



**JESUS OF NAZARETH
(MAL)FORMATIVE FAITH
MATTHEW 15:29-16:12
7-19-20**

All = bold sections – read together

Leader = regular font – leader reads (choose or rotate leaders)

Sung together = italics

NOTE: Please have a white candle ready to light.

Welcome

Good Morning! More changes! As you likely already know, CCRC will be meeting outdoors at the Bloomingcamp Ranch for the foreseeable future. We are grateful for this space to worship together, sing, take communion and fellowship. For some of you staying home to avoid meeting indoors, this may be great news. For the rest of you, we will continue to lift you up as you remain safe during these uncertain and potentially dangerous times.

May the love and joy of the Farther, the grace and peace of the Son and the courage and comfort of the Holy Spirit by ours in abundance!

Call to Worship: Psalm 5 - TO THE CHOIRMASTER: FOR THE FLUTES. A PSALM OF DAVID.

How many of us are groaning given the current situation we find ourselves in? Notice to whom King David turns to and why. We have to be careful here though. Who are our enemies? Not a political party group or religious group. And how are we supposed to act towards them according to the Jesus of Nazareth? Remember, our true enemy is not flesh and blood but the principalities and powers of our defeated but still dangerous enemy, the Devil and his cohort of demons.

Give ear to my words, O LORD; consider my groaning. Give attention to the sound of my cry, my King and my God, for to you do I pray.

O LORD, in the morning you hear my voice; in the morning I prepare a sacrifice for you and watch. For you are not a God who delights in wickedness; evil may not dwell with you.

The boastful shall not stand before your eyes; you hate all evildoers. You destroy those who speak lies; the LORD abhors the bloodthirsty and deceitful man.

But I, through the abundance of your steadfast love, will enter your house. I will bow down toward your holy temple in the fear of you.

Lead me, O LORD, in your righteousness because of my enemies; make your way straight before me. For there is no truth in their mouth; their inmost self is destruction; their throat is an open grave; they flatter with their tongue.

Make them bear their guilt, O God; let them fall by their own counsels; because of the abundance of their transgressions cast them out, for they have rebelled against you.

But let all who take refuge in you rejoice; let them ever sing for joy, and spread your protection over them, that those who love your name may exult in you. For you bless the righteous, O LORD; you cover him with favor as with a shield.

Candle Lighting – Light the candle as a reminder that God is Light (Father, Son, Holy Spirit)!



Jesus is the Light. We are a light. Shine your light!

Song: To God Be The Glory -- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2CeBoSQsBR0>

*To God be the glory great things He has done;
So loved He the world that He gave us His Son,
Who yielded His life an atonement for sin,
And opened the life-gate that all may go in.*

*Praise the Lord, praise the Lord; let the earth hear His voice!
Praise the Lord, praise the Lord; let the people rejoice!
O Come to the Father through Jesus the Son,
And give Him the glory, great things He has done.*

*O perfect redemption, the purchase of blood,
To every believer the promise of God;
The vilest offender who truly believes,
That moment from Jesus a pardon receives.*

*Praise the Lord, praise the Lord; let the earth hear His voice!
Praise the Lord, praise the Lord; let the people rejoice!
O Come to the Father through Jesus the Son,
And give Him the glory, great things He has done.*

*Great things He has taught us, great things He has done
And great our rejoicing through Jesus the Son
But purer, and higher, and greater will be
Our wonder, our worship, when Jesus we see*

*Praise the Lord, praise the Lord; let the earth hear His voice!
Praise the Lord, praise the Lord; let the people rejoice!
O Come to the Father through Jesus the Son,
And give Him the glory, great things He has done.*

Responsive Reading – Blessings on Those Staying Home

For those staying home alone, we offer you this blessing. May you grow a deeper understanding of your own worth. Navigate the aloneness with gentle care, for this too shall pass. May you be blessed with a peace and serenity; may you find the courage to reach out to hear another's voice and to remember others need you too. May you be well.

For those staying home together, we offer you this blessing. May you find moments of patience and grace in your relations. May you offer each other enough time apart, reassurance and space enough to cry, to be angry and not sin, for this too shall pass. Above all, may the peace of Christ reign in your home. May you see one another's whole self as a gift. May you be well.

For those working from home, we offer you this blessing. May you remember to take breaks. May you find the means to relish your imperfection and the imperfection of others as evidence of our shared humanity. You are enough in Christ even when there isn't enough. Make order in your days and then let it go. May you be well.

