

Sunday

Week 11. Restoring Peace With The World

It seems easy for Christians struggling with the Overweight State to hold a totally negative image of the world as a bleak and terrible place, Devil-ridden, doomed, and dangerous.

What about you? What is your attitude about your life in the world? Do you fully appreciate the distance you've traveled? Do you value your accomplishments? Have you discovered the good within you?

How you view yourself in the world but not of the world, as the Bible says, will give you the proper connections that enable you to function well but to remain independent of the superficial ways in which society measures success.

"To every man there openeth
A Way, and Ways, and a Way.
And the High Soul climbs the High Way,
And the Low Soul gropes the Low,
And in between, on the misty flats,
The rest drift to and fro.
But to every man there openeth
A High Way, and a Low.
And every man decideth
The way his soul shall go.

John Oxenham

We must remember that each of us is a divine original, created by God to make a unique contribution to life, one that only you can make. This is true for you and for millions of other people like you who are unknown outside their small circles.

You can't afford to travel shallow, refusing to plumb the depths of your experiences. When you skim the surface, you miss what lies beneath. "Your soul suffers if you live superficially," cautions Doctor Albert Schweitzer.

Different Ways To Read the World

The word "read" shares a root with other words – art, skill, ordain, adorn, and ordinary, for example. To read the world you're fitting together the connections between the obvious and the not-so-obvious – things, places, events, feelings, and thoughts.

Basically there are three different ways to read the world spiritually:

First, we read the world for what it teaches us about the spirit within us and the convergence of the Holy Spirit with our own spirit.

Through this kind of reading, we gain a new understanding of our place in the world and learn to recognize the many workings of the Holy Spirit.

Second, we read the world to see what it can show us about the meaningful life. Everything that happens to us and everything we encounter as an experience has the seeds within it to contribute to our journey toward peace, joy, and harmony.

By reading the texts of our experiences in this way we pick up clues as to who we are and what we need to deal with. Therein we discover ways to get in touch with the depths of our souls and the breadth of our connections to others.

Third, we read the world for what is. Not as a symbol. Not as a teaching. Not as a mirror. Simply for what is, for truth and reality. When we discover truth and reality, we find the peace we've been searching for.

We also discover that there are things we cannot possess with our reasoning nor envision in our imaginations. These are the realities of mysteries that reflect the Great Mystery.

Monday

Week 11 – Day 1

Morning Prayer

Theme: Ask God for healing in our families

Evening Prayer

Theme: Changing what is, through the power of the Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit As A Source of Attention

To see God in the world – pay attention. All sorts of wonderful and important things are going on in front of our very eyes and we miss most of them because we're half asleep.

Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane said to His disciples, "Watch here and wait with me." They couldn't do it.

God is in the details. Paying attention demands practice and discipline.

Contemplative prayer is right on the money. It is the healing balm for our inability to pay attention. It is there for you to utter at any moment.

To be attentive, you must be open, receptive, and totally present. Otherwise, you risk overlooking a thousand forms of beauty every day.

Every day there are moments of grace and great insights and lessons in discernment. Every day we miss them. Slow down or you'll miss the good stuff.

As you leave your home each day, ask yourself, "If I pay attention today, how will I see God?" By evening's end you'll have the answer.

Take yourself off automatic pilot and you will enter a whole new world of wonder.

Wrapping Up

It's time.

Tuesday

Week 11 – Day 2

Morning Prayer

Theme: Ask God for healing of our work communities

Evening Prayer

Theme: Changing what is, through the power of the Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit As Inspiration for Being Present

Henry David Thoreau went into the woods at Walden Pond to find himself in the 19th century. One of the things he wrote was this, "Now or never! You must live in the moment, launch yourself on every wave, find eternity in the moment."

So, leave your past to God's mercy and your future to God's love. This moment is the only moment you're assured of.

Be creative with your moments. As an artist focuses – so can you. Be in the moment at the stove cooking, washing dishes, cleaning the floor, sitting or lying quietly, praying. Be in the moment at play or when reading. Be here, like the ice skater, moving without effort, fluid and free.

Jesus spreads a banquet before us and He says, "Eat, in remembrance of me." So we eat without regrets for the past or fears for the future.

So, don't wish yourself someplace else. Pledge yourself to the moment and let it teach you. Surrender yourself to the moment and let it preach to you.

Wrapping Up

It's time.

Wednesday

Week 11 – Day 3

Morning Prayer

Theme: Ask God for healing of our living communities

Evening Prayer

Theme: Changing what is, through the power of the Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit As A Source of Connection

The capacity to experience wonder and a primal sense of connectedness with all of life has been confirmed by quantum physics and ecology to be both possible and inevitable.

Your self and your world are linked in ever-expanding circles. We are kith and kin of God's creativity – from stones to galaxies. This concept of inter being transforms our concept of Jesus' words, "Love your neighbor as yourself."

Who is your neighbor? The Samaritan? The woman in prison? The Iraqi woman forced to flee her home? The enemy?

All these and more – the entire community of life. The entire universe. We must love it all as our self.

Every drop of blood that falls in Darfur, in Palestine, in Israel, in Afghanistan, in Iraq, splashes on our shoes and spatters the hem of your dress and my trousers.

The Hopi Indians say that we all began together, that each race set out on a different journey to learn its own road to power. Now it is time to put the pieces of the puzzle back together. Now it is time to work to make the circle unbroken again.

