

*When you're at the
end of your rope*

Twentieth Sunday after Pentecost

October 10, 2021

*Call to Worship

Adapted from Psalm 130

*Out of the depths I cry to you, O God:
We hunger for the bread of Jesus, the bread of life, O God.
O God, hear my voice!
Let your ears be attentive to the voice of my supplications!
We hunger for the bread of Jesus, the bread of life, O God.
There is forgiveness with you and I wait for you, O God.
My soul waits for You.
We hunger for the bread of Jesus, the bread of life, O God.
In your words I hope. My soul waits for you, God,
more than those who watch for the morning:
We hunger for the bread of Jesus, the bread of life, O God.*

*Hymn of Praise

"O How I Love Jesus"

UMH 170

***Opening Prayer**

*Living and faithful Spirit, the God in whom we live and move and have our being, the God who is made known in Christ Jesus, bless us as we wait on you this day. Please remove from our minds and hearts whatever impediments hinder worship or dampen our joy. Increase within us that holy longing for closeness which can open our lives to fuller delight and to a deeper commitment. May our hymns and prayers, our searching thoughts, and our hearing of the Scriptures, be an exercise in love. In the name of Christ Jesus. **Amen!***

Share How You Can Present Your Offering to God

Make your offering personal...through a donation or an act of service...bring to God an offering of praise and gratitude!

Sing the Doxology Together

Praise God, from whom all blessings flow; praise him, all creatures here below; praise him above, ye heavenly host; praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Amen.

We Bow Our Hearts with Prayers for One Another at Faith and Hope...As we prepare to go our separate ways, we do so graciously, praying God's blessings upon one another.

*May the Lord bless you and keep you,
May He make His face shine upon you and be gracious to you.
May the broad expanse of God's love
and the abundance of His riches in glory,
shape your perspective on your own life and needs,
including those things which disappoint you.
May the eyes of your heart be open
to all the blessings which surround you;
may this awareness produce a harvest of generosity in your spirit.
May thankfulness rise up within you,
not just during this season, but day after day.
May your prayers reflect gratitude,
while also acknowledging the needs of others
whose situations are so drastically different.
May thoughts of Jesus fill your mind,
and hunger for God drive your soul,
and love for Lord guide your speech and your actions.
And finally, may the grace, peace, and love of the triune God,
protect, defend, and empower you
to run with perseverance the race marked out for you.*

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name; thy kingdom come; thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.

God's Word

Matthew 5:3

The Word of God for the people of God...Thanks be to God!

Message

"End of Your Rope"

Clark Hess

*Hymn of Faith

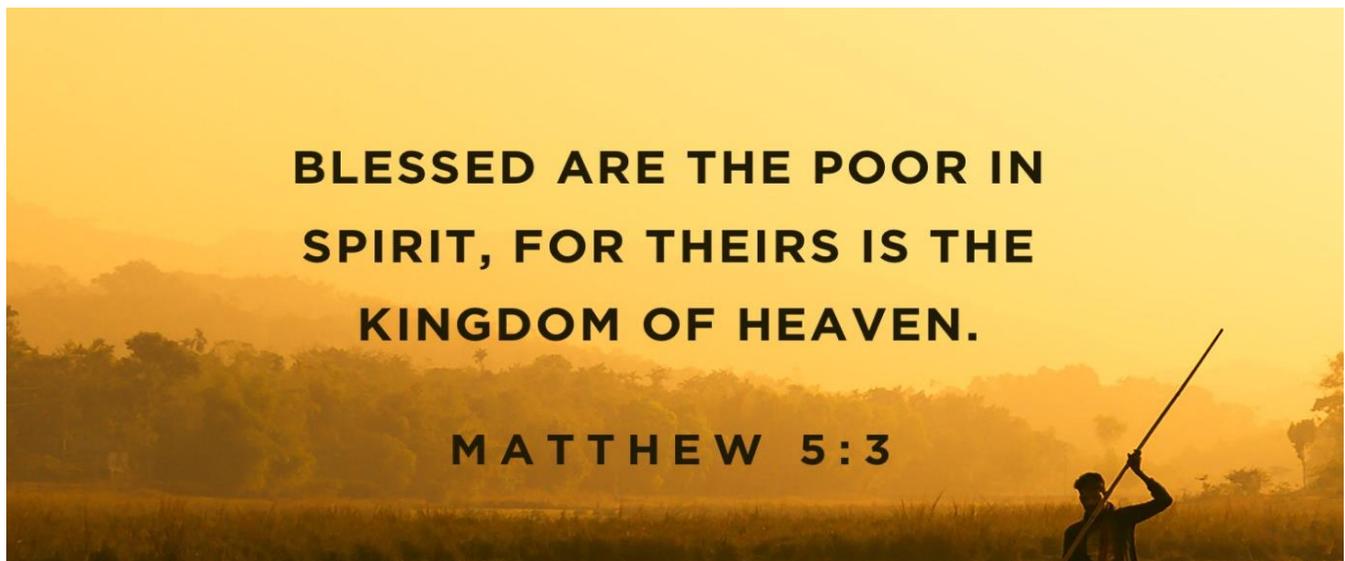
"O Love That Wilt Not Let Me Go"