For those staying home with children, we offer you this blessing. May you find humor and compassion



in your days. There will be learning of a different kind, deeper no doubt, unexpected for sure. May there be patience and forgiveness, again, and again, and again. For this too shall pass. May you all remember the deep love that brought your family into being. May there be peace and understanding in your home.

May you be well. May we be well. Amen. May it be so.

Corporate Prayer

Take turns sharing your prayer request(s) and then have someone offer a prayer for all, not necessarily naming each prayer request, but offering them to God.

Song: Great Is Thy Faithfulness -- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dTKlqmdfHSk>

*Great is Thy faithfulness, O God my Father,
There is no shadow of turning with Thee;
Thou changest not, Thy compassions, they fail not;
As Thou hast been Thou forever wilt be.*

*Great is Thy faithfulness! Great is Thy faithfulness!
Morning by morning new mercies I see;
All I have needed Thy hand hath provided—
Great is Thy faithfulness, Lord, unto me!*

*Summer and winter, and springtime and harvest,
Sun, moon and stars in their courses above,
Join with all nature in manifold witness
To Thy great faithfulness, mercy and love.*

*Great is Thy faithfulness! Great is Thy faithfulness!
Morning by morning new mercies I see;
All I have needed Thy hand hath provided—
Great is Thy faithfulness, Lord, unto me!*

*Pardon for sin and a peace that endureth,
Thine own dear presence to cheer and to guide;
Strength for today and bright hope for tomorrow,
Blessings all mine, with ten thousand beside!*

*Great is Thy faithfulness! Great is Thy faithfulness!
Morning by morning new mercies I see;
All I have needed Thy hand hath provided—
Great is Thy faithfulness, Lord, unto me!*

Offering

We remember that giving is an act of faith, a practice of hope and an expression of love.

(You can give by sending your offering to the church, P.O. Box 217, Oakdale Ca 95361 or consider giving online through your bank. Our deacons can help you with this if necessary.)

Youth Celebration

We remember and celebrate the presence and participation of our youth. If there is a youth in your



midst – share your love and appreciation for them. If there is no youth in your presence, take a moment to thank God for those he brings to your attention.

Scripture Reading: Matthew 15:29-16:12

We are continuing our series through the Gospel according to Matthew, Jesus of Nazareth. Matthew has just showed us what great faith looks like in the Canaanite woman as compared the Peter's little faith and the no faith of the Pharisees. Today, we will again see "little faith" demonstrated by the disciples who are very slowly figuring out who Jesus of Nazareth is. The section we are looking at today shows Jesus beginning to formally extend the gospel and the kingdom of heaven to the Gentiles. There is a repeat feeding of a large crowd. While the previous miraculous feeding was a Jewish crowd, this one is Gentile and located on the eastern shore of the Sea of Galilee in the area of the Decapolis. This is a setup for a confrontation by a very strange pairing: the Pharisees and the Sadducees. It is strange because these two Jewish religious groups did not get along with each other at all. However, a common enemy can bring two former enemies together. That is the case here with Jesus being the common enemy of both. Jesus then gives one of his boldest and most straightforward warnings to his disciples about these two groups.

We will first take a quick look at Jesus' healings and feeding of the 4,000 to once again demonstrate his character and competence as the Son of God and the Son of Man. Then we'll take a closer look at the Pharisees and the Sadducees, their history and what they believed so that we might understand Jesus' warning better. We will see that they represent both ends of the pendulum of lostness (similar to the elder brother and the younger brother lostness we have been talking about the past 9 months). Finally, we will apply this to our situation today and how we might grow in our faith and obedience to Jesus of Nazareth.

Gospel Message: Formative Faith

Jesus returns from his encounter with the Canaanite woman and heads to the eastern shore of the Sea of Galilee. There he is presented with the "lame, the blind, the crippled, the mute, and many others." Jesus heals them all so that the mute can now speak, the cripple are now healthy, the lame can now walk and the blind can now see. They do what should come natural in the presence of God and his miraculous actions, they glorify the "God of Israel." This phrase and the location confirm that the crowds are not Jewish but Gentile. Jesus character and competence are vividly on display. People who have been incapacitated by their infirmities for years and decades, with no one being able to help them are suddenly, instantaneously, miraculously healed in front of all. Wow! Matthew wants to remind us of who Jesus is and his mission to heal (save) those who believe in him. Try and picture the scene in your mind. What would you be thinking? Feeling? What might you want to do next?

