



Theme: The Gospel on Broadway

"Beauty and the Beast – Hospitality and Meaning"

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Weekly Memory Verse:

17 This means that anyone who belongs to Christ has become a new person. The old life is gone; a new life has begun! – 2 Corinthians 5:17


Meditation Moments for Monday, April 20 – Read **2 Corinthians 4:7-12 and 5:11-21**. Paul wrote 2 Corinthians to a community of Christians, many of whom had turned against him, even though he himself had brought them to faith! It was a painful disappointment he tells us about in [2 Corinthians 11:23-27](#), after years of struggles as he traveled and shared Jesus in the Roman world. Yet he trusted that, if he kept his inner spiritual focus on God's eternal love, nothing in this world could crush or destroy him. He believed that it was the power of Christ that could bring reconciliation and meaning.


👥 Paul's description of himself as a "clay pot" in 2 Cor. 4:7 wasn't false modesty. The image of a clay pot recognized an essential truth that we all must wrestle with. God is God and we are not. How can learning to see yourself as a "clay pot" help put you in a better position to avoid feeling crushed by any of your human struggles, such as struggling with a difficult teenager, or facing job uncertainty?

👥 Paul is urging us to see ourselves differently from how the world sees us in 2 Corinthians 5. He wants us to focus on the work God through Christ is doing inside of us. Do you believe Christ can make you a new creation? Why, or why not? What does this say about your past life and the life you can hope for now? What do you think "reconciliation" means? What story from your life illustrates being made new and experiencing a new kind of life?

Prayer: *Lord God, some days all I can see are my failures, my setbacks, and my pain. On those days especially, I really need your grace to show me life as you see it, to show me your reality. Amen.*


Tuesday, April 21 – Read **Colossians 3:12-17** and **Hebrews 13:1-2**. Nowhere in Scripture will you find, “Treat your neighbors with kindness, unless their beliefs differ from yours.” Implicit in Paul’s instructions, and in the letter to the Hebrews, was the understanding that we are to treat all people with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience. We are, in fact, to love all people. Yes, this becomes more complicated when people’s fundamental beliefs are not the same as ours, especially if they do not treat you in these ways. Rather than looking at this as a problem and trying to “fix” them, Paul said in places like **Romans 14:1-15:7** we should attempt to love extravagantly, working to find unity in unexpected places. In today’s world, we have the chance to do that in digital spaces as well as in the more personal settings Paul no doubt had in mind.

 Paul wrote in Romans 14:19, “So let’s strive for the things that bring peace and the things that build each other up.” Why is this harder when people’s beliefs are different than ours? What is one concrete thing you can do this week that builds up another person, especially a person with whom you differ? What principles can guide you in deciding when loving your neighbor is more valuable than winning an argument?

 John Wesley, Methodism’s founder, said in a sermon titled “A Catholic Spirit,” “Even though a difference in opinions or modes of worship may prevent an entire external union, yet need it to prevent our union in affection? Though we cannot think alike, may we not love alike? May we not be of one heart, though we are not of one opinion? Without doubt, we may.” How did Paul’s teachings in today’s passages shape Wesley’s theology? Is there someone in your life with whom you do not think alike, yet you need to love alike?

Prayer: *Lord Jesus, give me clarity about my daily need for your forgiving, empowering grace to nurture and grow me. And grow me into a person who makes kindness and forgiveness central to my rhythm of life. Amen.*

Wednesday, April 22 – Read **Matthew 25:14-30**. The “coins” in this story were **very** valuable. The Greek word is *talanton*, often translated as ‘talent,’ which refers to an amount equal to more than 16 years of earnings for a laborer. But Jesus didn’t focus on how much money but on how much faithfulness each servant showed. He said our loyalty to God shows in our readiness to fearlessly use all God-given resources to bless others and build God’s kingdom. That might include energy, time, skills, money or other assets.

 The third servant seemed to be unwilling to work or take risks, so he dug a hole and buried the money. In what ways does it take willing investment of effort and energy to deepen your walk with God and maximize the service to others it produces? How could fear of failure line in verse 25 stop you from using your

God-given gifts for all they're worth? Can you remember a time you found deeper meaning in life because of a risk you took?



The first two servants showed that God defines faithfulness differently than we might. One got five valuable coins. Verse 15 tells us the second received an amount, "according to that servant's ability." Yet the second one got the same warm approval at the end as the first one, even though he returned fewer coins than the first servant received in the first place. Can you value all your God-given abilities, whether they seem large or small to you, and use them actively for God's purposes?

