

Questions For Reflection and Discussion

- What does it mean to “gain the whole world”? What would make that worth it?
- In verse 34, Jesus encourages the disciples to “take up their cross.” What difference would this phrase mean to Jesus’ original listeners versus today?
- What is the cost of following Jesus? What have you needed to give up in order to be obedient? Were there things that were easier or harder? Is there anything else you need to give up still?
- What does it mean to be ashamed of Jesus? What do you think it is like for Jesus to be ashamed of us?

Prayer List/Notes



FOR WHAT WILL IT PROFIT THEM...?

Scripture Focus This Week:
Mark 8:34-38

Daily Reading Plan

Mon: **Matthew 6:25-34**—Are you not of more value than they?

Tues: **Matthew 9:2-8**—Why do you think evil in your hearts?

Wed: **Mark 3:1-6**—Is it lawful to do good or to do harm on the sabbath?

Thurs: **Luke 11:37-41**—Did not the one who made the outside make the inside also?

Fri: **Luke 12:22-31**—Can any of you buy an hour to your span of life?

Sat: **Luke 22:24-30**—For who is greater, the one who is at the table or the one who serves?

Prayer

Generous God, we give you thanks for all that you have given to us. For the beauty of our world that surrounds us, for the breath that fills our lungs with life, and for the love of Christ that warms our hearts, we owe it all to you. Help us to not take your gifts for granted, but instead to share them with others so they may turn to you with grateful hearts as well. Amen.



Scan for this
week's guided
meditation.

Lenten Practice:

THANKSGIVING

*“Enter his gates with thanksgiving,
and his courts with praise.*

*Give thanks to him, bless his name.”
(Psalm 100:4 NRSV)*

Gratitude and thanksgiving are often things that we usually focus on during the Fall when there is a Turkey thawing or roasting in our kitchens. However, this spiritual practice is something we should be embracing on a year-round basis.

According to researchers, our bodies respond well to gratitude. When different groups were asked to begin a daily practice of reflecting on their days, those who focused on what they were thankful for felt healthier and happier as well as went to the doctor less than the other groups.¹ While positive health outcomes are not the only reason to be thankful, it does demonstrate that in many ways our bodies are designed to be grateful.

Throughout the Bible, there are many instances where God’s people respond to all that God has done with gratitude. In Exodus 15 Moses and Miriam sing songs of praise and thanksgiving for being rescued from Egypt. In Joshua 4, the Israelites stack 12 stones together on the bank of the Jordan River as a way of marking their gratitude for God’s faithfulness in leading them through the desert and into the promised land. And then, throughout the psalms there are

¹ <https://www.health.harvard.edu/healthbeat/giving-thanks-can-make-you-happier>

many which are either entirely focused on singing praise to God or contain verses that include this theme. All of these point towards gratitude as an essential part of a healthy worship life.

Much like the stones by the Jordan River, having a record of your gratitude can be a helpful resource during seasons of difficulty and challenge where gratitude can be more difficult. Starting a handwritten gratitude journal or keeping a list on phone using an app are a few ways of keeping thanksgiving as a regular spiritual practice. When things are written down it can be easier to discern the work of the Holy Spirit over time since the focus is no longer the granular details of the day-to-day. Another practice is to write thank-you notes or send regular messages to those who you love and who have impacted your life. You could designate a certain day of the week or month as “gratitude day” and try and write or message one person to say thank you for something. Can you imagine what it would be like to get a note or message from someone, out of the blue, expressing appreciation for something you have done? You could provide that blessing to someone!

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