



**Daily devotions for July 3 – September 8, 2023**



**First Presbyterian Church of Ambler**  
**4 South Ridge Avenue • Ambler, PA 19002**  
**215.646.3030      fpcambler.org**

A place where lives are changed by Christ  
and we live out our faith together.



**This week's devotions were written by our missionary Beth Hedges who is serving in Armenia. Beth will be at FPCA on Sunday, July 9, sharing a Minute for Mission.**

**Monday, July 3, 2023**

**Read:** Matthew 13:3-9 AND 13:18-23

**Reflect:** The Sower (messenger) spreads the message of the Kingdom widely without any concern for the state of people's hearts. Their response reveals the true state of their heart. When I hear a message of God's Kingdom of love, forgiveness, and reconciliation, what kind of soil am I? Do I seek to understand the Kingdom or am I content with only a surface understanding? Do things crowd out the reality of the Kingdom in my life? Does the message of the Kingdom bear a harvest of love, forgiveness, and reconciliation in my life?

**Prayer:** Jesus give me spiritual ears to understand the message of Your Kingdom. Plant the message of Your love, forgiveness, and reconciliation deeply in me. Remove the rocks and thorns that crowd out these things out. Help me deeply understand the message of Your Kingdom so that I can offer love, forgiveness, and reconciliation to others.

**Song:** Change My Heart Oh God ~ Maranatha! Music ~ lyric video - [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ISmG-\\_eJTU](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ISmG-_eJTU)

**Tuesday, July 4, 2023**

**Read:** Matthew 13:3-9 AND 13:18-23 again

**Reflect:** The Sower (messenger) widely shares the message of the Kingdom. He does not do an in-depth analysis of their hearts but just shares the message with them. When I consider sharing the message of Jesus with others do I try and analyze their hearts? But who can know the human heart except God? What I *do* know is the message of the Kingdom - Jesus has come to offer life, light and a restored relationship with God. I can share that message widely and not worry about what kind of “soil” someone is.

**Prayer:** Father, Son, and Spirit, You know those around me. You know their hearts. Help me to share with them the Good News of life, light and a restored relationship with You. Be at work in their lives, giving them understanding, that what I share may lead to a great harvest in their lives. Increase my love for them and give me Your words for them.

**Song:** Faithful Men words and music by Twila Paris -  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=705RuyUoCrM>

**Wednesday, July 5, 2023**

**Read:** Matthew 13:9-12

**Reflect:** How do the disciples come to the knowledge of the secrets of the Kingdom? They ask Jesus for help. They are confused by the use of parables, and they come and ask Jesus. This leads to deeper understanding of Jesus and His message. The secret of the Kingdom is to seek out Jesus and ask Him for understanding. I can do the same things the disciples did by seeking out Jesus and asking my questions to Him.

**Prayer:** Lord there is much that I do not understand. Here is my question today. (*Ask your question to the Lord*). Give me more understanding of You and of the Kingdom. I want Your abundance. (*Wait and see if the Lord has an insight or answer for you; is there is a scripture or a picture?*) Thank You for the Message of Your Kingdom which means I can repent, believe the Good News, and live with You. I give You the next 24 hours – may Your Kingdom come, and Your will be done, on earth as it is in Heaven.

**Song:** Seek Ye First the Kingdom (Acapella)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Uo76XUt0tO4>

**Thursday, July 6, 2023**

**Read:** Matthew 13:13-15

**Reflect:** We can miss the Kingdom of God. We can be calloused and close our eyes and miss God's Kingdom all around us. It is easy to be blind and deaf to what God does around us. Western culture further encourages this blindness and deafness, claiming that it is only the material that matters. But when we embrace this view of the world then we miss God, what He is doing and saying and will even miss His healing. (See the end of verse 15)

**Prayer:** God I don't want to miss You. Give me eyes to see and ears to hear. Show me where You have been at work in this past week. (*Think back on this week, where was God speaking and acting?*) Show me today where You are at work. There are places where I need You to be at work. There are places where I need You to speak. (*Give those areas to God*). Thank You that You are a God who longs for us to hear and see and understand. Hear my prayer O Lord

**Song:** Open the Eyes of My Heart Lord - Michael W. Smith - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x0orH2uloel>

**Friday, July 7, 2023**

**Read:** Matthew 13:16-17

**Reflect:** In Jesus we see the prophets' longings fulfilled. They spoke of a time when the Holy Spirit would be poured out on all people, and this happens today. They spoke of hearts of stone becoming hearts of flesh, and this happens today. When the message of the Kingdom comes to "good soil" – to receptive hearts – then the Spirit comes and fulfills the longings of righteous people. As the Holy Spirit gives spiritual eyes and ears it can be a time of blessing.

**Prayer:** Spirit thank You for giving me eyes to see and ears to hear what You are doing and saying. Continue to open my eyes and ears, for I long to see and hear more of what You are doing. Thank You for the blessing it is to understand the message of Your Kingdom of love, forgiveness, and reconciliation. Help me bear this kind of fruit. May Your Kingdom come, and Your will be done in my life as it is in Heaven.

**Song:** Spirit of the Living God (worship video w/ lyrics) - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BagH-zTfnsQ>

## **Saturday, July 8, 2023**

Read Matthew 13:24-32, 36-43 in preparation for tomorrow's sermon. Imagine you are in the crowd listening carefully to Jesus. What do you make of these words?

## **Sunday, July 9, 2023**

Come meet Beth Hedges, a missionary who grew up at FPCA and serves in Armenia. She will share a Minute for Mission with us. Services are at 9 am (traditional) and 10:30 (contemporary) and are also live-streamed. Find us on Facebook, YouTube, and at [FPCAmbler.org](http://FPCAmbler.org)

*This week's devotions were written by Suzy Moore*

**Monday, July 10, 2023**

**Read:** Matthew 13: 24-28(a)

**Reflect:** We see a description of God's kingdom in a field of wheat. It isn't a field of pure wheat but one also with weeds from seeds planted by others. Knowing his job, his responsibility and being true to how he planted, the model sower easily explains that an enemy planted the weeds. We may also take strength and surety that as we live our lives in the best way we can according to God's way as revealed in his word, we need not fear anything done by others.

