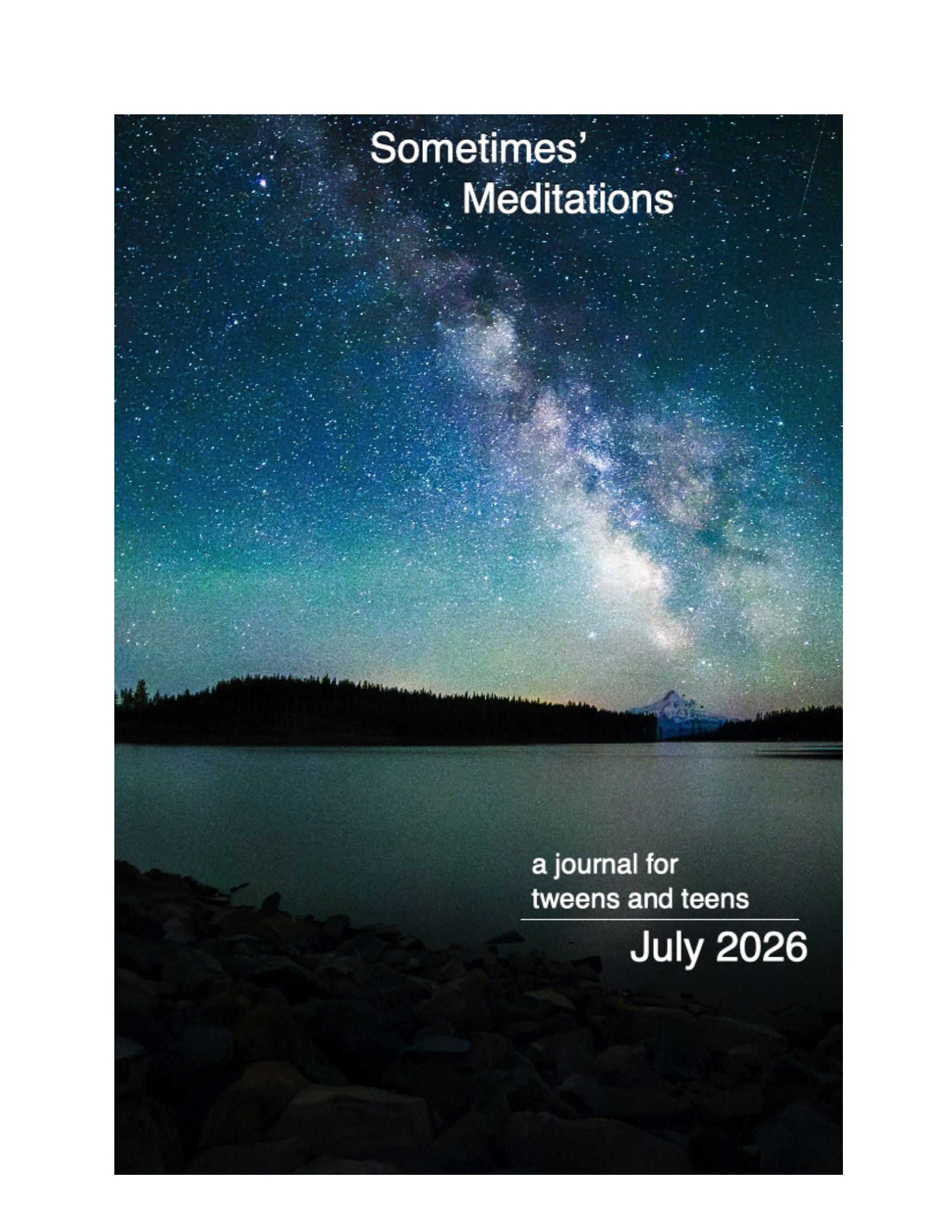




Sometimes' Meditations

a journal for
tweens and teens

July 2026

Wednesday, July 1st, 2026

Jesus said to them, 'Have you never read in the scriptures:

"The stone that the builders rejected
has become the cornerstone

Matthew 21:42

Do you know what a "cornerstone" is? It's an important part of a building that bears much of the building's weight. Some translations give "keystone," instead, and if you live near Pennsylvania, you may have seen the keystone shape on the highway signs there. Keystones are the center stones in an arch. They need to be in this shape so that the arch doesn't fall down. They are the most important stone in the whole building or in the whole arch.

