

Bethel Church Worship Guide – June 21, 2020

Thanks to Kim Lehmoxn for the welcome and offering prayer.

Peace verse: Proverbs 16:7-8

When the ways of people please the Lord,
he causes even their enemies to be at peace with them.
Better is a little with righteousness than large income with injustice.

Light a candle in your worship space to represent the peace of Christ in our midst today.

Welcome: by Kim Lehmoxn

Hopefully this day, “Sunday” will be a time of spiritual slowing down for all of us. I trust you are taking the time to learn, grow and enjoy these messages from Rebecca.

This has been a time of learning and examining “church” in a totally different way. I have found I am pleasantly surprised about some things this “church” experience has for me. Hey, those YouTube videos have taken music to a whole new level. I can repeat the message, or fast forward if I want. I can go back and ponder what has been said/read. I have enjoyed the questions Rebecca puts before us. And I feel free to talk back.

I have found it intriguing, Rebecca wants to talk about money at a time such as this. During this pandemic money seems to be the “hot” word of the day. I believe I hear or read about money almost every day: Did you ever get your stimulus check? What are you going to buy? Can I make more money staying home or going to work? Are we getting another check? ... and on and on and on. Oh, yes, I have seen supply and demand; for example, face masks used to be \$6 for a box, now that box costs \$25. Is that the same as tearing down and building bigger in 2020?

I would like to share with you something I read that has stayed with me (and you can choose to ponder or skip over this). *For those of us who are satisfied only with things money can buy, we are in great danger of losing the things money can not buy.* Just ask the farmer in Jesus’ parable in Luke 12:15-21.

Song: Like the murmur of the dove’s song – Hymnal Worship Book #29

Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d6TjaPHVsB4>

- V.1. Like the murmur of the dove’s song, like the challenge of her flight,
like the vigor of the wind’s rush, like the new flame’s eager might:
come Holy Spirit, come.
- V.2. To the members of Christ’s body, to the branches of the Vine,
to the church in faith assembled, to her midst as gift and sign: come Holy Spirit, come.
- V.3. With the healing of division, with the ceaseless voice of prayer,
with the power to love and witness, with the peace beyond compare:
come Holy Spirit, come.

Old Testament reading: Leviticus 25:8-19, 23-24

Offering and prayer: consider what you will offer to God this week

Heavenly Father,
We praise you, and want our lives to be pleasing to you, Lord.
Help us to reach out to others, not only with our giving of money but also with your love.
Help us to listen to you, knowing as our Heavenly Father you will meet all our needs. Amen.

Song: O Power of love – Hymnal Worship Book #593

Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VCVJUerDI80>

- V.1. O Power of love, all else transcending, in Jesus present evermore,
I worship thee, in homage bending, thy name to honor and adore.
Yea, let my soul, in deep devotion, bathe in love's mighty boundless ocean.
- V.2. Thou art my rest; no earthly treasure can satisfy my yearning heart,
and naught can give to me the pleasure I find in thee, my chosen part.
Thy love, so tender, so possessing, is joy to me, and every blessing.
- V.3. To thee my heart and life be given; thou art in truth my highest good.
For me thy sacred side was riven, for me was shed thy precious blood.
O though who art the world's salvation, be thine my love and adoration.

Scripture reading: Luke 12:15-21

Questions for reflection:

1. In this week's scripture, Jesus uses a parable to warn against greed. In this story, a man – who is already rich – has the happy dilemma of figuring out what to do with his bumper crop. He makes a plan, but God calls him a “fool” because of it. What caught your attention in the story?
2. Most of us have been taught that saving for the future is important (even essential), and is the responsible thing to do. How do we know if we are being prudent and saving for the needs of the future, or whether we are being greedy? What principle(s) have you used to guide your financial decisions?
3. Where did the man in the parable go wrong? Read the passage again; this time notice how many times the man says “I” or “my.”
 - a. As his income grew, we do not see any evidence that his generosity also increased. His interest was focused on his own well-being. This seems to be one of the barometers Jesus uses to determine what should be considered prudent and what amounts to greed.¹ Jesus directed his warning about greed to a crowd (12:13); he knew that materialism and the desire for possessions (and the status that comes with it) is something we are all susceptible to, regardless of our income level. So, Jesus said, “*be on your guard!*” Are you aware of your own areas of vulnerability to greed? What is it that you would be most tempted to ‘build bigger barns’ for? (for example: shoes, tools, vacations, etc). What or who helps keep you accountable?
4. Although people's situations vary, one general rule of thumb for financial management is to give 10%, save 10%, and live on the remaining 80%. Has that formula, or something similar,

¹ Beryl Jantzi, “But it's Only a Story”, in *Leader* Spring 2020 Vol.17 No.3, page 28.

been helpful to you? How have the ratios changed over the course of your life? What personal story could you tell someone to illustrate the benefits of saving and giving?

