Isaiah 55:1–3

“Come, buy wine and milk without money and without price.” (Isaiah 55:1, ESV)

ESV Bible

Devotion (200–350 words)

God’s invitation in Isaiah 55 is wonderfully unreasonable, “Come, buy... without money.” That’s upside-down blessing written in bold. Everything in the world runs on transaction, earn it, pay it back, prove you deserve it. God runs on gift.

This is why hungry people can be blessed. If you’re stuffed with self-sufficiency, you don’t come. If you’re aware of your need, you hear the invitation like water in the desert.

Isaiah also asks a piercing question, “Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread?” Translation, “Why are you feeding your soul with things that can’t nourish it?” We do it all the time. We spend time, energy, attention, and emotional money on things that leave us emptied: resentment, image management, constant comparison, endless consumption.

God doesn’t just say “stop,” He says “come.” He offers Himself. He offers His Word, “Hear, that your soul may live.” That points right into John 6 again, Jesus is the Bread, and His Word is life.

So today, let Lent be practical. Identify one “not-bread” you’ve been consuming. Then practice comes, not with payment, but with openness. The Beatitude promise stands, those who hunger and thirst for righteousness will be satisfied, because God delights to feed hungry people.

Prayer

Father, I confess I spend myself on things that don’t satisfy. Call me back to Your invitation. Teach me to come without pretending I can pay. Feed my soul with Your Word and anchor my hunger in Christ. Amen.

Blessings for you

May you feel God’s welcome, even when you have nothing to offer but need.

Blessings for others in your life

May those you love hear God’s invitation as good news, not pressure.

Day 16: Thirst and Praise

Scripture

Psalm 63:1–5

“My soul thirsts for you... because your steadfast love is better than life.” (Psalm 63:1, 3, ESV)

ESV Bible

Devotion (200–350 words)

David writes Psalm 63 in a dry place, and he doesn't pretend it isn't dry. “My soul thirsts.” That honesty is part of the blessing. The world says, “Don't admit thirst, you'll look weak.” Jesus says, “Blessed are the hungry,” and David shows you what hunger looks like, it speaks.

Here's what surprises me in this psalm, David doesn't say, “If you fix my situation, then I'll praise you.” He says, “Your steadfast love is better than life.” That's upside-down because life, comfort, and survival usually feel like the main thing. David says there's something better, God's covenant love.

This is where hunger becomes worship. Not the kind of worship that denies pain, but the kind that says, “Even here, God is still God, and His love is still true.” Hunger and praise can live in the same chest.

If you feel spiritually dry today, you're not disqualified. Let the dryness become prayer. “God, I'm thirsty.” Then add one more sentence, “Your love is better than life.” You might not feel it yet, but you can confess it. Faith often speaks before feelings catch up.

And Jesus fulfills this thirst. The Bread of Life also gives living water. He satisfies not by distracting you from reality, but by meeting you in it.

Prayer

God, I'm thirsty. I confess my dryness and my restlessness. Meet me with Your steadfast love. Teach me to praise You even before I feel full. Satisfy me with Christ, the true Bread of Life. Amen.

Blessings for you

May you find that thirst can turn into prayer, and prayer can turn into praise.

Blessings for others in your life

May those you love to be steadied by God's steadfast love when they feel dry and tired.

Day 17: Hope That Doesn't Collapse

Scripture

Romans 5:1–5

“Suffering produces endurance... and hope does not put us to shame.” (Romans 5:3–5, ESV)

ESV Bible

Devotion (200–350 words)

Sometimes hunger isn't about food, it's about relief. You're hungry for the pressure to lift, hungry for the conflict to end, hungry for peace in your own mind. Romans 5 doesn't deny that suffering is real, but it refuses to let suffering be meaningless.

Paul says suffering can produce endurance, character, and hope. That's not motivational speech, it's Gospel logic. Because we've been justified by faith, peace with God is already true. That changes how we walk through hardship. We aren't being punished for holiness, we're being held through the process.

This is upside-down blessing again. The world says, “If life is hard, God must be absent.” Jesus says, “Blessed are the hungry,” and Paul says, “Hope does not put us to shame,” because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit.

So, hunger becomes hope when it's anchored in love. Not sentimental love, covenant love proved at the cross. Christ didn't wait until you were strong. He loved you while you were weak. That means your hungry seasons are not proof you're abandoned; they're places where endurance can grow and hope can deepen.

Today, don't pretend hardship is easy. But also, don't let it rewrite the story. You have peace with God. You have access to grace. And hope is not going to embarrass you, because it rests on God's love, not your performance.

Prayer

Father, when I suffer, I'm tempted to despair. Anchor me in the peace You've given through Christ. Grow endurance in me without hardening my heart. Pour Your love into me again by Your Spirit. Keep hope alive. Amen.

Blessings for you

May you find hope that holds, even when your circumstances are still heavy.

Blessings for others in your life

May those you love to be strengthened by God's love poured out, not by their own willpower.

Day 18: Bread Given, Not Earned

Scripture

John 6:51

“The bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh.” (John 6:51, ESV)

ESV Bible

Devotion (200–350 words)

Jesus doesn't just say He is bread, He says He will be bread by giving His flesh. That's not metaphor only, it's mission. He will satisfy hunger by going to the cross.

The world says, “Prove your worth.” Jesus says, “I will give my life.” Hunger for righteousness is met not by you finally becoming impressive, but by Jesus becoming crucified for you. The righteousness you need is a gift He gives, purchased with His own blood.

That's upside-down blessing so deep it flips everything. Your spiritual hunger isn't solved by more spiritual hustle. It's solved by Jesus' self-giving love. That's why Lent moves toward the cross. It's not a season of “try harder,” it's a season of “come closer.”