UMH 480

Blessing

Drawing from Luke 7

When we see the body of Christ still broken in this world, may we meet it with lavish grace and pour ourselves out with extravagant love.



“End of Your Rope”

Matthew 5:1-2 (NLT and MSG)

“God blesses those who are poor and realize their need for him, for the Kingdom of Heaven is theirs. God blesses those who mourn, for they will be comforted.”

“You’re blessed when you’re at the end of your rope. With less of you there is more of God and his rule. You’re blessed when you feel you’ve lost what is most dear to you. Only then can you be embraced by the One most dear to you.”

Introduction

At the end of our rope...sharing the story of when our son Ryan was born...and had emergency surgery to save his life...

In the blink of an eye, you can find yourself at the end of your rope!

That ever happen to you? One moment all was well; the next moment you found life was unraveling? Anyone wish to share such a time in your life?

Or, it can be a long-time building. The pressure mounting gradually with a succession of setbacks. Wears you down. A wave of depression washes over you. Can you stay afloat? Keep your head above water? Hold on any longer? Then you realize, you’re at the end of your rope. No more options.

Ever feel that way? Let’s take a moment...perhaps you’d like to name a time when that happened to you...

These kinds of experiences cause us to come face to face with the realization that we are broken. But, in Jesus’ scheme of the Kingdom, that’s a good thing! Here Jesus’ teaching...

“God blesses those who are poor and realize their need for him, for the Kingdom of Heaven is theirs. God blesses those who mourn, for they will be comforted.”

“You’re blessed when you’re at the end of your rope. With less of you there is more of God and his rule. You’re blessed when you feel you’ve lost what is most dear to you. Only then can you be embraced by the One most dear to you.”

One quick word: The word *“blessed”* is sometimes translated *“happy.”* It shouldn’t be! Just doesn’t do it justice. Some years ago a popular preacher wrote a book called, *“The Be-Happy Attitudes”*—a clever title, but it misses the point. The poor, the grief-stricken, the hungry, and the persecuted are not usually *“happy.”* But they can be *“blessed.”*

Prelude Parable

I am indebted to Kyle Idleman in his book *The End of Me* when he shares this fascinating story from Luke 7 that he surmises is a parable of this very verse. It struck me as a brilliant way to contrast the inherent tension between the “*poor in spirit*” and those who self-confidently rely on themselves.

³⁶ One of the Pharisees asked Jesus to have dinner with him, so Jesus went to his home and sat down to eat. ³⁷ When a certain immoral woman from that city heard he was eating there, she brought a beautiful alabaster jar filled with expensive perfume. ³⁸ Then she knelt behind him at his feet, weeping. Her tears fell on his feet, and she wiped them off with her hair. Then she kept kissing his feet and putting perfume on them.

³⁹ When the Pharisee who had invited him saw this, he said to himself, “If this man were a prophet, he would know what kind of woman is touching him. She’s a sinner!”

⁴⁰ Then Jesus answered his thoughts. “Simon,” he said to the Pharisee, “I have something to say to you.” “Go ahead, Teacher,” Simon replied.

⁴¹ Then Jesus told him this story: “A man loaned money to two people—500 pieces of silver to one and 50 pieces to the other. ⁴² But neither of them could repay him, so he kindly forgave them both, canceling their debts. Who do you suppose loved him more after that?”

⁴³ Simon answered, “I suppose the one for whom he canceled the larger debt.”

“That’s right,” Jesus said. ⁴⁴ Then he turned to the woman and said to Simon, “Look at this woman kneeling here. When I entered your home, you didn’t offer me water to wash the dust from my feet, but she has washed them with her tears and wiped them with her hair. ⁴⁵ You didn’t greet me with a kiss, but from the time I first came in, she has not stopped kissing my feet. ⁴⁶ You neglected the courtesy of olive oil to anoint my head, but she has anointed my feet with rare perfume.