5. What do you think Jesus meant when he said we should be "*rich toward God*" (Luke 12:21)? Can you think of other Bible passages that help us know what that looks like? One example might be I Timothy 6:17-19. There Paul tells Timothy what attitudes and actions "*those who in the present age are rich*" should possess. What are the attitudes and actions named there?
6. Jesus emphasized that "*one's life does not consist in the abundance of possessions*" (12:15). Beryl Janzti wrote that the rich man in Jesus' story "had a false view of both life and death." He regarded life as meant for personal pleasure, and death as something that wouldn't affect him. Janzti says many people today behave with that same attitude. The rich man's life ended suddenly. In what ways are your financial values and faith values reflected in your end-of-life plans? (This could apply to a wide variety of things, including: talking with loved ones about what kind/level of medical care you wish to receive at the end of life, determining funeral expenses, and designating beneficiaries or charities.)
7. The Leviticus 25 passage we read earlier in the service describes God's plan for the Year of Jubilee. Every 50 years, Jubilee was meant to be like hitting a "reset" button economically and socially. Land was to be returned to its original clan and those members, debts forgiven, and indentured servants released. Notice verse 23: "*The land shall not be sold in perpetuity, for the land is mine*" (i.e. belonging to God; the Israelites are "*tenants*" to God). In many ways, the Jubilee year was a remedy to greed. It meant the rich couldn't perpetually amass wealth, and the poor (those who "*fall into difficulty*", v.25) had a way out of the cycle of poverty. What about this system is attractive to you?
 - a. When Jesus publicly read from the scroll of Isaiah (Luke 4:18-19), he declared that he had come "*to proclaim [and fulfill] the year of the Lord's favor*" which was at least an indirect reference to the year of jubilee. Are there ways that you have seen Christians or congregations participating with Jesus in making jubilee-style restoration a reality?

In her opening, Kim was curious that the theme of money was chosen for our worship. Well, it's not because I think Bethel people are greedy, or not generous, or not good at managing money. I don't know if money matters have been a contentious issue in the congregations' past. I hope the passages and questions have helped you think more consciously about a part of life that is often guided by habit.

I also believe that this Sunday's focus on greed connects to current events in at least a few ways. Greed often happens when we are afraid there won't be enough, when we think we'd be happier or safer with more. The hoarding of products that happened in March is an example. Greed causes people to do whatever it takes (even if it's illegal or hurts others) to gain or hang onto possessions; it was at the root when some people used their insider info to sell stocks to avoid losing money at the beginning of the pandemic. And I think it's important to recognize the many ways greed has created enormous disparity in our country and around the world, which aggravates the civil unrest we are witnessing. Paul told Timothy that the way to overcome greed is to flee from it and to "*pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love,*

endurance, gentleness" (I Tim. 6:11). Let's seek to pursue those things, along with contentment and generosity.

Response song: For the healing of the nations – Hymnal Worship Book #367

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

(Note: the tune in the recording is different than in our hymnbook, but the words are fitting.)

- V.1. For the healing of the nations, Lord, we pray with one accord,
for a just and equal sharing of the things that earth affords.
To a life of love in action help us rise and pledge our word.
- V.2. Lead your people into freedom. From despair your world release,
that, redeemed from war and hatred, all may come and go in peace.
Show us how, through care and goodness, fear will die and hope increase.
- V.3. All that kills abundant living, let it from the earth be banned: pride of status,
race, or schooling, dogmas that obscure your plan.
In our common quest for justice may we hallow life's brief span.
- V.4. You, Creator God, have written your great name on humankind.
For our growing in your likeness, bring the life of Christ to mind,
that by our response and service earth its destiny may find.

Intercessory Prayer: you are invited to offer your own prayers now, and/or join the Bethel group sharing and prayer time at 11:00 am by calling or logging in to GoToMeeting.

Generous God, in you I find life, health, and strength;
through your gifts I am clothed and fed;
through your mercy I have been forgiven and cleansed.

For all this I give heartfelt thanks!

We confess, Lord Jesus, that our lives are cluttered by too many things and many activities.

We are driven by the need to succeed, and to accumulate.

Forgive us.

Let us, like Mary, find the one thing that is needed and sit at your feet.²

Hear now my prayers:

(close with the Lord's Prayer...)

Benediction: (Luke 12:32, 34)

Do not be afraid, little flock,

for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.

For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

² Adapted from *Hymnal: A Worship Book* #695 and #724.