Prayer: *Lord Jesus, I admit that sometimes I'd like to keep what you entrust to me all for myself. Teach me daily more about what it means for me to be good and faithful. Amen.*

Thursday, April 23 – Read **Psalm 56:3-4 and 10-11**. In 1933 the United States was in a deep economic depression. New President Franklin Roosevelt said in his inaugural speech that year, "The only thing we have to fear is fear itself—nameless, unreasoning, unjustified terror which paralyzes needed efforts to convert retreat into advance." Roosevelt called on human resolve to resist fear. Bible writers trusted God, not just human strength, to overcome fear. Psalm 56's words of trust in God were repeated in [Psalm 118](#), sung at Passover seders, and quoted in [Hebrews 13:5-8](#). Counting on God's reliable love, the psalmist, Jesus, and early Christians all asked the same fearless question: "What can anyone do to me?"



Scholar J. Clinton McCann wrote, "The refrain ["What can anyone do to me?"] means that the concept of trust runs throughout the psalm, communicating the reality that trust is everywhere in the life of the psalmist." The psalmist didn't save trust for a crisis. Trust in God permeated every area of life. In what ways can you embed trust everywhere in your faith life, even daily routines and small anxieties? How does the psalmist's question "What can anyone do to me?" speak to whatever fears you carry in your heart right now?





When we read "What can anyone do to me?" our first (alarming) thought may be, "People could do plenty!" Humans can hurt, betray, harm us in many ways. Only as we look below life's surface does the psalmist's question make more sense. The question isn't "Can people harm me?" but "Can anyone separate me from God's loving ultimate purposes?" What bad, even malicious, acts have God's presence helped you survive, or even turned to a good purpose? How does that affect your ability to trust God moving forward?

Prayer: *Lord God, I want to learn to live with the same kind of trust the psalmist expressed. Teach me each day how to put my trust in you whenever I am afraid. Amen.*

Friday, April 24 – Read **Job 42:1-6**. Rabbi Michael Zedek wrote in his book *Taking Miracles Seriously*, "The Book of Job is a strong candidate for the most important, difficult, and misunderstood volume in the Bible." Hasty readers may think the first two chapters fully explain suffering. But the Hebrew poet(s) saved the key truth for the


book's end. Just before today's reading Rabbi Zedek writes, "In one of the most extraordinary images in any literature, Job encounters a presence, a voice speaking out of a tempest or whirlwind." Today's text is Job's response to that speaking presence.


 The poetic encounter with the divine presence in [Job 38-41](#) completely transformed the lead character's outlook in this ancient story. Job moved from simply hearing about God to seeing God, which is what he hoped for in [Job 19:26-27](#), and the nature of God's creation, and his place within it in [Job 42:3-5](#). When have you met someone you'd only heard about and learned much more about them? How can you remain open to the importance of knowing (not just knowing about) God?

 Rabbi Zedek wrote, "At the end of the poetry, Job's situation remains unchanged. He is still an everyman, positioned on a pile of ash; however, he holds to the conviction that meaning abides... While we cannot explain in tidy formulas why the righteous may suffer, let alone why others who are wicked prosper, that does not mean emptiness lies at the heart of existence... Job learns that tragic and meaningless are not synonyms." How can God's presence sustain meaning in life's hardest times?

Prayer: *Lord God, you know we suffer. In Jesus, you experienced our suffering. When I am hurting, remind me that tragic does not mean meaningless, and walk through the suffering with me. Amen.*

Saturday, April 25 – Read **John 4:16-21**. Some people think "righteous" people are unkind, that serving Jesus makes you critical and unloving. The apostle John and the founder of Methodism John Wesley disagreed. Real love for God, they knew, shows in our love for people. In a sermon on April 21, 1777, Wesley quoted 1 John 4 and invited all Christ-followers, "Let us provoke all men, not to enmity and contention, but to love and good works; always remembering those deep words... 'God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him!'"

 Why would John say, "Perfect love drives out fear"? 1 John 4:20 said, "Those who say, 'I love God' and hate their brothers or sisters are liars." Do you agree that it is often fear that leads us to hate other people? Why would hating others block any genuine love for God? Can you think of practical ways to let God's perfect love move you in the direction of acting in love toward "others," even if you think they deserve fear and distrust rather than love?

 The words, "God is love," touch on everything. They affect us as individuals and as a community. Love and God go together; hate and God do not according to verse 20.) Fear and God do not go together according to verse 18. Have you ever experienced a situation in which as you learned to love another person, your fear of that person decreased and even disappeared? In what ways has following Christ made you and your relationships more loving?

Prayer: *Lord Jesus, you embodied God's love for me. Now you call me to embody your love as I deal with other people, even people I may not like, may even fear. Grow your love in my heart. Amen.*