⁴⁷ “I tell you, her sins—and they are many—have been forgiven, so she has shown me much love. But a person who is forgiven little shows only little love.” ⁴⁸ Then Jesus said to the woman, “Your sins are forgiven.”

⁴⁹ The men at the table said among themselves, “Who is this man, that he goes around forgiving sins?”

⁵⁰ And Jesus said to the woman, “Your faith has saved you; go in peace.”

#1 We Can Be Religiously Lost

Simon the Religious is the well-respected religious leader who seems to have his life together. He’s the leader everyone looks up to. He probably lives in a big house with plenty of servants. Often has VIP’s over for dinner parties. He has it all: possessions, power, and prestige. He is not humble about it either; in fact, he’s downright arrogant.

We see this in how he treats Jesus. Three ways Simon was to offer Jesus hospitality in that culture. Three times Simon, in his disgust for Jesus, decides to decline on all three! Simon could have greeted the guest with a kiss of the hand, a sign of gracious welcome. He refused. Next, a gracious host would have offered to wash the feet of his guest. This was a daily reality in this dusty culture. Finally, Simon should have anointed his guest's head with oil. In fact, very fine oil was to be used. No anointing. Why anoint the head of the one you thought was an imposter?

We get the picture: Simon was full of himself. Thought he was one of the top dogs in his culture who everyone else should serve. His pride blinded Simon. He couldn't see his brokenness. He was blind to his lostness.

Kyle Idleman says, *"The less we see of our own brokenness, the more broken we are."*

In the novel ***Girlfriend in a Coma***, Douglas Coupland tells the story of Karen, who in 1979 falls into a coma. While she lies in the hospital, life goes on. Her teenage friends grow up, get married, get divorced, do drugs. In her vegetative state, Karen misses the fall of the Berlin Wall, the AIDS crisis, and the ubiquitous personal computer. Seventeen years after collapsing, Karen suddenly awakes from her dreamless sleep.

Her sudden reawakening is a huge story. Karen initially resists the media hype but eventually agrees to an interview with a local TV interviewer named Gloria. The big question is, just how is Karen finding the new world she has awakened to?

"What's the biggest change in the world you've noticed so far, Karen? What strikes you as the deepest change?"

Karen speaks: "You know what it is, Gloria? It's how confident everybody comes across these days. Everybody looks like they're raring to go all the time. People look confident when they're buying chewing gum or walking the dog."

"You like that then?"

"There's more. You take the same confident-looking people and ask them a few key questions, and suddenly you realize that they're despairing about the world—***that the confidence is a mask.***"

"What kind of questions?"

"What do you think life will be like in 10 years? Are you straining to find some kind of meaning? Does growing old frighten you?"

"Hmmm. We're a culture searching for meaning."

Simon was wearing a mask! His confidence was a mirage. He was just as broken as the woman at the center of this piercing parable.

Simon despite his religious achievement was lost!

#2 We Can Be Beautifully Broken

Woman Who Is Broken... This woman is a prostitute. But ironically, something drew her to this dinner gathering...a dinner for the pious. She would have been out of place altogether! Certainly not an invitation from Simon. Has she heard about Jesus? Listened to him share about a Kingdom too good to be true?

What does she encounter? In the eyes of the religious she senses disgust, rejection, and even outrage. But in the eyes of Jesus, she experiences a delightful surprise...acceptance, delight, joy. She doesn't feel judged or condemned or shamed. She feels loved and encouraged to become something new.

As a result, she is undone. She has come to the end of herself. Tears begin to flow from her eyes. She falls to the floor and begins kissing his feet...dirt and sweat and all. *"Funny thing about tears is that when they fill your eyes, that's when you see most clearly!"*

She anoints Jesus' feet not with a drop from her flask, but with the whole flask, she pours it out in devotion to Jesus. Lacking a towel to do so, she uses her hair. What a scandal! In Simon's eyes, this is an outrage. In his mind, he is probably thinking this woman must be stoned to death. But in Jesus' eyes, she deserves to be loved.

Ironically, she fulfills everything, in his spite, Simon withheld from Jesus! Her devotion is to be treasured! She is blessed. The poor in spirit have become honored and treasured.

What a contrast! For Simon, Jesus has a rebuke; for the broken woman, Jesus has a blessing.

Jesus goes to show us: we can be beautifully broken!

#3 How We Come to Recognize Our Need for Jesus

"You're blessed when you're at the end of your rope. With less of you there is more of God and his rule."

The affluent poor don't recognize their poverty. They brag about their possessions, their promotions, their positions, their power, their prosperity...

