

WEDNESDAY – April 22nd

CENTERING BREATH PRAYER: Make me like you...O, Lord, my Savior.

O, dear Lord, how I long to be like you. I am frustrated by my own inadequacies and my inability to follow through with all my good intentions. Thank you for your love and forgiveness without which I would be devastated. Walk with me today as I endeavor to grow into the person you created me to be. With you help I can achieve much, without you I am impotent. I ask these things in the name of and for the sake of Jesus, my Savior. Amen.

SCRIPTURE: 1 John 3:1-3

KEY VERSE: 1 John 3:2:

(12) “Beloved, we are God’s children now; what we will be has not yet been revealed. What we do know is this; when he is revealed, we will be like him, for we will see him as he is” (NRSV).

Purity, perfection, completeness, Christ-like, mature children of God – these are all things to which we aspire but never seem to attain. I dare say we do not attain these goals because we place too much importance on doing things our own way. We are, like the Israelites, are a stubborn and rebellious people. Like the famous Frank Sinatra song, I Did It My Way, we have a great deal of trouble submitting ourselves to anyone or anything. I have recently been reading the book by Richard Foster called Celebration of Discipline. One of the disciplines outlined in the book is the discipline of submission. It is not a popular spiritual discipline, but according to Foster, something which is essential for all believers. It is also one of the most difficult to practice on a consistent basis. The concept of living lives of self denial, that is, putting others before ourselves, is so contrary to our self indulgent lifestyles that we tend to ignore it all together. Yet, if we are to grow into Christ-like children of God, we need to re-evaluate this important spiritual practice.

We have become enamored of what I will call: cheap grace. It is not cheap for the Lord who gave himself over to death for us. But, we seem to take it for granted that we have received grace from God because of Christ’s sacrifice and we need do nothing in return. Yes, we say thank you once in a while and we attend church, when it isn’t too inconvenient. We grab the idea of forgiveness for ourselves, but often fail to forgive others. We accept Christ’s gift of salvation as if it is only our due, instead of the act of pure and compassionate grace which we could never deserve. Then we continue to live our self indulgent lives just as the rest of the world with little to distinguish us from those who do not believe. It was never meant to be this way. The New Testament is full of examples and admonitions to grow up, to become like Christ and to eliminate sin from our lives. But, the most important admonition is to love; love ourselves in a healthy manner, love our neighbor as ourselves, love God with all our heart, soul, mind and spirit and finally love one another in the same way that Christ loved us – compassionately and sacrificially. We are to be servants of one another, submitting ourselves to God and to others. Submission here has nothing to do with self mortification, a martyr complex or bondage. It has everything to do with the freedom to not have our own way all the time. Yesterday we talked about how we are witnesses at all times. One of the main reasons unbelievers don’t run to find out all about the Christ we profess is that we don’t live as if we are any different because of our belief than we would be without it. They are not seeing the love Christ commanded us to have for one another. Christ lived a life of compassion and attention

to the needs of those around him at all times. It drew people like a magnet. Even though some of his words and actions seemed radical to those around him, he lived only to please the Father, the one to whom he professed complete submission. His prayer in the garden of Gethsemane ends with, *“not my will, but yours, be done.”* Christ has given us clear instruction about how to live as his witnesses. It is a life of submission to Christ’s will and to one another. This is the love with which Christ showered us both while on earth and by his death and resurrection. As we continue to walk the resurrection journey through this Easter season, let us hold fast to the promise that we are children of God and to grow into Christ’s likeness. We can’t do it alone. But, we have the empowerment of the Holy Spirit who dwells within us and the examples of Christ to guide us. We don’t need Christ to tell us who to marry or what school to attend or what job to take. What we need Christ to tell us is how to submit to one another and how to love more completely. Hallelujah! Christ is risen! Let us walk with him as children of God, growing in love and compassion as his witnesses.

ADDITIONAL SCRIPTURES: Matthew 10:32-34; Mark 8:34-38; John 15:9-17

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION AND/OR JOURNALING:

1. Am I seeking to grow as a child of God?
2. How am I growing in love and self denial?
3. Why is it important for me to grow? Haven’t I already received eternal life? What more is there to do?

SUGGESTIONS FOR ACTION:

Take a good look at your lifestyle. Compare it with those around you who are not believers. What is different? If you have trouble answering this question, you may need to spend some serious time in prayer seeking help to give up some attitudes and cultivate others that will bring a more Christ-like life in you. Use your journal or just make a few notes about what a Christ-like life might look like. Then pray for God to work in you to make it happen.

O Christ, who came to show me the kingdom of God and how I may be a part of it, I come before you today knowing that I am falling short of your desires for me. As we continue to walk along the resurrection journey, help me to cultivate compassion and love in my heart and show me ways I may mature as your child. In your loving name, I pray. Amen.