**Pray:** Our Father who art in Heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy Kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in Heaven. Lord, may we spend our time on earth simply living as you have directed and remain clear about doing your will even in the face of actions by others that are confusing and even harmful or toxic and seem not to be in accordance with your will.



**Tuesday, July 11, 2023**

**Read:** Matthew 13:28 (b) -30

**Reflect:** Yes, there is evil, sin and the results of sin. Often, we wonder what we can do when we see other people doing things we believe are bad or wrong. Are we to fix the apparent error of their way? How can we separate ourselves from them, from what they do? This parable keeps our focus on how we follow God's word and what we do to grow the Kingdom, instead of regarding and judging what other people are doing. Others and their lives will be judged and taken care of by God. Lord, have mercy.

**Pray:** Lord, give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our debts as we forgive the debts of others. May we do this day what you put before us and let go of thoughts against others, forgiving them, and trusting you to sort it all out.

**Wednesday, July 12, 2023**

**Read:** Matthew 13: 31-32

**Reflect:** A beautiful picture of the kingdom of God. As the littlest of seeds produces the largest of garden plants and provides home and shelter for birds, so, too, each word and act of kindness, love, joy, hope, and peace done God's way leads to God's kingdom here on earth and to heaven above.

**Pray:** Lord, lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. May we make sure to take even one step this day to reach out, to share your word, to let others see You through all that we do.

## Thursday, July 13, 2023

**Read:** Matthew 13:36-43

**Reflect:** As the parable is explained we get a glimpse of the joy to come even now as God fulfills his promise by sending angels to weed out everything that causes sin and all who do evil, allowing the righteous to shine like the sun. The matter of eradicating evil is not simple, and we cannot do it. We trust God and his good plans for now, for the end of the age, and forever more.

**Pray:** Lord, may we live in confidence for thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory forever. Amen!

## Friday, July 14, 2023

**Read:** Matthew 13: 24-28 and 36-43

**Reflect:** Jesus explained the parable to his disciples, and we see the full kingdom of God more clearly. God will fulfill his promise to work all things to our good in his own time. This will not always be as we expect and will always be in his time. It is not for us to focus on stopping other people, but rather to do all we can to build God's kingdom as we live according to all Jesus taught.

**Pray:** Dear Lord, you leave us with great hope for now and for the future and a way to begin to participate in your Kingdom this very day as we pray the prayer you taught us saying...Our Father....

## **Saturday July 15, 2023**

Read Matthew 13:33, 44-52

Take some time to consider the Kingdom of God. Why does it seem so precious to those who are seeking it? How precious is God's Kingdom to you?

## **Sunday, July 16, 2023**

Please join us in worship today. You are welcome to attend the 9:00 am traditional or the 10:30 contemporary services.

Livestreaming is available for both services on Facebook, YouTube and at [FPCAmbler.org](https://FPCAmbler.org)

*This week's devotions were written by Leslie Wise.*

## **Monday, July 17, 2023**

**Read:** Matthew 13:33   Matthew 6:1; Zechariah 4:10

**Reflect:** The woman in Matthew 13:33 took leaven or yeast and hid it in three measures flour. This produced about 50 pounds of leavened flour and would create enough bread to feed 100 people. The making of bread was part of everyday life for women in Biblical times. Much of my life is made up of the small tasks of the everyday; so much is hidden from view. I often wish I lived my life on a bigger stage; garnering a bit more praise or attention from others. Matthew 6:1 advises us “not to perform our righteous acts before men to be seen by them.” It is possible that the small, hidden things we do may have a greater impact on the Kingdom than the great and glorious things we seek. God is able to transform our hidden, everyday works beyond all we could ask or think. “Eye has not seen, nor ear heard” what a small pinch of leaven can accomplish.

**Prayer:** Enable us to be content in all circumstances. We are asked “not to despise small beginnings for You rejoice to see the work begin.” Help us to find joy and purpose in our everyday lives.

**Tuesday, July 18, 2023**

**Read:** Matthew 13:44

**Reflect:** The merchant in Matthew 13 was seeking fine pearls. He finally came upon that one pearl of great value and sold all that he had to buy it. There are many different kinds of pearls, including fresh and seawater. Some colors are preferred over others. A pearl of great value would be expensive and rare. The shape needed to be round and symmetrical, the nacre strong, with high luster. This pearl must have contained all those qualities in high measure. I can imagine the joy of the merchant in finally finding the much sought after pearl. Obtaining this pearl required nothing less than selling all that he had. Imagine being left with only that one pearl. What did others think of this extreme purchase? Jesus compares the Kingdom of God to a pearl of great price. In the end, only the Kingdom of God will remain. Everything in this world will soon pass away. Sometimes it's difficult to discern the difference between fake or true pearls without a trained eye. The merchant knew this pearl had genuine, lasting properties and he gave his all to obtain it.

**Prayer:** The world treasures so many things. Help us search for the Kingdom of God as diligently as the merchant searched for that pearl. Enable us to hold onto possessions lightly and to prize what is truly of value.

**Wednesday, July 19, 2023**

Read Matthew 13:47-51

**Reflect:** This was a difficult passage for me to write about. It left me with a fair amount of doubt and anxiety regarding the fate of unbelievers. Some commentaries described the bad fish as being our lives under the law, which is rubbish. The good fish are gathered into containers and kept by the grace of God. That being said, my heart is with the “bad fish”; those we consider in the margins, the poor, unloved, broken and forgotten by others. Jesus was always mingling with the second-class people of his time-tax gatherers, prostitutes, women, beggars, and those deemed unclean. He welcomed all into the safe container of salvation and dignity. Hopefully, my ponderings on this passage will not offend. Our works will one day be dragged out, viewed, and judged. Our good and bad deeds open for all to see. Bring the bad fish back to waters of restoration and freedom. Walk with them into the joyous streams of the Kingdom of God.