So, when you feel hungry for change, hungry for holiness, hungry to be free from the same cycle, remember, the Bread is given. You can repent today, not to get God to love you, but because God already loved you first.

And because the Bread is given, you can give too. Feed someone else with kindness. Offer forgiveness. Share your table. Not as a performance, but as overflow.

Prayer

Jesus, thank You for giving Yourself for me. When I try to earn what You give, stop me. Feed my faith with Your promise. Let Your self-giving love reshapes how I love others today. Amen.

Blessings for you

May you receive Christ's righteousness as a gift, and rest in what He has done.

Blessings for others in your life

May the people around you experience God's generosity through your simple, quiet love.

Day 19: Gathering Up, Daily Bread for Daily Desire

Scripture

Matthew 6:11 (supporting reference: Matthew 5:6)

“Give us this day our daily bread.” (Matthew 6:11, ESV)

ESV Bible

Devotion (200–350 words)

We gather the hunger week with a prayer Jesus taught, “Give us this day our daily bread.” Notice the word daily. Not monthly. Not “set it and forget it.” Daily. That’s both humbling and freeing.

The world trains us to stockpile satisfaction. Jesus trains us to receive. Hunger and trust are connected. If you want daily bread, you have to admit daily need. That’s why hunger can be blessed, it keeps you from pretending you’re self-sustaining.

And daily bread is more than calories. It’s everything God provides to keep you alive, body and soul. It’s the friend who texts at the right time. It’s the forgiveness that resets your week. It’s the Word that steadies your mind. It’s Christ Himself, the Bread of Life.

So, here’s a simple “gathering” practice, turn one craving into prayer. Every time you feel the pull toward a quick fix, pray, “Father, give me daily bread.” Then ask, “What would actually nourish me right now?” A psalm. A walk. A confession. A glass of water. A hard conversation done with gentleness. A quiet act of service.

Blessed are the hungry, because hungry people learn how to pray. And praying people learn how to receive.

Prayer

Father, give me daily bread. Train my heart to ask instead of grasp. Forgive me for feeding on what doesn’t nourish. Satisfy me with Christ and His promises. And make me a small source of bread for someone else today. Amen.

Blessings for you

May you learn daily dependence as peace, not as panic.

Blessings for others in your life

May those you love to be fed by God’s care and strengthened through your steady presence.

Sermon Sunday Carryover 3

(Lent 3): Blessed Are the Merciful

Beatitude (Matthew 5:7), Companion Gospel: Matthew 18:21–35

ESV Bible

Context (simple):

Peter asks Jesus how often he has to forgive, hoping for a manageable number. Jesus tells a story where a man forgiven an unpayable debt turns around and strangles someone over pocket change. The point is blunt, mercy received becomes mercy given.

Takeaways for the week

- Forgiveness is not pretending it didn't hurt, it's releasing the debt.
- Mercy is costly, but bitterness is costlier.
- God's mercy toward you is the engine for mercy toward others.
- Peacemaking belongs here; mercy moves toward reconciliation.
- The Kingdom looks like forgiven people, forgiving.

Prayer (4–6 sentences)

Father, You canceled a debt I could never repay. Melt my hard places. Teach me mercy that is honest about wrong and still releases it. Make me a peacemaker where I've wanted to be a scorekeeper. Help me forgive as I have been forgiven in Christ. Amen.

Day 20: The Number That Breaks the Calculator

Scripture

Matthew 18:21–22

“I do not say to you seven times, but seventy-seven times.”
(Matthew 18:22, ESV)

ESV Bible

Devotion (200–350 words)

Peter wants a number. Jesus gives him a demolition. “Seventy-seven times,” not because you’re supposed to keep a bigger spreadsheet, but because mercy is not math.

The world says, “Forgive a little, but keep the file.” Jesus says, “Blessed are the merciful.” Mercy is the upside-down way of the Kingdom, because it refuses to let sin have the last word in your heart. Mercy doesn’t call evil good, it calls evil what it is and then releases the debt into God’s hands.

Peter’s question sounds spiritual, but it’s actually a control question. “How much do I have to do?” Jesus pushes past minimum requirements. Mercy is not a quota; it’s a new life. And that new life is fueled by the mercy God has already shown you.

This week may hit tender spots. Forgiveness is not always immediate, and reconciliation isn’t always safe or possible. But mercy is still a calling, because bitterness chains you to the person who hurt you. Mercy begins to unlock the chain.

So today, start small. Ask God to soften one hard edge. Pray for someone you’d rather avoid. Release one demand for payback. Mercy isn’t weakness, it’s courage that trusts God to be Judge, so you don’t have to carry the gavel.

Prayer

Jesus, I want mercy to be easy and controlled. Forgive my hard heart. Teach me the long obedience of forgiving again. Give me wisdom about what mercy looks like in my situation. And let Your mercy toward me become mercy through me. Amen.

Blessings for you

May you be freed from the tyranny of keeping score and breathe again.

Blessings for others in your life

May those you love experience mercy through you, especially where they least expect it.

Day 21: Mercy Cancels a Debt

Scripture

Matthew 18:26–27

“Out of pity for him... he forgave him the debt.” (Matthew 18:27, ESV)

ESV Bible

Devotion (200–350 words)

Jesus tells a story about a servant owing a debt so huge it’s basically laughable. He begs for time, “I will pay everything,” which is also laughable. He can’t. That’s the point. Then the master does the unthinkable, he forgives the debt.

That’s the Gospel. Your sin-debt is not manageable. You can’t “get your act together” enough to erase it. The world says, “Pay what you owe.” Jesus says, “Blessed are the poor in spirit,” because they stop pretending, they can pay, and they receive mercy.