"Poor in spirit" The poor in the Old Testament are those who are both afflicted and unable to save themselves and who therefore look to God for salvation while recognizing that they have no claim upon God. Being poor in spirit is to acknowledge our spiritual poverty before God. We have nothing to offer, nothing to plead, nothing with which to buy the favor of heaven.

Those who are poor in spirit don't brag; they beg.

My guess is that at some point in our lives we come face to face with the reality that we are not as affluent as we thought. Life seems to bring us these kinds of experiences that compel us to confront our poverty in spirit. Like Brian last week who lost his 18-month-old son because he had slipped out of the house after Brian who inadvertently backed over him.

What kind of experience put you at the end of your rope?

We are all broken! "We are those people."

Philip Yancey in his classic ***The Jesus I Never Knew***, in quoting Monika Hellwig, painted a picture of the spiritual advantages of poverty, poverty of spirit:

Why would God single out the poor for special attention over any other group? I used to wonder. What makes the poor deserving of God's concern:

- 1. The poor know they are in urgent need of redemption.*
- 2. The poor know not only their dependence on God and on powerful people but also their interdependence with one another.*
- 3. The poor rest their security not on things but on people.*
- 4. The poor have no exaggerated sense of their own importance, and no exaggerated need of privacy.*
- 5. The poor expect little from competition and much from cooperation.*
- 6. The poor can distinguish between necessities and luxuries.*
- 7. The poor can wait, because they have acquired a kind of dogged patience.*
- 8. The fears of the poor are more realistic and less exaggerated, because they already know that one can survive great suffering and want.*
- 9. When the poor have the gospel preached to them, it sounds like good news and not like a threat or scolding.*
- 10. The poor can respond to the call of the gospel with a certain abandonment and uncomplicated totality because they have so little to lose and are ready for anything.*

How do you recognize your need for Jesus? You become poor in spirit. When you are poor in spirit you know you are desperate and that you have nothing that can lift you out of the desperation. Your only option is to call out to God for mercy.

Conclusion

When have you been at the end of your rope? Cause you to lay aside your masks which hides your true brokenness. Causes you to lay down your pride and self-sufficiency. Causes you to desperately cry out for God to pour His mercy upon you.

If you do, by God's grace, ***you can become beautifully broken!***



- *Jan Yapple is moving to a special dialysis rehab center in Westerville*
- *Jewell Edwards' grandson, Connor, has been diagnosed with a brain lesion*
- *Debbie Piermont will have aneurysm surgery on October 20*
- *Marsha Waibel, cancer has returned; surgery upcoming*
- *Debbie Fields dealing with significant heart arrhythmia issues*
- *Dan Matthew, recovering from successful aneurysm surgery*
- *Jan Smith from Faith Church continuing treatments*
- *Sarah Cory and Guy Cory now both in Bickford Senior Living*
- *Earl Kantner, declining with a variety of health issues*
- *For doctors, nurses, medical staff, EMS personnel as hospitals are overrun with COVID*
- *Community Focus: Rebuilding a sense of community in our COVID era*
- *National Focus: Police and fire departments in the face of mounting danger*
- *World Focus: Getting the COVID vaccines to remote corners of the globe*

Tailgate Party/Chili Cook Off on October 30

We are throwing a party! A tailgate party for the OSU vs Penn State match-up! Along with a Chili Cook Off! On Saturday October 30 at Faith UMC (time TBD once we find out when the game will be telecast) we invite you to share in the tailgate excitement! Cornhole games. Something for all ages. Great chili to sample. Desserts to enjoy. Big game atmosphere to pump you up!

We need Chili makers! We want to have at least ten different kinds of chili on hand to see who will win this year's cook off. Talk to Dustin or enter online or fill out the card in the rear today before you leave to sign up.

Hopeful Hearts: This coming Saturday October 16 will be our next Hopeful Hearts morning! Hope's baby clothing ministry has shifted to winter clothes but finds itself extremely low on clothing due to the pandemic dynamics. We urgently need donations—even new clothes—for this vital ministry. Boys and girls clothing birth to five years old. You can bring it to church on a Sunday or drop off at Hope.

Thanks to all those who helped make the Hope Trash and Treasure a huge success! God certainly smiled on this event with phenomenal weather! Thanks for all who contributed items as the sale raised nearly \$7500. Thanks to all who helped in the takedown this past week!

Educare will receive a makeover of sorts in the coming months: a brand new playground will be installed towards the end of the month, new hallway flooring and Educare office flooring will be installed over the holidays when school is out of session, and new hallway lighting will be installed in October or early November.