**Prayer:** Help us to discern hands that need our holding. Let us not turn away from hands that are different than ours.

**Thursday, July 20, 2023**

Read Matthew 13:5; Psalm 16:6

**Reflect:** Before writing these devotions, I pray “that the lines will fall for me in pleasant places.” While this may actually be a description of physical borders or boundaries, it is my prayer that my jottings will be a blessing to those who read them. Toiling away over scripture is not an easy process for me. It comes with editing, more editing, rewrites, total do overs and delete alls. Throw in a bit of hand wringing for dramatic effect! But eventually the lines fall where they should. They are not perfect, and a certain vulnerability attends their being read as devotions. Use a gift God has given you, even if it seems difficult or impossible. By persevering, you will bring out treasures, old and new, to share with others.

**Prayer:** Help us to bring out our treasures to share. So often we hoard what we have been given. Please encourage us to be cheerful givers. What joy in seeing you multiply our gifts!

**Friday, July 21, 2023**

**Read:** Matthew 13:33, 44-52

**Reflect:** It was a beautiful June afternoon. I sat watching my grandson and his team play baseball. I enjoyed the hum of conversation around me and listening to the time-honored phrases of baseball: “Balls in! Be baseball ready! Good eye, good eye. Full count!” Plumes of dust rose as players rounded the bases. A certain crack of the bat signaled a bases-clearing double. In the midst of the game, I began to experience a quiet tranquility that I don’t often have. I sat on a wooden riser feeling, for a brief moment, that the world was just right. In some ice cream stores, they have small plastic spoons available to sample the different flavors. Sometimes we get just a taste of what the Kingdom of God may be like. The game was soon over. Walking back to my car, the cares of the world came tumbling back in. I was given a taste of the Kingdom. It will be savored as a brief glimpse into glory.

**Prayer:** So much in our lives clouds the vision of your Kingdom. Help us to clear away what impedes seeing You more clearly. Help Your Kingdom to become more real in our lives.



## **Saturday, July 22, 2023**

Read Matthew 18:21-35 in preparation for tomorrow's sermon. Where is God challenging you in these parables? Who do you struggle to forgive? Do you see your own great need for God's mercy?

## **Sunday, July 23, 2023**

What is the kingdom of God like?

Come, let us worship the King together!

9 am traditional service

10:30 contemporary service

Online on Facebook, YouTube, and at [FPCAmbler.org](https://FPCAmbler.org)

*This week's devotions were written by Debra Lee*

**Monday, July 24, 2023**

**Read:** Matthew 18: 21-35

**Reflect:** Forgiveness is an essential part of our Christian life. Showing mercy and forgiving others will transform us. The parable of the Unmerciful Servant illustrates that it is God's will for us to forgive others in the same way we are forgiven by Him. In the Lord's Prayer, Jesus taught us to pray, saying "forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors." Peter had more than doubled the Jewish practice of pardoning someone three times for an offense, and in this context seven seemed like a large number. Jesus famously replied, not even seven, but seventy-seven, or in some translations seventy times seven. The point is to forgive as many times as it takes. We are instructed in Ephesians 4 to put away all bitterness, wrath, malice, anger, clamor, and slander and to be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgives each of us. Forgiveness brings freedom, where unforgiveness breeds bitterness and resentment.

**Prayer:** Lord, show me where I need to forgive and to let go of past hurts, just as you have forgiven me and no longer keep a record of my sin. Thank you that the debt for my sin has been paid by Jesus, and for the freedom this brings.

**Tuesday, July 25, 2023**

**Read:** Matthew 18: 23-27

**Reflect:** The king represents God, the servant represents us. The servant's debt was an insurmountable amount, in today's value, several millions of dollars! The servant begged for the king's patience to pay it back. Rather than reduce the debt or work out a payment plan, the king canceled the debt. The lesson is simple, the forgiveness God extends to us must be extended to others. There is no amount of forgiveness you can give that will be greater than or even equal to the amount of forgiveness God has forgiven you. We must pay it forward in our willingness to forgive others.

**Prayer:** Thank you, Heavenly Father, that you love us so much you sent your Son to pay the debt of our sin which is beyond our capacity to repay. Show me where I need to extend to others the same grace you have shown me, in Jesus' name.

**Wednesday, July 26, 2023:**

**Read:** Matthew 18: 28-30

**Reflect:** After the servant was pardoned for his insurmountable debt by the king, he sought out a fellow servant who owed him money. It is mind boggling that the servant who was shown mercy and clemency by the king did not show mercy toward his fellow servant, as if he completely forgot about his master's abundant grace, demanding payment from another servant of a much lesser amount. Though we live wholly on God's mercy and forgiveness, we are often loathe to forgive the offences of our brethren. The principle of forgiveness is that the grace and forgiveness we are to show towards others is without limit.

**Prayer:** Heavenly Father, show us when we forget that Your forgiveness is not because of anything we have done, but simply because of the grace and mercy shown to us through Your only begotten Son Jesus. By the power of your Holy Spirit, grant us the mercy and grace to forgive others.

**Thursday, July 27, 2023**

**Read:** Matthew 18: 31-34

**Reflect:** Jesus went on to illustrate what happens if we don't extend the same mercy and forgiveness God shows us. The first servant demonstrated unreasonable severity toward his fellow-servant in light of, and despite of, the mercy and forgiveness he received. The master reproved this servant's cruelty. We are not to suppose that God turns around and condemns us for wrongdoing. Rather, this part of the parable shows that if we do not extend the same mercy that God has shown us, we haven't received the sanctifying grace of the Gospel. It shows how God deals with freely forgiven Christians (in name only) who persist in unmerciful treatment of others,

**Prayer:** Heavenly Father, we humbly come before you in gratitude for your abounding mercy, through the ransom of the death of Jesus. Lord, change our hearts, that we may show the same mercy and forgiveness toward others that we have received from You.