Now here’s the upside-down turn, forgiven people become forgiving people. But when we refuse mercy to others, we reveal how little we’ve let mercy sink in for ourselves. The servant walks out forgiven and immediately becomes a debt collector. It’s tragic, and it’s familiar.

Mercy doesn’t deny justice, it hands justice to God, and chooses not to be consumed by vengeance. Mercy says, “I release you from owing me what you can’t repay, approval, apology, repair, I place this in God’s hands.” That is hard. That’s why mercy is blessed, because it’s supernatural.

Today, rehearse your own forgiven debt. Then ask, “Who am I strangling in my heart?” Release one clenched fist. Mercy is the Kingdom’s currency.

Prayer

Father, thank You for forgiving what I could never repay. Keep me from becoming a harsh collector. Teach me mercy that looks like Jesus. Give me courage to release what I’ve been holding. Heal what needs healing in me. Amen.

Blessings for you

May you feel the weight of your forgiven debt lifting your shoulders.

Blessings for others in your life

May the people around you find mercy safer than they imagined, because of Christ in you.

Day 22: God Does Not Treat You as Your Sins Deserve

Scripture

Psalm 103:8–14 (focus: vv. 10–12)

“He does not deal with us according to our sins.” (Psalm 103:10, ESV)

ESV Bible

Devotion (200–350 words)

Psalm 103 is like warm sunlight on a cold conscience. God is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in steadfast love. And then the line that wrecks your inner prosecutor, “He does not deal with us according to our sins.”

That is upside-down blessing. The world runs on merit and retaliation. God runs on mercy anchored in Christ. If God dealt with you according to your sins, you’d be done. But He has removed your transgressions “as far as the east is from the west.” That is not “God is ignoring sin.” That is “God has dealt with sin at the cross.”

And because you’ve received that mercy, you’re invited to live it. Mercy becomes a new reflex. Not the reflex of “let people walk all over you,” but the reflex of “I won’t become cruel.” Mercy says, “I will be honest about wrong, and I will not let it turn me into a worse person.”

Today, practice Psalm 103 toward yourself and others. When shame says, “You are your worst moment,” answer, “God does not deal with me according to my sins.” When anger says, “They deserve payback,” answer, “God’s mercy toward me is the pattern now.”

That’s not easy. But it’s blessed. It’s freedom.

Prayer

Lord, thank You for mercy that is deeper than my sin. Help me believe Your forgiveness is real. Soften my anger and heal my shame. Teach me to treat others with the mercy You’ve shown me in Christ. Amen.

Blessings for you

May you live today under God’s steadfast love, not under your inner prosecutor.

Blessings for others in your life

May those you love to be protected by your mercy and pointed to God’s greater mercy.

Day 23: Mercy Throws Sins Overboard

Scripture

Micah 7:18–19

“You will cast all our sins into the depths of the sea.”
(Micah 7:19, ESV)

ESV Bible

Devotion (200–350 words)

Micah paints forgiveness with a wild image, God hurls sins into the depths of the sea. Not place them gently on a shelf for later review. He throws them overboard.

The world says, “Never forget.” Jesus says, “Blessed are the merciful.” Mercy doesn’t mean you erase wisdom. But it does mean you stop fishing up sins that God has already tossed. Some of us live with a spiritual fishing pole, dragging up our own forgiven failures to punish ourselves again. God says, “Stop, that’s not where I put them.”

This is upside-down blessing, because self-punishment feels like humility, but it’s often unbelief in disguise. If Christ paid, why are you still trying to pay? If God cast your sins into the sea, why are you scuba diving for them?

Mercy also changes how you remember others. If you keep their sins on a hook, you control them, but you also stay stuck. Mercy says, “I release this to God. I will not keep weaponizing the past.”

Today, choose one “sin memory” you keep replaying. Confess it again, not because God forgot, but because you need to hear the truth again. Then picture God throwing it into the sea. You don’t have to carry what He has thrown away.

Prayer

Father, thank You that You delight in mercy. Help me stop rehearsing what You’ve forgiven. Give me faith to believe the cross is enough. Teach me to release others as well. Let mercy have the last word in my heart. Amen.

Blessings for you

May you stop fishing up forgiven sins, and walk lighter in Christ’s mercy.

Blessings for others in your life

May those you love experience freedom as you choose not to weaponize the past.

Day 24: Tenderhearted

Forgiveness

Scripture

Ephesians 4:32

“Forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.”
(Ephesians 4:32, ESV)

ESV Bible

Devotion (200–350 words)

Paul doesn’t say, “Forgive because they earned it.” He says, “Forgive as God in Christ forgave you.” That’s the engine. Mercy doesn’t start with the other person; it starts with Jesus.

The world says, “Stay hard, stay protected.” Jesus says, “Blessed are the merciful.” And Paul adds a word we don’t always love, tenderhearted. Tenderness sounds risky, because it is. But tenderhearted doesn’t mean naive, it means not cruel. It means you refuse to let pain turn you into a weapon.

Forgiveness can be complicated. Sometimes it’s quick. Sometimes it’s a long road. Sometimes reconciliation is possible, sometimes boundaries are necessary. But the call to mercy remains, because mercy is the shape of the Kingdom.

What makes mercy possible is not your personality, it’s Christ’s forgiveness. God forgave you at great cost, the cross. That means mercy is not “cheap.” It’s costly, and it’s blessed, because it looks like Jesus.

Try one concrete act of mercy today. Speak kindly where you’d normally be sarcastic. Pray for someone who irritates you. Admit your own wrong first. Mercy is not grand, it’s faithful.

Prayer

Jesus, thank You for forgiving me. Make my heart tender without making me foolish. Give me wisdom and courage to practice mercy in real relationships. Heal my anger and guide my boundaries. Let Your forgiveness flow through me. Amen.

Blessings for you

May you practice mercy with courage and experience the freedom it brings.