So what is Jesus saying? Something that was thought of as unnecessary or useless became the most important thing. Who is Jesus talking about? Well, he's probably talking about himself: Jesus will be rejected and hung on a cross, and yet he is the most important person in the history of all humanity (that's pretty important, huh?).

Over the years, however, people have wondered if, maybe, Jesus was talking about something else as well. Maybe he was speaking more *generally* and less *specifically*. He may have been saying, "Be careful of what you ignore or say is unimportant. Those people you don't like or who you want to ignore, watch out! They may be more important than you realize!"

It often happens that someone who is less important or the underdog comes out on top. This is a common theme in American culture. We love the underdog. But it's not just the underdog who is important. It's the ones who all of our culture looks down on: the sad, the lonely, the forgotten, the poor, the minorities. Their voices are important, and we may be surprised how important they actually will be, and how much we should have listened to them!

Activity

Who do most people ignore in your community? Maybe reach out and connect with them, listen to their stories, and hear what they have to say.

Saturday, July 5th, 2026

Jesus came to Galilee...saying, 'The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news.'

Mark 1:14-15

Jesus talked about a lot of things, but one thing that was most often on his lips was 'the good news' or 'the Gospel.' But what is the Gospel?

We call the books of the Bible that talk about Jesus's life the gospels, because they tell about the good news. That good news is that Jesus, the *God*, came. He came to our world, he came to our side, he came to live with humanity. God did not leave humanity to live alone, far from him, but decided to walk the earth as one of his own creations, even if that meant that he would have to die in a rather violent way. He loved and still loves us so much that he wanted to be with us, and so he was incarnated as a human, as Jesus Christ, to do just this.

But why? Why do this? Well, in part, God loved humanity so much that he wanted to be as close to us as possible, and becoming human was the way to do that. It also may be that something was keeping God and humanity apart. People have a penchant for forgetting about God, and God may have wanted to overcome that and show how much he cared. Some say that humanity has done so many bad things that we couldn't get closer to God even if we wanted, and so God overcome that, too, by showing how strong, and how humble, he is.

Whatever the reason, what we know is that God so loved the world that he came to live among us - and not just live, but also died. That's a pretty tremendous thing. It's one of the reasons we worship him, and it's one of the reasons we give him thanks so often.

Prayer

Holy God, thank you for giving us Jesus Christ, who is you as much as he is your son. Please be with us in the good times and in the bad times. Give us hope, strength, love, and joy in your presence now and for all the days of our lives.

Wednesday, July 8th, 2026

I led them with cords of human kindness with bands of love.
I was to them like those who lift infants to their cheeks.
I bent down to them and fed them.

Hosea 11:4

A few seasons ago, we had a bird nest in a wreath on our front door. I can't remember what kind of bird it was, but I remember the scraggly-looking babies who hatched from the light blue eggs. The *cheep cheep cheeped* all throughout the day, only stopping when their parent flew in with some food. The little guys could barely lift up their heads, much less fly to find their own food, and so it was the parents' job to search out food to deliver to their newborns.

The prophet Hosea, who wrote our bit of Scripture today, thinks of God in the same way. Hosea was probably thinking of human children, but I think the image of God bending down to feed us reminds me more of birds standing on the edge of their nests and leaning towards their children. Whatever animal you think of, the image is pretty clear: God gives us what we need to live.

Does God give us literal food? Well, in a way, yes, God does. We are blessed with food, and those who grow it, harvest it, bring it to our supermarkets, and cook or prepare the food are all given their skills by God's gift. All good things come from God.

There is something else God gives us, though. God also gives us food for our spirits. When we are down, when we are lonely, when we are lost or sick or just feeling pretty crummy, God raises us up. Sometimes God sends someone to visit us and cheer us up. Sometimes God cares for us through doctors or parents or friends. And sometimes God simply sends the Holy Spirit into our hearts to see things more clearly. Whatever the case, God is feeding us with love and hope. It's something we can always give thanks for.

Activity: Spend some time imagining a bird giving its chicks food. Or think of a mother nursing her child, or other mammals who also nurse. Try imagining God as a mother giving food to her children, who are all of us.

Sunday, July 12th, 2026

Praise him, sun and moon;
praise him, all you shining stars.

Psalm 148:3

It's easy to like sunny days, where the weather is fine and the air is neither too cold nor too warm. It's easy to step outside your door, stretch out your arms, breathe in a deep breath of air, and put on a bright smile. Somehow it really does feel like all the world is praising God, that the sun and the moon and the stars are all singing out God's praise. The birds sing, little animals scurry about in the underbrush or climb up trees, and a little breeze passes through the leaves. Ahh, the glorious natural world!