**Friday, July 28, 2023**

**Read:** Matthew 18: 35

**Reflect:** Jesus provides a stern warning, saying that God will do the same as the master who punished the unmerciful servant for his lack of mercy. We are called to do for others what God has done for us. If God is willing to forgive us day after day after day for our repeated offenses, how much more should we be willing to forgive those who have wronged us? In the same way, when we accept the free gift of salvation and step into God's complete and total forgiveness, we are freed from the shackles of sin and our hearts are transformed to become more like His.

**Prayer:** Lord, I pray for a heart of gratitude and a willingness to forgive others simply because of how much I'm forgiven through Christ. I know that it is far more than seven, seventy, or seventy times seven. Change my heart, Lord, by Your mercy which is beyond measure and by far the most magnificent, undeserved gift of grace anyone could ever receive.

## **Saturday, July 29, 2023**

Read Matthew 22:1-14 slowly.

Then close your eyes and imagine you are the son in whose honor the banquet is being prepared. Or perhaps a servant sent to invite the guests. Or one of the guests who refused to come. Imagine you are the host. Do you catch the aroma of the roasting fattened calf? Feel the energy of final preparations being made? What emotions are each person feeling? What is stirred up in you?

## **Sunday, July 30, 2023**

Join us for traditional worship at 9 am or contemporary at 10:30. You are also welcome to join us online at [FPCAmbler.org](https://FPCAmbler.org), on Facebook, or YouTube.

*The devotions for Monday-Thursday this week were written by Bill Brams.*

## **Monday, July 31, 2023**

**Read:** Matthew 22: 1-3

**Reflect:** Jesus so often spoke in parables and rarely provided explanations. The parables were an important teaching method of our Lord. A parable explained loses some of its impact on us. I have come to really enjoy the parables and the learning opportunities they present to me. This wedding was a significant event, and an invitation was highly valued. The invitation refused made no sense. This is the issue that gives us pause and a reason for introspection. Jesus does not stop there.

**Prayer:** Dear Lord Jesus, please give me the wisdom to learn from your teachings. Often at first reading the parables makes no sense to me but with time and thought the lesson to be learned gets through to me. I know sometimes I, too, have refused your invitations. Bless me with gained wisdom to see the light you are shining on me and to say yes when you call. I ask this in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.



**Tuesday, August 1, 2023**

**Read: Matthew 22: 4-7**

**Reflect:** According to Barclays, invitations such as these were sent in advance and often did not indicate the specific time of the event. Rather servants would be sent out to let those invited to know that the feast was ready. And yet, the invitation was ignored. Not only ignored but dismissed to tend to business or personal needs. The messengers were killed for spite. The king was furious and brought judgment against them. Burning the city is possibly a reference to the burning of Jerusalem in A.D. 70.

**Prayer:** Gracious God, I know I can be both ignorant and stubborn. Your invitation to me is always there and you are always ready to receive me. The time and day are actually a continuum. Bless me and enlighten me to persist in my faithful following of your words and teachings as you persist in loving me. Help me to set my priorities in good order by the guidance of the Holy Spirit and your teachings.

**Wednesday, August 2, 2023**

**Read:** Matthew 22: 8-10

**Reflect:** Talk about persistence! We have the third invitation. The host was determined to fill his banquet hall. No one was refused entry. We have that moment when we realize that this parable is about grace. All who came were underserving of both the invitation and to partake of the wedding feast. Jesus was talking to you and me. Did I finally get the message? Yes, but it took a while. The sacrament of communion is a powerful reminder of how blessed I am and how welcome I am at God's table. The invitation is for everyone, the good and the bad among us.

**Prayer:** Gracious God, thank you for the gift of grace given to us freely through your son Jesus. Dear Jesus, the price you paid for our eternal benefit is remembered each day and particularly when we celebrate the sacrament of communion. Your cost was great, and the grace bestowed to us is free. I am so thankful, Lord Jesus.

**Thursday, August 3, 2023**

**Read:** Matthew 22: 11-14

**Reflect:** Some commentators believe that the host would have provided a wedding garment and this man insulted the host by not complying. Apart from the garment question, clearly the man was out of place at this event. He wanted to eat and party, but he did not show reverence for the host or his son.

The parable suggests that this man was not really a believer but indifferent to the gospel. As such, he was denied sharing in the feast. He was invited but did not exhibit appropriate conduct. His conduct led to him not being chosen. The question becomes, what is my status? I was clearly invited as we all were but is our conduct appropriate as followers of Jesus? We strive to make our actions consistent with God's teaching but fall short. Thank God for his mercy and the forgiveness purchased for us through Jesus Christ!

**Prayer:** Lord Jesus, thank you for the wisdom and lessons of this parable. I pray that my actions to further your kingdom on this earth honor your invitation. I pray that my actions that honor your gift mean that I am also chosen. I ask this in the name of your blessed son Jesus.

**Friday, August 4, 2023**

**Read:** Matthew 22:14

“For many are invited, but few are chosen.”

**Reflect:** Christians have debated “free will” versus “election” for millennia. Paradoxically, the answer is probably somehow both. I wonder if this verse speaks to the issue. Can it be that all are invited as Jesus stands at the door and knocks (Rev. 3:20), but not all will open the door? And doesn't it make sense that our all-knowing God will know who will answer? We also know that no one comes to faith unless the Father draws them (John 6:44.) So, listen well. Have ears that hear. Open the door to the King's son Jesus, bridegroom of the Church, and be clothed in the righteous robes of the lamb. No one will ever be better dressed!