Blessings for others in your life

May those you love receive gentleness from you, especially when tensions rise.

Day 25: Peacemakers Belong in the Mercy Week

Scripture

Matthew 5:9 (supporting reference: Romans 12:18)

“Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.” (Matthew 5:9, ESV)

ESV Bible

Devotion (200–350 words)

You might wonder why “Blessed are the peacemakers” shows up here. Simple, peacemaking is mercy in motion. Mercy cancels debt inside the heart, peacemaking takes the next step toward reconciliation when possible and wise.

The world confuses peacemaking with peacekeeping. Peacekeeping avoids conflict at any cost, even truth. Peacemaking faces conflict with truth and love, aiming for restoration. That is upside-down blessing. The world says, “Win.” Jesus says, “Make peace.” Not fake peace. Real peace, grounded in honesty and mercy.

Peacemaking starts with humility. It sounds like, “I was wrong,” or “Help me understand,” or “I forgive you,” or “I need to set a boundary, and I still want your good.” Mercy fuels that. Without mercy, peacemaking becomes manipulation. Without truth, peacemaking becomes denial.

This beatitude belongs in Lent because Jesus is the ultimate peacemaker. He didn’t just tell us to calm down; He made peace by His blood. So, peacemaking isn’t a personality trait, it’s a baptismal calling. You are God’s child, and children of the Father look like the Son.

Today, ask one question, “Where is God calling me to make peace?” Maybe it’s a conversation. Maybe it’s an apology. Maybe it’s releasing a grudge. Maybe it’s stepping away from gossip. Mercy first, peace next.

Prayer

Prince of Peace, make me a peacemaker. Give me courage to speak truth with love. Keep me from avoiding conflict out of fear. Teach me mercy that moves toward reconciliation where it’s wise. Let Your peace shape my words today. Amen.

Blessings for you

May you be called God’s child in the way you pursue peace with truth and mercy.

Blessings for others in your life

May the people around you feel safer because you choose peace over winning.

Day 26: Gathering Up, Mercy is the Family Resemblance

Scripture

Matthew 5:7

“Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy.”
(Matthew 5:7, ESV)

ESV Bible

Devotion (200–350 words)

We gather this week with a simple truth, mercy is the family resemblance of God’s children. Not because you earned your way into the family, but because Christ brought you in, and His Spirit begins reshaping you.

“Blessed are the merciful,” doesn’t mean, “Be merciful so God will finally love you.” It means, “Those who have received mercy are being remade into merciful people.” Mercy received becomes mercy practiced. That’s the upside-down blessing, the world says power is payback, Jesus says power is forgiveness.

Notice the promise too, “they shall receive mercy.” You don’t outgrow your need for mercy. You don’t graduate from grace. You keep returning like the tax collector, like the hungry, like the child, receiving again. And as you receive, you can release.

So, ask, what changed in you this week? Maybe nothing dramatic. Maybe a small softening. Maybe you caught yourself before a harsh word. Maybe you prayed for an enemy. Those are not small in the Kingdom, those are seeds.

As we head into purity next, don’t confuse purity with moral polish. Purity is a heart kept close to Jesus. Mercy is part of that closeness.

Prayer

Father, thank You for mercy that keeps meeting me. Forgive me where I’ve been harsh. Heal the places I’ve protected with bitterness. Make me merciful without becoming weak-willed. Keep me close to Jesus, where mercy is always fresh. Amen.

Blessings for you

May you receive mercy again today and let it soften your heart without erasing your wisdom.

Blessings for others in your life

May those you love to be spared unnecessary harshness, and experience Christ’s kindness through you.

Sermon Sunday Carryover 4

(Lent 4): Blessed Are the Pure in Heart

Beatitude (Matthew 5:8), Companion Gospel: John 15:1–15

ESV Bible

Context (simple):

In John 15, Jesus uses a vineyard picture, branches only bear fruit if they stay connected to the vine. He also talks about pruning, God's loving cutting back that helps life grow. Purity here is not sterile perfection, it's connectedness to Jesus.

Takeaways for the week

- Purity is not “trying harder,” it's staying close to Jesus.
- Jesus cleanses with His Word, not with our pretending.
- Pruning can hurt, but it's aimed at life.
- A pure heart is a single-hearted heart, not split between gods.
- Seeing God begins with being held by Christ.

Prayer (4–6 sentences)

Jesus, keep me close. Cleanse me with Your Word and cut away what is choking life in me. When pruning hurts, it helps me trust the Father's love. Make my heart single, not divided. Let purity look like abiding and let abiding grow love. Amen.

Day 27: Who May Ascend?

Scripture

Psalm 24:3–4

“He who has clean hands and a pure heart.” (Psalm 24:4, ESV)

ESV Bible

Devotion (200–350 words)

Psalm 24 asks a question that should make all of us swallow hard, “Who shall ascend the hill of the LORD?” Clean hands. Pure heart. Not lifted up to what is false.

The world hears that and says, “See? You’ll never measure up.” Jesus hears it and says, “Come to Me.” Because purity is not you scrubbing yourself into worthiness, it’s Jesus making you clean and keeping you close.

That’s the upside-down blessing. The world says purity is image management. Jesus says purity is single heartedness, a heart not split between God and idols. And that kind of purity isn’t achieved by grit; it’s received through grace.

So yes, the psalm exposes us. Our hands are not always clean; our hearts are often crowded. But exposure is not the end, it’s the beginning. Lent is where God reveals what’s real so He can heal what’s broken.

Today, let the psalm do its work. Ask, “Where am I lifting my soul to what is false?” Maybe it’s approval. Maybe it’s control. Maybe it’s a habit that promises comfort but delivers emptiness. Then don’t just swear it off, bring it to Jesus. Purity is not “I will never struggle again.” Purity is, “I will keep returning to Christ, and let Him cleanse me.”