Matthew then directs us to another grand miracle of Jesus of Nazareth – a second feeding of thousands of people with very little to start with. This scene is almost identical to the previous feeding of the 5,000 but with some small variations of the numbers (4,000 instead of 5,000; 7 loaves instead of 5; few small fish instead of 2; seven baskets full left over instead of twelve). What we are to get from this second feeding is at least two things: (1) what Jesus has done for the Jews in bringing Good News of the arrival of the kingdom of heaven in him, he is now doing with the Gentiles. Thus, the Good News of Jesus of Nazareth is meant to go global, to all peoples of all colors and of all races and in all places. Who are some people groups that you might have a hard time seeing the gospel of Jesus going to? Who might you have a hard time sharing the gospel of Jesus of Nazareth with? (2) Discipleship and



faith development can be a slow process! This is actually helpful to know. I know that I wish my faith would be stronger, deeper, more “mega” like the Canaanite woman but is often “micro” like Peter and the other disciples who struggle with learning and applying their faith in response to Jesus. It is one thing to know something about Jesus of Nazareth and quite another to apply that in real life situations. The disciples had just seen Jesus feed 5,000+ not too long ago and they find themselves in the exact same situation and they drop the ball of faith, they don’t remember; they don’t act in accordance to Jesus of Nazareth’s character and competence.

There are three things that characterize the disciples “little faith.” (1) **They do not perceive** - They saw the miracle of the feedings but they did not see how Jesus was trying to show them who He is. The miracle of the feedings demonstrated that Jesus is our provider and we trust in Him: for salvation, for our physical needs and emotional needs! (2) **They do not remember** - The disciples quickly forget what Jesus has done in their midst. Instead, they fixate on the cares of this world. (3) **They fail to understand** - The disciples frequently fail to understand who Jesus really is. This will change in the second half of Matthew 16 as Peter confesses that Jesus is the Christ. Furthermore, notice Jesus’ response to their lack of faith – that is, their lack of perception, not remembering and failing to understand. Yep, he doesn’t jump all over them but simply repeats the miracle for them. Jesus is patient with us. Jesus will help us along in our lapses of faith. Take a few moments to recall some points in your life where your faith was thin, small, absent. What happened and what eventually came of it? What did you learn? How have you grown since then? How might you grow more?

Jesus is forming and shaping their faith around him. He is aware that faith can be distorted, weakened and malformed if it loses him as its center and source. This is troublesome and counterproductive for a disciple of Jesus of Nazareth. Why? Because a malformed and/or malnourished faith hinders our witness of Jesus Christ as his image bearers and does not honor him as Lord and Savior. A person can malform their faith in two basic ways: (1) acknowledging Jesus as Savior but living without him being Lord of their life or (2) acknowledging Jesus as Lord but living without him being Savior of their life. The Pharisees and Sadducees represent both. In both, the acknowledgement does not translate into a heart change that begins to shape and conform the person into the image and likeness of Jesus of Nazareth. Their faith is formative but it is malformative. Jesus warns them of this: “Watch and beware of the leaven (teachings v. 12) of the Pharisees and Sadducees.” So, who are the Pharisees and the Sadducees? What is their history and contribution to the Jewish storyline?

The Pharisees were an ancient Jewish group who laid the foundation for what would become rabbinic Judaism. The name, “Pharisee,” likely comes from the Hebrew word *prushim*, meaning “separated ones,” but it’s unclear what exactly this label signified. Some of the Pharisees’ biggest contributions to Judaism were:

- Emphasizing the “oral tradition” (which they argued was equal to the written tradition of the Torah – the first five books of the OT – Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy)
- Extending Jewish practices into life outside the temple
- Instilling greater piety in “the common people”
- Promoting belief in the afterlife

Despite their influence on rabbinic Judaism and their prominence in the New Testament, the Pharisees are a notoriously difficult group to define. **No ancient Jewish group referred to themselves as Pharisees.** The label originated with people who didn’t belong to this group.



While they've been described many different ways over the centuries—religious sect, political group, social movement, school of thought—none of these descriptions give us a holistic picture of the Pharisees. Modern Christians tend to see the Pharisees in a negative light—mostly because the New Testament authors portray the Pharisees as legalistic and hypocritical. While that might describe their confrontations with Jesus and early Christians, it hardly tells the whole story of this important Jewish group. By preserving and advocating for the importance of oral tradition, which was believed to have been handed from God to Moses *along with* the Torah, the Pharisees played an integral role in giving us both the Talmud (the written record of the oral tradition) and the Masoretic Text (the original Hebrew Bible, which relied on oral tradition to correctly identify and pronounce ambiguous words).