**Prayer:** Father, we thank you for sending your Son to seek and save the lost. Jesus, we thank you for taking our sin to the cross and standing at the door, knocking, wanting all to be saved. Holy Spirit, thank you for prompting us to open the door, to accept the invitation that leads to abundant life. We pray for \_\_\_\_\_ to receive your invitation, be drawn to you in faith, and have life with you forever.

## **Saturday, August 5, 2023**

Read Matthew 20:1-16 in preparation for tomorrow's sermon.

What does this parable stir up in you? Talk to the Lord about it.

## **Sunday, August 6, 2023**

Come, let us worship together!

We will serve communion at both services.

9 am traditional

10:30 am South Ridge contemporary

Live-streamed at [FPCAmbler.org](https://FPCAmbler.org), Facebook, and YouTube

*The devotions for Monday-Thursday this week were written by Bill Brams*

**Monday, August 7, 2023**

**Read: Matthew 20: 1-2**

**Reflect:** This parable appears only in Matthew. Day laborers were often poor and as such it was customary that they be paid at the end of each day. One denarius was a normal payment. The same amount was paid daily to Roman soldiers. It is important to note that the payment was agreed upon by the landowner and the workers so deemed fair by all.

As an aside, when I visited South Africa and was on a bus tour, we passed numerous groups of people standing by the side of the road. It was explained to us that these were day laborers hoping to be offered work and day wages. This practice continues to this day.

**Prayer:** Gracious God, I feel blessed each day that I am given an opportunity to be led by the Holy Spirit to further the work of your kingdom. I am blessed and grateful to be an instrument of your grace. I am thankful for so many blessings through the gift to us of your son Jesus.

**Tuesday, August 8, 2023**

**Read:** Matthew 20: 3-7

**Reflect:** The third hour was about 9AM. The day started at dawn, so the first hour was considered 6AM. The landowner had an unlimited supply of workers that could be tapped throughout the day. The parable starts to speak to us. Why, in the sight of God, are so many idle? Are you? Am I? We know there is plenty of work for all of us that follow Jesus and are charged to advance the kingdom. It is never too late.

Please note again that the wages were agreed upon. The landowner says clearly, "Whatever is right you will receive."

**Prayer:** Gracious God, hear my prayer. I know that many times I have been idle in your sight or perhaps simply lazy. Through your grace I have been saved and through the Holy Spirit have been blessed with so many opportunities to help others and advance your kingdom. Help me gain the wisdom to recognize my gifts and apply them to benefit others. I ask this in the name of your son Jesus who was and is your gift to us.

**Wednesday, August 9, 2023**

**Read:** Matthew 20: 8-10

**Reflect:** An important point in this parable is that not only were all paid the same but those hired last were paid first. This seems so unfair to us at first consideration. The power of the parable is all about this perceived unfairness and how we reframe our initial reaction. We recall that the landowner broke no promises. The payments to all were as agreed. Again, the parable speaks to us. Our human determination of worth is not the same as God's. Latecomers, the poor, outcasts and perhaps those late in finding Jesus in their lives can also be blessed in God's eyes. God's grace is not time dependent.

**Prayer:** Gracious God, so often my pride overwhelms me. I compare myself to others---sometimes positively and sometimes negatively. I have, at times, expected your judgment to be based on a scorecard as if I need to win in the game of life. Bless me with the wisdom to put pride aside and live a life accepting your generous gift of grace. Each day is another opportunity to advance your kingdom. Help me recognize it is never too late.



**Thursday, August 10, 2023**

**Read:** Matthew 20: 11-16

**Reflect:** In Matthew 19 Peter asked Jesus, “We have left everything to follow you! What then will there be there for us?” This parable follows immediately and speaks to Peter as it does to us. God’s rewards are not the same as the way humans dispense rewards. These verses properly sum up the messages of the parable. Although we sympathize with the workers’ complaints, as noted, the landowner broke no promises. The landowner finally rebukes the grumblers and points out that the way he distributes his wages (substitute generosity for wages) is at his discretion. So, we should be cautious about questioning how God may at times reward us unequally from our perspective.

**Prayer:** Gracious God, your precious gift to us of Jesus so that we may have eternal life is not time bound. Latecomers are welcome. I am truly blessed and have been given the wisdom to grasp your gift of grace. The ability to serve you is all grace. Every opportunity to serve is your gift. Help me cast my pride aside and strive to serve You day by day. I pray for these things in the name of your son Jesus.

**Friday, August 11, 2023**

**Read:** Matthew 20:1-16

**Reflect:** When we read this passage, we tend to focus on those who worked all day. We understand their expectation of receiving more and their dismay when they received only what was originally promised and had to wait until last. Let's flip it around and imagine you are one of those hired at the end of the day. What joy to receive a whole day's pay! How surprising to receive such generosity. The religious elite were not happy about folks on the margins being welcomed into the kingdom. The poor, foreigners, tax collectors and prostitutes were all becoming disciples while the chief priests and Pharisees indignantly stood by. And yet, angels in heaven rejoice when a sinner repents (Luke 15:7.) We may have labored for Jesus our whole lives; can we rejoice with those who come to faith late in life---perhaps even gangs and thieves, and receive the same gift of salvation?

**Prayer:** Lord God, what is a lifetime in view of eternity? We thank you for the gift of our salvation. May we share your love and the hope we have with others and do the work you created in advance for us to do (Eph 2:10) with joy and purpose. May our hearts rejoice as you generously call others your own.

## **Saturday, August 12, 2023**

Read Matthew 25:1-13 in preparation for tomorrow's sermon.

Ask the Holy Spirit to give you understanding as you meditate on this parable.

## **Sunday, August 13, 2023**

All are welcome to gather in worship at FPC Ambler!