Wrapping Up

It's time.

Thursday

Week 11 – Day 4

Morning Prayer

Theme: Ask God for healing of our nation

Evening Prayer

Theme: Changing what is, through the power of the Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit As A Source of Devotion

Devotion is a word derived from the Latin *devotio* for “vow” or “total dedication.”

The great spiritual traditions suggest a treasure chest of devotional acts: morning prayers, evening prayers, grace said over meals, and reverent physical movements such as kneeling or bowing our heads to pray.

Think about it. Every aspect of your life has potential as a devotional practice. Every movement of your body is anchored in the act of creation. Everything we do, everything we see, everything we touch, everything we say can be defined as a devotion.

Dorothy Day, cofounder of the Catholic worker movement, says, “I believe lots of people pray through the witness of their lives. Through the work they do. Through the friendships they have. Through the love they offer and receive from other people.”

So, you can see the possibilities: a quiet time reading your Bible in the early morning hours, a weekly call to a special friend to share your deepest feelings, a reflective pause at work before going out to lunch, some quiet time with your children at bedtime, prayer with your partner before dropping off to sleep. All these are truthful times of heartfelt worship which feed your soul and spur your spiritual growth. Such times are nothing less than the oxygen of spiritual survival.

Wrapping Up

It's time.

Friday

Week 11 – Day 5

Morning Prayer

Theme: Ask God for healing of our world

Evening Prayer

Theme: Changing what is, through the power of the Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit As A Source of Hospitality

In the Bible Jesus is the most hospitable of people, mingling with rich and poor, Jew and Gentile, women of good repute and bad, crossing boundaries in the name of love.

Christian monasteries have a long-standing tradition of taking in strangers, acting as if the stranger could be Jesus, heeding the words of Hebrews 13:2, "Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels unawares."

This spiritual practice goes against the grain of today. In the post modern world we're afraid of everybody if we don't know them. Thus, hospitality can be the step you need to take to adjust your attitude toward dismantling the barriers of your world and the world at large. Hospitality is the way to turn a prejudiced world around, one heart at a time.

So, start with your own situation and those who are close at hand. Share who you are and what you have. Then, extend the practice to your neighbors and to the world.

When you are gracious and courteous to strangers, it shows that you are a first class world citizen. And, that's what the world needs – more citizens united by hospitality, an openness to new ideas, tolerance of strangers, and a willingness to face the mysteries of living adventurously.

So, open your door.

Wrapping Up

It's time.

Saturday Eating Realities

Week 11

Read [Smart Moves](#) 1-22

Saturday's Message

Week 11

"Making God's Will Mine"

Matthew 26:36-45

Dr. A.C. Reid – in a brief sermon delivered in Harvard University Chapel – said: "To discover the will of God is our highest privilege, our greatest need, and our finest source of strength." Dr. Reid is right. But if I were to survey any group of people by asking, "What do you think is the most important thing in your life?" I would receive many different answers. We are living in a day when people have many hopes and dreams and priorities. But for Jesus Christ – during the course of His earthly life – there was one thing that really mattered – one thing that took top priority; and that one thing was to do the will of God.

In John 4:34 Jesus said to His disciples: "My meat is to do the will of the Father which hath sent me, and to finish His work."

In John 5:30 Jesus declares: "I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent me."

In John 6:38 Jesus affirms: "For I come down from Heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of Him that sent me."

In the Garden of Gethsemane shortly before His arrest and crucifixion Jesus prayed three times saying, "Not my will, but thine be done."

In the Christian life, Jesus Christ is our example. He lived life as God intends for all of us to live – in the center of God's will for our lives.

It is my conviction that the Word of God teaches a number of truths concerning the will of God. Consider some of these truths:

1. God definitely has a will for every person's life. God knows everything about every individual. He has a definite plan for everyone.
2. Sometimes a person must engage in a struggle before he knows what the will of God for his life is. This was certainly true of Jesus. His temptation experience was a struggle to know God's will concerning the kind of Messiah He would be. His experience in the Garden of Gethsemane was a struggle to determine God's will about moving on to face the cross of Calvary. We

also will find times when we struggle in our desire to know and do the will of God.

3. Obeying God's will for your life is not always the most popular thing to do. It was not for Jesus. It led Him to a cross! We may not be awarded with popularity when we commit ourselves to the will of God for us. I was responding to what I know to be God's will for my life when I changed my course of study at Wake Forest University from pre-law to pre-ministerial, but when an adult friend in my home town heard the news, he told me: "I am very disappointed. I was hoping that you would do something important with your life!"
4. Obeying God's will for your life is the right thing to do. Doing the right thing is always best.
5. If you will submit your life without reservation to the will of God, He will supply all your needs. He did that for Jesus and He will do that for all of us.

A Baptist pastor who always sent a personal, hand-written letter to the high school and college graduate from his church wrote the following paragraph in those letters: "I wish for you the very best in life, knowing from personal experience that the only way to live life at its best is to live in accord with God's will. Be assured of my prayer as you – throughout the course of life – seek the knowledge to know and the courage to do God's will."

The prayer of the hymn writer is an inspiration:

Have thine own way, Lord,
Have thine own way.

Thou art the potter,
I am the clay.
Mold me and make me,
After thy will.

While I am waiting,
Yielded and still.

AMEN

Reverend Phillip R. Morrow Sr.