So at least in part, Christians can thank the Pharisees for ensuring the Old Testament was so carefully preserved. But beyond emphasizing oral tradition, the Pharisees also helped Judaism prepare for life after the Romans destroyed Herod's temple, and they helped Jews apply and obey the Mosaic Law in everyday Jewish life. Due to the lack of texts describing them, many modern scholars believe the Pharisees were not as prominent or numerous as people have assumed. Josephus, a first century Jewish-Roman historian, wrote numerous books on Jewish life and history, but he only mentions the Pharisees 20 times (usually briefly) and he spends more time describing contemporary Jewish groups. And since the New Testament presents them as speaking on behalf of the public, that's made it appear as though they were the face of first-century Judaism.

It's easier to understand the Sadducees as they compare with the Pharisees:

The Pharisees and Sadducees are both ancient sects of Judaism. In the New Testament, both groups opposed Jesus and his followers and served as foils for the new movement Jesus was initiating within Judaism. And that can make it hard for modern Bible readers to understand the important distinctions between these two Jewish groups. The Sadducees were comprised of priests and social elites, and were responsible for maintaining the temple. The Pharisees included people of all classes and professions, and had their roots in the scribes, sages, and experts in the Law. They both accepted the Torah as God's instructions, handed down to Moses. And they both believed they represented the truest form of Judaism. But there are several main differences between these groups. Their disagreements generally revolved around:

1. Oral tradition
2. The temple

As a result of these two disagreements, numerous theological differences emerged that affected the way each group practiced Judaism. One of the more notable theological differences was what each group believed about life after death (the Pharisees believed in a resurrection, and the Sadducees did not). Pharisees saw the oral tradition as equal to the Torah. On Mount Sinai, God gave Moses the Torah, which Moses wrote down. But the Jews believed that from that time on, there was also an oral tradition which was never written down, but which was used to interpret the Torah. This was primarily passed down by scribes and sages who were experts in the Torah.

The Pharisees believed God gave this oral tradition to Moses along with the Torah, making its interpretations and applications as authoritative as the Torah. This is why the oral tradition is also referred to as the Oral Torah or Oral Law. **But the Sadducees believed the oral tradition originated with the scribes, sages, and experts in the law, so they saw it as humans adding to God's commands.**

This created a rift within Judaism about how to interpret the Law, with the Sadducees treating



commands like taking “an eye for an eye” literally (Exodus 21:24), and the Pharisees seeing them through the lens of their oral tradition, which suggested a specific monetary compensation for various injuries.

Having their roots in the scribes and sages who studied the oral tradition, the Pharisees were seen as authorities on the Law, whereas the Sadducees derived their authority from their status as priests and their control over the temple, which was the social, economic, and religious center of Judaism. Pharisees observed sacred rituals outside the temple, Sadducees did not. During the Babylonian exile, the Jewish people had no temple, and established synagogues and other places to gather, pray, and study the Torah. Later, the Persian King Cyrus the Great allowed the Jews to return to Jerusalem and rebuild the temple. Once again, Jerusalem became the center of Jewish life, and since there was no king from the line of David, the temple priests (who became the Sadducees) began to fill a power void. **But the Pharisees believed Jews were supposed to practice purity rituals outside the temple, not just in it.** Like the Essenes, they believed the sacredness of these practices wasn’t limited to the walls of the temple. The Sadducees, who controlled the temple, disagreed. And when the Second Temple was destroyed in 70 AD, the Pharisees evolved into mainstream Rabbinic Judaism, while the Sadducees faded into history.

The Pharisees are a mysterious group. But as we read the Bible, it’s important to remember that these people weren’t the power-hungry villains church tradition has often made them out to be. In their minds, they were the protagonists, defending Judaism against heretical beliefs and false doctrine. If you’re familiar with the New Testament epistles, you know that the early Christian church was similarly vigilant. But unlike the early Christian church, they had a formally defined canon of Scripture—and centuries of tradition to interpret it—reinforcing what they believed. So perhaps it’s better to think of the Pharisees, Sadducees, scribes, and experts of the Law this way: when Jesus came onto the scene, Israel needed a heart transplant, and these groups were like an overactive immune system, rejecting the very thing they needed to survive.

The Pharisees aren’t “the good guys” in the New Testament, but their emphasis on oral tradition and practicing Judaism outside the temple allowed Judaism to evolve into what it is today. And Christians have them to thank for preserving the Oral Torah, which was used to create the Masoretic Text—the document our Old Testament is based on. Next time you read about the Pharisees in your Bible, just keep in mind: this isn’t the whole picture, and for all their faults, the Pharisees were relentlessly trying to point the nation of Israel back to God. How has this general overview bolstered or changed your understanding of the Pharisees and Sadducees?