Service times are 9 am (traditional) and 10:30 (contemporary)

Unable to make it? Join us online via Facebook, YouTube, or [FPCAmbler.org](http://FPCAmbler.org)

*This week's devotions were written by Suzy Moore.*

**Monday, August 14, 2023**

**Read: Matthew 25:1-13**

**Reflect:** Why wait? We see a choice entertained by the 10 virgins in their duty to keep their lamp full and ready to be lit upon the bridegroom's arrival. Some lived each hour taking care to fill their lamps. They were ready and when the time came, the bridegroom beckoned them in. Some did not keep oil in their lamps and were not ready. The first group entered when the bridegroom came and will enter the Kingdom of God when Jesus comes again; the second group simply will not. Having failed to stay ready, they could not enter and were separated from the bridegroom forever.

**Prayer:** Dear Lord, you have given us a simple message and a simple choice. To be forever with you in an amazingly complex and beautiful world both here and in heaven we need only believe in Jesus and live as he taught us to live. Help us to understand and live well, always asking and seeking your will for us.

**Tuesday, August 15, 2023**

**Read:** Matthew 25: 1-3

**Reflect:** It's us! I was confused as I read the story. Aren't we supposed to help the poor, share our bounty and gifts? Of course, we are. Here, the five who had not tended to their lamps had known what they were to do, yet, for some reason did not do it. Filling our lamps with oil is compared to filling our lives with the Holy Spirit so that no matter what happens, we are always ready. We are called to read the Bible, share our gifts, reach out to all in God's name and live through all days with God foremost in our moments. The virgins who let their lamps go dry, had given in to sleep and did not have the Holy Spirit moving in their lives. We all do this at times. The beauty is God's gift to us, forgiving us again and again and drawing our hearts to his in love. No one can do this for us. We must each choose to live with God.

**Pray:** Dear Lord, how blessed and comforted we are that while we live and breathe, we always have the opportunity to turn to you, back from sin and forward with the Holy Spirit to enjoy, to share, and to spread your kingdom here. We look forward to spending eternity with you.

**Wednesday, August 16, 2023**

**Read:** Matthew 25 1-13

**Reflect:** He is here now! How long do we have to fill our lamps? When do we have to get serious about it? After all, it has been such a long while, when is Jesus coming again? What would we do if we knew Jesus was going to come tomorrow? Folks, I say, in His way, Jesus is here right now. The time is now, this day, to do everything we can to speak love, joy, peace, and hope to all and to pray ceaselessly as we go through each day, hour, and breath we are given.

**Pray:** Dear Lord, it is your world, your time, and your kingdom, in which we live. Please guide us, fill us, and lead us.

**Thursday, August 17, 2023**

**Read:** Matthew 25 1-13

**Reflect:** Love, joy, peace, happiness, goodness, faithfulness, and self-control are fun! But guess what. It is not merely a wonderful wedding feast and party - although marvelous events – for which we are preparing. We anticipate Jesus coming again and being united with him in God's Kingdom. While we wait, we enjoy full lives with the gifts of the fruit of the Spirit. They come as we start keeping the Holy Spirit with us, within us, and following the guide.

**Pray:** Dear Lord, open our eyes, ears, hearts, minds, bodies, and souls to you and keep us close. Bestow your Holy Spirit in our lives so that right now, all day today, we enjoy in all of our encounters love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control (Gal 5:22.) Thank you, Lord!

**Friday, August 18, 2023**

**Read:** Matthew 25 1-13

**Reflect:** Keep your lamps lit. The time to prepare for the arrival of the bridegroom and the great eternal wedding feast is now.

**Prayer:** Dear Lord, thank you for your sweet simple and far-reaching parable of the ten virgins for us to read. We do not understand why bad things happen, we do not always see what we are supposed to be doing or where we are going. We have doubts, questions, and misgivings. We sin. May we benefit and respond to this story by choosing to keep our lamps well-oiled ready to be lit - keeping our lamps lit in the face of whatever comes in our path.



## **Saturday, August 19, 2023**

Read Matthew 21:28-32 in preparation for tomorrow's sermon.

Ask the Holy Spirit to be your teacher as you read.

If you were preaching on this passage, what would you say?

## **Sunday, August 20, 2023**

First Presbyterian Church of Ambler Welcomes All to Worship

9 am traditional service

10:30 am contemporary service

Both are live-streamed and available at [FPCAmbler.org](https://www.FPCAmbler.org), Facebook, and YouTube.

**Monday, August 21, 2023**

**Read:** Matthew 21:28-32

**Reflect:** We are familiar with the parable of the two sons. One told Dad he would not go out to the vineyard to work but did and the other said he would but did not. In fact, the one who did not answered his father respectfully, “I will sir,” but did not go. He gave the appearance of honoring his father with his answer, but his heart wasn’t in it. Did he feel entitled? Above the menial work in the fields? Did he feel rebellious, balking at his father’s request? Did something else come along that held more allure?

The question posed to us is will we say “yes” to the Father and actually follow-through? Will we say “yes” on Sundays and “no” the rest of the week? We are called to give ourselves wholly to God and seek first his kingdom. Let us answer a whole-hearted YES to Jesus’ invitation and follow through with obedience. Joy and life abundant will follow.

**Prayer:** Lord God, we thank you for your invitation to follow you and reply with our YES. Help us to follow you in humility, faith, and always love.

**Tuesday, August 22, 2023**

**Read:** Matthew 21:31-32

**Reflect:** The tax collectors and prostitutes of the day represented the lowest of the low. Tax collectors earned their living by extorting fellow citizens. Greed and the love of money are insidious, full of promise leading to emptiness. Prostitutes were considered “dirty” and guilty of leading men into temptation. Like today, poverty, need, and exploitation were often behind this “choice” of profession that leads to shame and again, emptiness. How else did they differ from the chief priests and Pharisees? They knew their need. They were not deceived by self-righteousness or pride. They knew they did not have the key to life and when offered the richness of life with meaning and forgiveness that covers all shame, they eagerly accepted.

