

Growth Group Questions

Epiphany 4, January 29, 2023

Growing Together

The Sermon on the Mount begins with the Beatitudes, statements of blessing. Go around the group and share your biggest blessing of 2022, and the blessing you most hope for in 2023.

Into the Word – Zephaniah 2:3; 3:11-13

1. This is one of those sections that helps us to understand God's plan for Israel in the Old Testament. The nation would face God's anger but a remnant would be spared and/or restored. Who does Zephaniah say will be lost and who will be saved?
2. This prophecy isn't completely fulfilled until the perfection of the Last Day. We don't often think of heaven in terms of the tongue but how does Zephaniah picture heaven here?

Into the Word – 1 Corinthians 1:26-31

1. Expand on Paul's line of thought. Why do so few people of worldly wisdom, power, and influence become part of the Christian Church?
2. What does the last phrase (*Let him who boasts boast in the Lord.*) mean?

Into the Word – Matthew 5:1-12

1. What was Jesus trying to help the crowd understand in beginning his sermon on Christian living with these statements of blessing?

2. There isn't enough time in one sermon to discuss the question of how much the beatitudes are meant to speak to worldly blessings versus eternal blessings. It seems likely Jesus would have had both in mind as he spoke, just like how Zephaniah's prophecy spoke to Old Testament Israel's remnant and believers on the Last Day. Go through the list of beatitudes (as you have time) and think about the earthly blessings God gives in each as well as the heavenly blessings.

- The poor in spirit who have the kingdom of heaven.
- Those who mourn and will be comforted.
- The meek who will inherit the earth.
- The hungry & thirsty for righteousness who are filled.
- The merciful who will find mercy.
- The pure in heart who will see God.
- The peacemakers who will be called children of God.
- The righteous persecuted who have the kingdom of heaven.

3. Which of the blessed qualities do you find hardest to imitate? Share with the group and include in your closing prayers.

4. I said in the children's message that God wants us to be blessed, not necessarily to be happy. Do you agree? What's the difference between the two terms?

Closing Prayer

Loving Father, we thank you for sending your son to save us and to teach us. As we hear our Savior's sermon help us to give him praise and glory. Help us to put his words into practice as well. Renew our hearts and lead us to be pure and merciful, meek and peace-seeking. Give us a hunger for your righteousness, that we would turn away from ourselves and be filled with your grace. In Jesus' name. Amen.