Prayer

Lord, my hands and heart need cleansing. Show me what is false that I’ve been clinging to. Forgive me and make me single-hearted toward You. Keep me close to Jesus, my righteousness. Let purity grow as trust grows. Amen.

Blessings for you

May you feel conviction as invitation and cleansing as gift.

Blessings for others in your life

May those you love to be drawn toward truth and away from false comforts.

Day 28: A New Heart, Not Just New Habits

Scripture

Ezekiel 36:25–27

“I will give you a new heart... and put my Spirit within you.”
(Ezekiel 36:26–27, ESV)

ESV Bible

Devotion (200–350 words)

God doesn't promise Israel a self-help plan, He promises surgery. New heart. New spirit. His Spirit within. That's upside-down blessing because the world says, “Try harder,” and God says, “I will act.”

Purity starts here, God's initiative. You cannot bleach your own soul. You can manage behavior for a while, but the heart needs replacement. And God promises to do it. He cleanses. He renews. He puts His Spirit within you, not as a reward for good performance, but as mercy.

This connects to John 15; abiding is possible because God has already moved toward you. You're not trying to earn connection to the vine, you're being grafted in.

So today, don't settle for “new habits” without “new heart.” Habits matter, yes, but if your heart remains divided, habits become exhausting. Ask God for what He promises, a new heart. Pray for the Spirit's help in one specific area, speech, thought patterns, lust, resentment, whatever it is.

And remember the Beatitude, “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.” Seeing God begins now, not by your moral heroism, but by God's cleansing grace in Christ.

Prayer

Father, I need a new heart. Cleanse me where I'm stained. Put Your Spirit within me and move my feet toward what is good. Keep me close to Jesus, the true Vine. Make my heart less divided, more trusting. Amen.

Blessings for you

May you experience God's promise as power, not pressure.

Blessings for others in your life

May those you love to be renewed by the Spirit, not crushed by shame.

Day 29: Already Clean

Scripture

John 15:3

“Already you are clean because of the word that I have spoken to you.” (John 15:3, ESV)

ESV Bible

Devotion (200–350 words)

Jesus says something that should make you breathe, “Already you are clean.” Not “You will be clean once you prove it.” Already clean, because of His Word.

That’s upside-down blessing. The world says, “Clean up, then you can belong.” Jesus says, “You belong, and I will keep cleansing you.” Purity isn’t the entry fee; it’s the fruit of being connected to Him.

This matters because many Christians live like they’re on probation. They believe Jesus forgives them in theory, but in practice they wake up trying to earn acceptance all over again. Jesus says, “Already.” His Word has power. It creates what it declares. When Jesus speaks forgiveness, He isn’t giving advice, He’s giving life.

So, purity begins with receiving the Word. Hearing it. Believing it. Letting it settle deeper than your self-criticism. “Already clean” doesn’t mean you don’t struggle, it means your struggle is happening inside grace, not outside it.

Today, let Jesus’ Word be your anchor. When shame says, “Dirty,” answer, “Already clean in Christ.” When temptation says, “You’ll never change,” answer, “Jesus is pruning and cleansing.” When your heart feels divided, return to the Vine, not to self-hatred.

Prayer

Jesus, thank You for Your cleansing, Word. Teach me to believe what You say over what shame says. Keep me abiding when I’m tempted to drift. Prune what needs pruning in love. Make purity grow as trust grows. Amen.

Blessings for you

May you live today from “already clean,” not from “never good enough.”

Blessings for others in your life

May those you love see grace making real change and be encouraged.

Day 30: Abide Means Stay

Scripture

John 15:4–5

“Abide in me... apart from me you can do nothing.” (John 15:4–5, ESV)

ESV Bible

Devotion (200–350 words)

“Abide” is a gentle word that means something stubborn, stay. Remain. Don’t drift. Don’t disconnect.

The world says, “Be independent.” Jesus says, “Be connected.” That’s upside-down blessing because independence feels strong, but spiritually it’s deadly. Branches don’t “try harder” to bear fruit, they stay attached.

Purity, then, is not white-knuckle moral effort. It’s staying close enough to Jesus that His life keeps flowing into you. Your heart becomes less divided because you’re not constantly sampling other vines.

And Jesus is honest, “Apart from me you can do nothing.” He doesn’t say “a little less,” He says nothing. That’s not insulting, it’s clarity. You were made for communion with God. Disconnected, you wither.

So, what does “abide” look like today? It looks like returning. Short prayers. Scripture on repeat. Confession when you sin, not hiding. Worship with God’s people. Choosing one obedient step. Abiding is ordinary, it’s a thousand small “stay” moments.

When you fail, don’t spiral. Return. The Vine is not fragile. Jesus holds you. Purity grows by proximity.

Prayer

Jesus, teach me to abide. When I drift, pull me back. When I’m tempted, keep me close. Let Your life flow into my thoughts, words, and choices. Grow fruit in me that I cannot produce on my own. Amen.

Blessings for you

May you experience abiding as steady companionship, not as religious pressure.

Blessings for others in your life

May the people around you taste Christ’s fruit in your patience and love.

Day 31: Draw Near With a True Heart

Scripture

Hebrews 10:19–22

“Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith.” (Hebrews 10:22, ESV)

ESV Bible

Devotion (200–350 words)

Hebrews says you can draw near. Not creep nearby. Not peek around the corner hoping God isn't mad. Draw near, with full assurance of faith.

Why? Because Jesus opened the way with His blood. That's upside-down blessing again. The world says, “Approach God when you're cleaned up.” Scripture says, “Approach God because Jesus cleaned you up.”