Okay, the Pharisees and the Sadducees disagreed on a lot and did not generally get along with one another. So why were they coming together now? What was the “teachings” of the Pharisees and Sadducees that Jesus was warning them about. I think it is basically two things: (1) They both denied that Jesus was the Messiah and was a common enemy to both. Both of them rejected Jesus and refused to believe that he was God in the flesh and was the one that they were praying for to come and save them. They saw him as a threat to their leadership and their way of Jewish life. A common danger unites even the bitterest enemies. (2) In Luke 12:1, Jesus specifically calls the leaven of the Pharisees, hypocrisy. Both the Pharisees and the Sadducees were hypocritical in that their claim to true Judaism was undermined by the very fact they couldn’t recognize the most Jewish of all Jews, Jesus of Nazareth who obeyed every true moral law of the OT.



We can relate this to our pendulum of lostness (lost elder and lost younger brother from the parable of the two lost sons in Luke). In general, the Pharisees represent the lost elder brother and the Sadducees represent the lost younger brother. The Pharisees added to the teachings of scripture by adding oral traditions and law. They were on the legalistic side of the pendulum. The Sadducees took away from the teachings of scripture (denying the resurrection and much of the spiritual realm). They were on the licentious side of the pendulum. Jesus is not on the pendulum. He is a third way, the gospel way. Jesus is warning them about not following the hypocritical teaching of lostness from the both sides of the pendulum. What Jesus is saying then is that to focus on the Pharisees and Sadducees teachings and not his, belittles him and their faith. It will malform their faith and shape them into hypocritical people like the Pharisees and the Sadducees. **You follow them and their teachings you will become like them and their teachings. You follow me and my teachings and you will become like me and my teachings.** What I mean by follow is to orientate your life towards and through, to believe and trust to such a degree that your identity is dictated by it. In other words, your identity is driven by that in which you place your ultimate trust. Furthermore, your ultimate trust is seen by the identity you portray to others.

So what? Well, we can plug whatever we want into this equation and it will churn out the same answer. If you believe and trust _____ and their/its teachings you will become like _____ and their/its teachings. Generally, whatever is plugged into it is not a bad thing in and of itself but only when it is elevated to a position it was never intended by God to hold. And even then, it is not the thing that is the problem, it is the person who is the problem. If I believe and trust Major League Baseball (MLB) and its teachings, I will become like MLB and its teachings. That will be the shaping narrative of my faith. I will start to see life as a competition between winners and losers. I'll see that it is important to have fans following me and liking what I am doing. I'll buy into marketing. I'll view females differently. I'll see life with an on season and off season. I'll see success as beating the other. I'll see value in earned pay and develop a system of merit. I'll see basketball and soccer and football as inferior and subordinate and even insignificant forms of sport. I'll see the value of individual and corporate contributions to the success of the team and of giftedness towards a particular position and so on. Concepts of mercy, forgiveness, grace and love are filtered through the lens of MLB and not the other way around. What other words might our culture (and we by extension) be guilty of placing into that formula? White? Black? Brown? Democrat? Republican? Male? Female? LGBTQ? American? Rich? Capitalism? Democracy? Business? Sports? Spouse? Celebrity? Wealth? Health? Immigrant? Victim? Oppressed? Oppressor? What's wrong with any of these you might ask. Nothing in and of itself. Even LGBTQ (as long as it is not acted upon but acknowledged as that person's struggle with sin. The sin is not in the disorientation but the identifying with it and acting upon it.) As with LGBTQ, the problem is overidentifying with it to such a degree that it begins to form and shape your thinking and feeling and decision making and not Jesus of Nazareth and the Word of God.

What do you struggle with overidentifying with? Be honest! We all tend to do it to various degrees. This is what it means to fall back onto the pendulum of lostness and away from the gospel of Jesus Christ. Every temptation does this. Every temptation tries to pull us away from Jesus and onto the pendulum of lostness. Every temptation seeks to make us either elder brothers that don't need Jesus as Savior because it has replaced him (success, good works, health, wealth, lust, greed, pride, envy, sloth etc.) or younger brothers who don't need Jesus as Lord because it has replaced him (success, good works, health, wealth, lust, greed, pride, envy, sloth etc.). Yes, every idol has the opportunity to



pull us either way when we overidentify with it. Some will take the elder brother route and falsely see their obedience to it as good, righteous and deserving of salvation (works righteousness) or the younger brother route and falsely see their freedom to embrace other things above Jesus without recurring any consequence (cheap grace) or having to produce the “good works of faith.”