**Prayer:** Lord, you tell us that our best works are like dirty rags to you. Forgive us for delusional thinking in which we feel superior to others, cleaner, more deserving, more righteous. Like the taxpayer in Luke 18:13, I ask you to have mercy on me, a sinner. I do not deserve your grace but receive it with joy. Help me to surrender all to you in gratitude.

**Wednesday, August 23, 2023**

**Read:** Matthew 21:31-32

**Reflect:** Tax collectors and prostitutes were looked down on by society much as addicts, gangs, and faceless immigrants are in our nation today. What if Kensington became a center of praise? If revival broke out at our southern border? If gangs started delivering meals and offering ways out of bondage?

Would we respond with awe and wonder or with skepticism and hardened hearts?

Jesus saw each person. Those so used to being dehumanized and despised met the unflinching gaze of the One who came to save them. They were seen, in all their guilt and shame, yet they were *loved*. This powerful love melted resistance, showed greed for the lie it is, exchanged shame for dignity. Jesus sees each of us. Take a moment to meet his gaze and experience his love.

**Prayer:** Lord Jesus, thank you for seeing each of us and knowing us completely. Thank you for forgiving our sins and covering our shame. Thank you for inviting us into your kingdom and giving us meaning and purpose. Help us to live in your love and share it with others. May we see as you see.

**Thursday, August 24, 2023**

**Read:** Matthew 21: 28-31

**Reflect:** Jesus asked, “Which son did the will of his father?” Of course, it was not the one who gave lip service obedience but the one who actually went out to the field. Perhaps the one who said he would go became distracted. Do we have resolve on Sunday morning that is crowded out by afternoon? Perhaps the one who said no felt a prompting that made him change his mind. What is the will of our Father in heaven? What work does he have us to do? The work of God is to believe in the One he has sent (John 6:29.) His commands are to love him with all our being and to love others as ourselves. Let our response to God’s call be “Yes,” accompanied by hearts of faith and a life expressing love for him and for others.

**Prayer:** Lord, show me where I hold back, where my “yes” is shallow and my follow-through weak. I want to give myself completely to you who held back nothing to make me yours. There is no greater love than giving your life for a friend. Thank you for your sacrificial love.

**Friday, August 25, 2023**

**Read:** Matthew 21:32

**Reflect:** The chief priests and Pharisees did not believe John as he preached the way of righteousness, but the tax collectors and prostitutes did. What would it have cost them to believe? They would have had to re-orient their lives, to recognize their own need, to give up their status and power. They would have had to “change their minds.” What ideas do we have of right, wrong, priorities, and values that are not aligned with those of Christ? What would we need to give up if we changed our minds? Are we willing?

**Prayer:** Lord God, may I love as you love and yield my priorities to yours. May I be willing to submit my opinions and politics, my money and possessions, my time, and talents to you. Help me, Lord. Continue to transform me by the power of your Holy Spirit. Thank you that you who began a good work in me, will bring it to completion (Phil 1:6.)

**Saturday, August 26, 2023**

Read Matthew 21:33-46 in preparation for tomorrow's sermon.  
Ask God about "fruits of the kingdom."

**Sunday, August 27, 2023**

Come celebrate the King of kings!  
Worship services are at 9 am (traditional) and 10:30 (contemporary)  
Find us online at [FPCAmbler.org](http://FPCAmbler.org), on Facebook, and YouTube

**Monday, August 28, 2023**

**Read:** Matthew 21:33-41

**Reflect:** In this passage, tenants of the vineyard staged a coup. Rather than giving the landowner his due they beat, stoned, and killed his servants and finally, in an act they thought would be a triumph, they killed the owner's own son. Those listening were rightfully indignant and said the landowner should call them to task and replace them with tenants who would obey the terms. At first, they could not see Jesus was talking about them. This recalls the prophet Nathan coming to David about his role in having Uriah the Hittite killed in battle to cover up his sinful affair with Bathsheba. Nathan shared a story about a rich man taking the beloved lamb of a poor man, rousing David's sense of injustice. When Nathan told David, "You are the man," David was cut to the heart. Not so the chief priests and Pharisees.

Human beings have great capacity for self-deception and rationalization. Where are we off track?

**Prayer:** Jesus, we ask you to search our hearts. Show us where we are off course. Where do we stand in judgment? Where do we harbor greed? Where do we resist the path you have for us? We ask you to show us our sin and bring us to repentance. It is your kindness that leads to repentance (Romans 2:4.)



**Tuesday, August 29, 2023**

**Read:** Matthew 21:33

**Reflect:** The landowner planted the vineyard, fenced it, dug a wine press, and built a watchtower. The tenants could have had a secure place to live, steady work, and fruit of the vine. Their needs would be met. But it was not enough. Their lust for more led them to violence against the landowner's servants and even his son.

We rightfully condemn those wicked tenants but consider this: All we have comes from God. Our health, homes, and abilities are gifts. We are stewards of the gifts we have been given. It's hard to admit, but we can sometimes be like those servants. We don't like it when people---or the Holy Spirit!--- mess with "our" lives. We can dig in, justify ourselves, get ugly with anything or anyone challenging our ownership.

God planted us, encamps around us, watches over us, stays with us always. Our needs are met in him. He is enough.

**Prayer:** Lord, thank you for meeting all my needs. Forgive me for wanting more and for holding back what is rightfully yours. Everything I have is from you and for you. May I serve with gratitude and generosity as a good steward of all you have entrusted to my care.

**Wednesday, August 30, 2023**

**Read:** Matthew 21: 38

**Reflect:** How is it that the tenants thought they would get the inheritance after killing the landowner's son? Did they think this final act of violence would cause the landowner to give up? That through their violence they somehow "won?"

Satan, through the chief priests and Pharisees, thought he had victory at the cross. But no. Jesus is alive and gives life to all who come to him. The victory was a grand surprise. The landowner wins. Love wins. God is on the throne. This is the biggest turn-around in history and ultimately, all will be well.