This is purity in the deepest sense, not spotless performance, but a true heart. A heart that stops faking. A heart that comes honestly, trusting Christ's sacrifice. Hebrews even uses cleansing language, hearts sprinkled clean, bodies washed with pure water. God wants closeness, not distance.

So today, if you've been living at arm's length from God, hear the invitation, draw near. A pure heart doesn't mean you never struggle, it means you don't hide your struggle from God. You bring it. You confess. You receive mercy. You return.

And the promise from Jesus stands, “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.” You see God not by climbing up to Him, but by drawing near through Christ. Faith becomes sight, slowly, steadily, as you learn to trust.

Prayer

Father, because of Jesus, I draw near. Give me a true heart, not a fake one. Cleanse my conscience where guilt has been loud. Strengthen my assurance in Christ's blood. Help me stay close today. Amen.

Blessings for you

May you draw near with confidence, because Jesus has opened the way.

Blessings for others in your life

May those you love to be invited into God's presence through your gentle witness.

Day 32: Seeing God Begins With Being Held

Scripture

Matthew 5:8

“Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.”
(Matthew 5:8, ESV)

ESV Bible

Devotion (200–350 words)

We often imagine purity as spotless, sterile, untouchable. Jesus imagines purity as a heart turned toward God, undivided, honest, held.

And “see God” is the staggering promise. Not just know about Him but behold Him. That’s the deepest desire under all our lesser desires. We want to see God, even if we don’t know how to name it.

The world offers a thousand visions to chase, success, beauty, power, control. Jesus offers Himself. And He says the pure in heart will see God because purity is closeness. Abiding. Drawing near. Trusting His Word. Letting Him cleanse.

So, purity isn’t “look at me,” it’s “look at Him.” That’s upside-down blessing again, because the world says self-focus is the path to fulfillment. Jesus says God-focus is the path to joy.

If your heart feels scattered today, you’re not alone. Modern life is a blender. But Jesus is not asking for instant perfection, He’s inviting you into relationship. So, practice a small purity, one thing. Turn off one false voice. Tell the truth to God. Return to the Vine.

Seeing God begins in faith now and will become full sight later. The promise is sure because Jesus is.

Prayer

Jesus, make my heart less divided. Cleanse me with Your Word and keep me close. Help me resist false visions that steal my attention. Give me the joy of seeing God, even in small glimpses today. Hold me fast. Amen.

Blessings for you

May you see God’s goodness in ordinary moments and feel your heart steady.

Blessings for others in your life

May those you love to be drawn toward truth as you walk with an undivided heart.

Day 33: Gathering Up, Friends of the Vine

Scripture

John 15:9–15

“I have called you friends.” (John 15:15, ESV)

ESV Bible

Devotion (200–350 words)

We gather the purity week with a word that changes everything, “friends.” Jesus doesn’t just want branches that perform, He wants friends who remain.

Purity is not a sterile obsession with being “good enough.” Purity is being kept close, loved, pruned, cleansed, and then taught to love. “Abide in my love.” That’s the center. The world says, “Love is earned.” Jesus says, “Love is given.” That’s upside-down blessing at its kindest.

And then Jesus says something tender and dangerous, “If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love.” Not because commandments are ladders to climb into love, but because commandments are guardrails inside love. He is protecting your joy.

So, gather it up, purity is not you trying to be un-stainable, it’s you staying near Jesus and letting His love shape your choices. It’s a true heart, not a fake one. It’s drawing near, not withdrawing.

As we move into the fire next, you’ll need this, you are Christ’s friend. You belong to Him. That belonging will carry you when the heat rises.

Prayer

Jesus, thank You for calling me, friend. Keep me abiding in Your love. Prune what needs pruning without letting me doubt Your heart. Teach me obedience that flows from love, not fear. And make my life reflect Your kindness. Amen.

Blessings for you

May you rest in belonging to Jesus, and find purity growing from love, not anxiety.

Blessings for others in your life

May those you love to be warmed by the love of Christ through your words and actions.

Sermon Sunday Carryover 5 (Lent 5): Blessed in the Fire

Beatitudes (Matthew 5:10–12), Companion Gospel: John 15:18–16:4

ESV Bible

Context (simple):

Jesus tells His disciples that following Him will bring real resistance. The “world” in John isn’t just people; it’s the system that rejects God. Jesus doesn’t sugarcoat it, He prepares them, suffering is not a surprise, and it’s not proof they’re abandoned.

Takeaways for the week

- The heat is real; Jesus never lies about that.
- Opposition doesn’t erase your blessing, it reveals your belonging.
- Jesus calls you to endurance, not panic.
- The Spirit will help you witness, even under pressure.
- Rejoicing isn’t denial, it’s defiant hope in Christ.

Prayer (4–6 sentences)

Lord Jesus, when pressure rises, steady us. Keep us from fear-driven compromise and bitterness-driven rage. Remind us that we belong to You, and that blessing can exist even in fire. Give us courage to witness with humility and love. Hold us fast and keep our hope alive. Amen.

Day 34: Blessed When It Costs You

Scripture

Matthew 5:10

“Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake.” (Matthew 5:10, ESV)

ESV Bible

Devotion (200–350 words)

Jesus says “blessed” and “persecuted” in the same breath. The world says those words can’t belong together. If you’re opposed, you must be doing something wrong. Jesus says opposition can be part of faithfulness.

That’s upside-down blessing, because we often treat comfort as confirmation. Jesus treats faithfulness as confirmation. Not every hardship is persecution, and not every disagreement is righteousness, but when you follow Jesus in a world that resists Him, heat can come.

The promise is not “you’ll be popular,” it’s “yours is the kingdom of heaven.” Belonging is the anchor. You might be misunderstood, mocked, excluded, or quietly sidelined. Jesus doesn’t tell you to enjoy that, He tells you it doesn’t erase your blessing.