May we strive to adhere and hold to Jesus of Nazareth knowing that it is he who ultimately holds us fast in his faithful and eternally strong arms of love, grace and mercy. May we recognize the temptations and the idols and the overidentifying with secondary things so that we might glorify God by enjoying him forever.

Communion Meditation

While we cannot participate in the Lord’s Supper apart from the gathering of the local church and under the presiding of the council, we can remember and be grateful for the Good News of Jesus – his perfect life; his sacrificial and substitutionary death on the cross, his being raised to resurrection life; his ascending into heaven and his returning again to bring heaven fully to earth and remove all forms of evil from earth, forever! Because of Jesus, we are loved and our sins are forgiven!

Re-read the feeding of the 4,000 (Matthew 15:32-38). Note the wording Jesus uses before he distributes the food to the disciples to hand out (Matthew 15:36). Compare it with 1 Corinthians 11:24. Many see the feeding and communion deeply connected in Jesus Christ. **When we remember and engage communion not just as a backwards looking memorial, which it certainly is, but also as a present and participative means of grace in and through the real presence of Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit, the connection is made! Nourishment! Food! Satisfaction! Banquet! Feast! Abundance! Grace! Love! Compassion!**

Professing: (Nicene Creed) – note the “for” tone of the creed, especially in the second section

I believe in one God, the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible. And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, begotten of the Father before all worlds; God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God; begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father, by whom all things were made.

Who, for us men for our salvation, came down from heaven, and was incarnate by the Holy Spirit of the virgin Mary, and was made man; and was crucified also for us under Pontius Pilate; He suffered and was buried; and the third day He rose again, according to the Scriptures; and ascended into heaven, and sits on the right hand of the Father; and He shall come again, with glory, to judge the quick and the dead; whose kingdom shall have no end.

And I believe in the Holy Ghost, the Lord and Giver of Life; who proceeds from the Father and the Son; who with the Father and the Son together is worshipped and glorified; who spoke by the prophets. And I believe one holy catholic and apostolic Church. I acknowledge one baptism for the remission of sins; and I look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. Amen.

Proclaiming: 1 Corinthians 11:23b-25 (Paraphrased)

On the night of his betrayal, Jesus took bread, gave thanks and broke it saying, “this is my body given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.” After the meal he took the cup of wine and pouring it out said, “this wine is my blood, a new covenant of grace poured out for the forgiveness of sins.”



Remember and believe that the body and blood of Jesus was given and shed for the forgiveness of sins.

Song: Blessed Assurance -- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GEeBo1fwzkU>

*Blessed assurance: Jesus is mine!
O what a foretaste of glory divine!
Heir of salvation, purchase of God,
Born of His Spirit, washed in His blood.*

*This is my story, this is my song,
Praising my Savior all the day long!
This is my story, this is my song,
Praising my Savior all the day long.*

*Joyful confession: I am his own!
Following Jesus, I'm never alone!
Born of his Spirit, I am restored,
Challenged to serve my savior and Lord.*

*This is my story, this is my song,
Praising my Savior all the day long!
This is my story, this is my song,
Praising my Savior all the day long.*

*Perfect submission, perfect delight,
Visions of rapture now burst on my sight;
Angels descending bring from above,
Echoes of mercy, whispers of love.*

*This is my story, this is my song,
Praising my Savior all the day long!
This is my story, this is my song,
Praising my Savior all the day long.*

Sending as Disciples of Jesus: Matthew 28:18-20 (Paraphrased)

Notice what draws your attention this week. How do you describe things? What framework do you use to make sense of things? What words do you routinely use? What stories operate as formative for you? What do you believe is bad news? What do you believe is good news? Is this verified in your life choices. Pay attention to yourself. Don't drift through life. Engage. Reflect. Repent. Change. Grow. Identify with Jesus of Nazareth. Let go of the things of this world so that they fall naturally into secondary and tertiary positions. Read Scripture. Pray. Seek Jesus Christ and his kingdom first. Forego lesser things that might be getting in the way, distracting and malforming your faith. Be a disciple of Jesus of Nazareth.

All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to Jesus. Therefore, as we are sent into the world by him, let us make disciples of all, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that Jesus has commanded us. And let us remember and treasure that Jesus is with us always, even to the end of the age. Amen!