**Prayer:** God, Your ways are surprising, and we have reason for hope. We rest knowing that despite the brokenness of the world, the end of the story is written, and it ends well.

**Thursday, August 31, 2023**

**Read:** Matthew 21:33-46

**Reflect:** When the chief priests and Pharisees realized Jesus was talking about them as he taught in parables, they looked for a way to arrest him. Before we are too hard on them, think about how we react when we are called out. I confess that defensiveness and self-protection are usually my initial responses.

As we abide in Jesus and he in us, we can lay down defensiveness, trust his protection of our fragile selves, and bear abundant fruit for the kingdom.

**Prayer:** Lord Jesus, may we find our true selves in you and live this life you give with courage, hope, faith, and love. Help us to lay down all defensiveness and self-protection. Thank you for the safety and freedom we have as people of your kingdom.

**Friday, September 1, 2023**

**Read:** Matthew 21:43

**Reflect:** In the parable about the landowner and the evil tenants, the workers refused to give the owner the fruit. In v. 43 Jesus tells the people that the kingdom of God will be taken away from the leaders and given to a people who will produce its fruit. Recall that Jesus is the vine, and we are the branches. If we abide in him as he abides in us, we will bear much fruit (Luke 15:4-5.) And what is this fruit? The fruit of the Holy Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.

**Prayer:** Lord Jesus, you are the vine, and we are the branches. May we bear much fruit as we abide in you. May we remember that all we have is yours. May we be your faithful servants, joyfully bearing fruit that blesses your people and gives glory to your name.

## **Saturday, September 2, 2023**

Read Matthew 25:14-30.

What is God saying to you in this familiar parable?

## **Sunday, September 3, 2023**

Come worship the Lord with gladness!

9 am traditional service

10:30 am contemporary service

Online at [FPCAmbler.org](https://FPCAmbler.org), Facebook, and YouTube

**Monday, September 4, 2023**

**Read:** Matthew 25:14-30

**Reflect:** How fitting to meditate on this passage on the day we celebrate labor! My husband retired at the end of the school year. He was saddened that so many younger people said they were jealous and could hardly wait until they could retire. We are all given abilities, gifts, and passions to use in service to the King. There was work in the garden of Eden before the fall, so we know that work is meant to be good. Perhaps it is the perspective of the worker that determines whether the work is meaningful and fruitful or toil and drudgery.

**Prayer:** Lord, thank you for the gifts you have given me. Where I am uncertain, please show me what they are. May I invest them in your kingdom, bearing much fruit, and working as if I am working for the King of kings. Because I am.

**Tuesday, September 5, 2023**

**Read:** Matthew 25:14-15

**Reflect:** It was not unusual for owners to leave servants in charge of their possessions. The servants were stewards of the owner's riches. In this case, Jesus is the owner who went away, returning to his Father in heaven. But just as the owner in the parable returned and demanded an account from his servants, so Jesus will return and call each of us to account. What might our gifts look like? Skills, abilities, education, experiences, and more. How are we stewarding the gifts he has entrusted to our care? How does this impact how we use the time and talents we receive?

**Prayer:** Lord God, you teach that to whom much is given, much will be required (Luke 12:48.) We each have been given much! Help us to live each day in awareness that all we have is from you and for you. May we work to share your kingdom with servant hearts full of humility and love.

**Wednesday, September 6, 2023**

**Read:** Matthew 25:14-30

**Reflect:** When I was leaving my work at a hospital to come serve at FPCA colleagues asked me who my boss would be. I jokingly answered, “God.” But seriously, isn’t God the boss of all of us? What kind of servants are we? Our “work” may be paid employment or perhaps not if a student, disabled or retired, but we are all called to work for the kingdom of God. The work of God is to believe in the One he sent, to turn toward the One whose gaze is ever on us, and to live in sacrificial love for his people.

**Prayer:** Lord, what an honor to work for the King of kings. Turn our hearts and minds to you and fill us anew with your Holy Spirit. Help us to live this day and each day you give us unto you, using all you entrust to us in ways that bring you joy and bless your people. You give us gifts of life, light, and love. Help us to be diligent in using our gifts.



**Thursday, September 7, 2023**

**Read:** Matthew 25:24-30

**Reflect:** Think about the servant who was given just one talent. He said, “Master, I knew that you are a hard man, harvesting where you have not sown and gathering where you have not scattered seed. So, I was afraid and went out and hid your gold in the ground. See, here is what belongs to you.” His view of the master was limited, impacting his heart and his actions. Where is our view of God off-kilter? Yes, there are things about God that are hard for us to understand. Yet, we do know that God is a God of abundance who gives good gifts with extravagant generosity. Our God loves deeply, wildly, and uses even us, his creatures, to take part in his plan.

**Prayer:** Lord, thank you for each and every gift you give us. May we get to work, enthusiastically, joyfully, serving you with our whole hearts, multiplying the gifts for your glory, which is our joy.

**Friday, September 8, 2023**

**Read:** Matthew 25:24-30

**Reflect:** Dorothy Sayers, in her essay entitled *Why Work?* said that when we follow Jesus, “all the work will be Christian work, whether it is Church embroidery or sewage farming.” In his letter to the Colossians, Paul said, “whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks go God the Father through him (Col 3:17.)” On the surface, this parable deals with money. Each servant was given a different amount with a different anticipated outcome. The faithful servants worked hard and invested what they were given with a good return which they joyfully returned to their master. Not so the fearful servant. Meditate on this passage once more, asking God what he would have you take away.

**Prayer:** Lord God, thank you for the riches of your Word. We go back to familiar passages again and again and there is always something more to show us a facet of your character, another opportunity to grow, something new to ponder and turn over in our minds. Let your Word disrupt us, challenge us, instruct us. May your Spirit empower us. And may we have the joy of serving you with all that you entrust to our care.



**First Presbyterian Church of Ambler**  
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A place where lives are changed by Christ  
and we live out our faith together.