So, what do you do? You keep walking in righteousness, God’s right way, with humility. You don’t become harsh. You don’t become ashamed. You don’t chase revenge. You remember, Christ was rejected first, and you are united to Him.

Today, if faithfulness feels costly, hold this, the Kingdom is yours. That doesn’t make pain disappear, but it makes pain meaningful, and it keeps you from despair.

Prayer

Jesus, when faithfulness costs me, keep me steady. Guard me from fear and from bitterness. Help me love without compromise. Remind me that I belong to You, and Your Kingdom is mine by *grace*. Amen.

Blessings for you

May you endure pressure without losing gentleness, because Christ is holding you.

Blessings for others in your life

May those you love to be strengthened by your quiet courage and hope.

Day 35: When the World Hates

Scripture

John 15:18–20

“If the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you.” (John 15:18, ESV)

ESV Bible

Devotion (200–350 words)

Jesus doesn't romanticize opposition. He names it. “The world hates you.” That's a heavy sentence, and then He follows it with a heavier comfort, “It hated me first.”

This is upside-down blessing because it reframes the pain. Opposition isn't always about you, it's about Jesus. And that means you are not alone. Your story is connected to His.

The world wants you to belong by blending in. Jesus calls you to belong by abiding in Him. That can create friction. Not because Christians are supposed to be obnoxious, but because truth and grace expose idols. Light irritates darkness.

So, what does faithfulness look like here? It looks like remembering you're not the judge, you're the witness. It looks like speaking truth without cruelty. It looks like refusing the temptation to become the thing you oppose, angry, mocking, dehumanizing.

Jesus prepares you so you won't be surprised and crushed. He wants you to be stable. He wants your identity rooted in Him, not in public approval.

If you're facing rejection, hear Jesus' tenderness in the warning. He's not saying, “Good luck.” He's saying, “Stay close.”

Prayer

Jesus, when rejection stings, remind me You were rejected first. Keep me from seeking revenge or retreating into fear. Help me witness with humility and courage. Let my identity stay rooted in You. Amen.

Blessings for you

May you find comfort in belonging to Jesus, even when you feel misunderstood.

Blessings for others in your life

May those you love to be protected from despair and anchored in Christ's faithful presence.

Day 36: Do Not Be Surprised by the Fire

Scripture

1 Peter 4:12–14

“Do not be surprised at the fiery trial... you are blessed.” (1 Peter 4:12, 14, ESV)

ESV Bible

Devotion (200–350 words)

Peter says something that feels impossible, don't be surprised by the fire. Not because suffering is normal and fine, but because suffering for Christ is part of living in a world that resists Him.

And then he says, “you are blessed.” There it is again, the upside-down blessing. Fire and blessing in the same sentence. Peter isn't saying suffering is good in itself. He's saying God is present in it, and your suffering does not mean you've been abandoned.

He even says the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you. That's not poetry only, it's promise. God's Spirit is not allergic to hardship. The Spirit is a comforter and a witness-giver, especially when you're under pressure.

If you're in a fiery season, don't make it worse by adding shame. Don't assume God is punishing you. Don't assume you're failing. Instead ask, “Lord, how do I endure with faithfulness here?” Maybe it's patience. Maybe it's refusing to repay insult for insult. Maybe it's staying in community instead of isolating.

Blessed in the fire means you belong to Jesus, and He is with you.

Prayer

Father, when trials come, keep me from surprise that turns into despair. Remind me that Your Spirit rests on Your people. Strengthen me to endure with faithfulness. Teach me to suffer without losing love. Hold me close to Christ. Amen.

Blessings for you

May you sense the Spirit's strengthening presence when life feels hot and hard.

Blessings for others in your life

May those you love to be guarded from hopelessness and comforted by God's nearness.

Day 37: Rejoicing After the Beating

Scripture

Acts 5:40–42

“They... rejoiced that they were counted worthy to suffer dishonor for the name.” (Acts 5:41, ESV)

ESV Bible

Devotion (200–350 words)

The apostles get beaten, and then they rejoice. That is not normal human behavior. That is upside-down blessing with scars.

Their rejoicing isn't because pain is fun. It's because their suffering confirms their belonging, “for the name.” They were not suffering for being rude. They were suffering for Jesus. And that meant they were walking in His footsteps.

This kind of joy is not forced optimism. It's defiant hope. It's joy that says, “You can hurt our bodies, you cannot steal our Christ.” That's the sort of joy only the resurrection can create.

Notice also, they don't quit. They keep teaching and preaching Jesus. Not with swagger, with perseverance. When the heat rises, many of us want to either fight dirty or disappear. The apostles do something else, they keep witnessing.

So, if you're under pressure, ask for this kind of courage. Not dramatic heroics, steady faithfulness. God does not demand you feel happy about hard things. But He does promise you are not alone, and He can give you joy that survives pain.

Prayer

Jesus, give me courage like the apostles. When fear rises, steady me. Keep me from bitterness and from silence that comes from shame. Give me defiant hope rooted in Your resurrection. Help me keep witnessing with love. Amen.

Blessings for you

May you find a joy that doesn't deny pain but outlasts it in Christ.

Blessings for others in your life

May those you love to be encouraged by your perseverance and drawn toward Jesus.

Day 38: Nothing Can Separate You

Scripture

Romans 8:31–39 (focus: vv. 35–39)

“Nothing... will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.” (Romans 8:39, ESV)

ESV Bible

Devotion (200–350 words)

When life feels like a storm, you need an anchor sentence. Romans 8 gives it; nothing can separate you from the love of God in Christ.

Not trouble. Not persecution. Not danger. Not your worst day. Not your weak faith. Not even death. That’s upside-down blessing because the world says love is conditional, fragile, and temporary. God’s love in Christ is covenant, strong, and permanent.

This doesn’t erase suffering, Paul lists it. It redefines suffering’s power. Suffering can hurt you, but it cannot own you. It cannot rewrite your identity. It cannot cancel your adoption.

So, when the heat rises, repeat the promise. “Nothing can separate me.” That is not arrogance, it’s faith. And it’s the kind of faith that keeps you from panic. You can endure hardship without collapsing into despair, because Christ’s love is not hanging by your emotional thread, it’s held by His finished work.

If you’re afraid today, let this promise do its work. Fear shrinks when love becomes more believable. And God’s love becomes believable at the cross, where Christ refused to let your sin separate you from Him.

Prayer

Father, when fear rises, anchor me in Your love. Remind me that Christ has secured me. Help me believe nothing can separate me from You. Give me steady endurance and gentle courage. Keep my heart hopeful. Amen.

Blessings for you

May you be anchored in Christ’s unbreakable love, even when life feels shaky.

Blessings for others in your life

May those you love to be protected by the security of God’s promises through your calm presence.

Day 39: Rejoice and Be Glad, Even Here

Scripture

Matthew 5:11–12

“Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven.”
(Matthew 5:12, ESV)

ESV Bible

Devotion (200–350 words)

Jesus says people may insult you, say false things about you, and oppose you “on my account,” and then He says, “Rejoice and be glad.” That sounds impossible until you realize what He’s giving, a future that holds.

Rejoicing here is not pretending insults don’t sting. It’s refusing to let opposition define your worth. The world says, “If people mock you, you’ve lost.” Jesus says, “If you belong to me, you are blessed, even when it hurts.”

This is upside-down blessing that trains your heart for endurance. You don’t have to win every narrative. You don’t have to defend yourself into exhaustion. You can entrust your name to God, because your real name is “beloved in Christ.”

Jesus also connects you to the prophets. You’re not the first to be misunderstood for God’s truth. That doesn’t mean you’re automatically right, but it does mean you’re not alone when faithfulness costs you.

So today, practice rejoicing as remembrance. Remember Christ. Remember the Kingdom. Remember nothing can separate you. Then choose one act of love anyway. That’s the deepest defiance, loving in a world that expects you to get ugly.

Prayer

Jesus, give me courage to rejoice without denying pain. Keep me from bitterness when I’m opposed. Remind me that I belong to You, and my future is secure. Help me love anyway. Hold my heart steady. Amen.

Blessings for you

May you rejoice with defiant hope, because your belonging to Christ is real.

Blessings for others in your life

May those you love to be strengthened by your gentle faithfulness under pressure.

Day 40, Saturday before Palm Sunday: Gathering Up, Courage for the Road Ahead

Scripture

John 16:33 (supporting reference: Matthew 5:10–12)

“In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart, I have overcome the world.” (John 16:33, ESV)

Devotion (200–350 words)

We gather the whole season here, with Jesus’ clear-eyed promise, “You will have tribulation,” and His stronger promise, “I have overcome the world.”

That’s the heart of upside-down blessing. Jesus doesn’t sell you a pain-free life. He gives you Himself. He gives you victory that isn’t fragile, because it’s rooted in His cross and resurrection. The world’s instinct is to chase comfort at any cost. Jesus’ invitation is deeper, take heart, even when it costs you, because He has already overcome.

Look back over Lent. Secret repentance taught you you’re safe before the Father. Brokenness taught you the Kingdom opens to empty hands. Hunger taught you Jesus feeds what the world can’t fill. Mercy taught you to release debts because God released yours. Purity taught you to stay close to Jesus, the Vine. And the fire taught you that opposition doesn’t cancel blessing, it often reveals belonging. So, as you step toward the road ahead, you don’t go as a spiritual athlete showing off, you go as a beloved child held by Christ. Take heart doesn’t mean “toughen up,” it means “hold on to Me.” Jesus has overcome. That means your suffering is not pointless, your repentance is not wasted, your mercy is not weakness, your hope is not foolish.

Blessed in the fire, because Christ is with you, and Christ wins.

Prayer

Jesus, take my heart in Your hands. When tribulation comes, keep me from fear and bitterness. Remind me You have overcome, and I belong to You. Strengthen me to witness with humility and love. Carry me forward in hope. Amen.

Blessings for you

May you take heart in Christ’s victory and walk into what’s next with steady courage.

Blessings for others in your life

May those you love to be comforted and strengthened as they see Christ’s overcoming hope in you.

Congratulations

Lord Jesus Christ, our humble King who rides into Jerusalem for us, we lift up South Lake Church as we step from the road of Lent into the holy days of Your Passion. Thank You for the quiet mercies along the way, for repentance that didn't crush us but brought us home, for burdens You carried when we couldn't, for grace that kept showing up like daily bread.

Father, bless this congregation as we enter Holy Week. Strengthen every volunteer, every family, every tired soul, every doubting heart, every new believer, and every saint who's been walking with You for years. Give us clear eyes to see the cross not as a symbol, but as the place where our sin was truly paid for and give us soft hearts to receive Your love again, fresh and personal.

Holy Spirit, fill our worship with faith and courage. Let Palm Sunday's hosannas be honest, not just loud, and let Good Friday's silence be holy, not empty. Guard our church from distraction and division, and make us bold in compassion, steady in truth, and rich in mercy for our neighbors.

And as Easter dawns, resurrection joy deep in us, the kind that outlasts stress, grief, and fear. Make South Lake a living witness that Jesus Christ is Lord, crucified for sinners, risen for our justification, and coming again in glory.

We thank You for the blessing of walking this journey together, and we look forward with joy to the feast of victory. In Jesus' mighty name we pray, Amen.

Christ is risen.
He is risen indeed. Alleluia.

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