But what about cloudy days? What about days that are just so humid and so hot? Or what about those dark days in the midst of winter when there's snow on the ground and the air is so cold that it feels like your throat freezes just by breathing in? Is nature praising God on those days?

Or, think of this: my wife and I drove across the country to Oregon and then drove back a few years later. We saw some wonderful things: the Black Hills, Yellowstone, the open plains, and the high Rocky Mountains. It was all so beautiful that my wife and I had nothing at all to say to one another. We just looked out in awe of God's great Creation.

But then there were other parts of the natural world, especially southern Idaho and the high deserts of eastern Oregon. These were incredibly hot places. I think I got sick from all the sun. We were exhausted, and I couldn't help but to get angry at the land. But is that fair? Aren't high deserts also places where God is glorified? Isn't it something in me that failed to see God's glory rather than something wrong with the land itself? Shouldn't I, not the natural world, be the one to grow?

Activity

Go to the library and get out one of those huge photo books about different parts of the world. Think about the Psalm above and about how God is glorified by these places. Try to find parts of the world that seem hard to love and think about finding God there, too.

Wednesday, July 15th, 2026

Then the king will say to those at his right hand, “Come, you that are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me.” Then the righteous will answer him, “Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry and gave you food, or thirsty and gave you something to drink? And when was it that we saw you a stranger and welcomed you, or naked and gave you clothing? And when was it that we saw you sick or in prison and visited you?” And the king will answer them, “Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.”

Matthew 25:34-40

We have a longer selection today, but it’s one of the most important parts of the gospels and Jesus’ message to us. To be honest, we don’t know exactly how this works. It’s not that, when we care for those in any type of need, we are following God’s teachings. It’s not that helping out others is *like* what God did as Jesus. No. Helping out those in need IS helping God. Clothing the poor, feeding the hungry, giving drink to the thirsty IS clothing God, feeding God, giving drink to God.

There’s a lot to unpack in this, which is a way to say that these words of Jesus tell us the complicated, beautiful, and wonderful entirety of what it means to be Christian and to live as a human being in this world. What we know, however, is that we meet God when we are helping to feed, clothe, and care for others. It is one of the greatest mysteries in the world, but it’s also one of the greatest gifts.

Human beings are supposed to help one another. Our culture should be founded on raising people up, transforming hatred to love, pain to joy, suffering to safety. We are most alive when we are doing these things in our local and the global community.

Prayer

God, bless the caregivers in this world. May the poor be clothed and fed, may the lonely given company, the lost be shown the way. And may I be part of your love for the world.

Sunday, July 19th, 2026

When he returned to Capernaum after some days, it was reported that he was at home. So many gathered around that there was no longer room for them, not even in front of the door; and he was speaking the word to them. Then some people came, bringing to him a paralysed man, carried by four of them. And when they could not bring him to Jesus because of the crowd, they removed the roof above him; and after having dug through it, they let down the mat on which the paralytic lay. When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, "Son, your sins are forgiven."

Mark 2:1-5

Something very interesting happens in this story. Did you catch it? No, not that people were able to remove a roof, and yes, the power of the four friends' faith is great (we'll get to that in a second). Think about it like this: imagine that a friend did something wrong to you. Maybe they lied to you or talked about you behind their back. They felt bad, but they felt so bad that they couldn't get up the courage to say that they were sorry. So another friend came up to you and apologized for them. Would you forgive that person?

For Jesus, the answer is "yes." It may seem pretty strange or wild to us, but Jesus forgave a man through the faith of his friends. Now, you may rightly ask: what did this man do? In Jesus' time, it was thought that, if you were sick or handicapped, that it was your fault. Even if you were born with a disease or, say, a leg or arm that didn't work, it was your fault or your parents' fault. You or they did something, and so God got mad at you and gave you a disease or hurt you.

That doesn't sound like the God that we know of through Jesus Christ, does it? Well, one of the things that Jesus taught was that this type of thinking was wrong-headed. God is our father, our mother, our beloved parent, and God doesn't give someone sickness or an injury as punishment. Here in our story, Jesus was telling him that: it's not your fault. You're forgiven.

But there's something in the power of the man's friends' faith that helped. Something about their willingness to carry his burden, to go the extra mile by taking apart a roof, but seeking and seeking and seeking help for their friend. This healed him, too, not just Jesus.

Question: how can you heal your friends (or enemies!) through your own faith?

Wednesday, July 22nd, 2026

But Mary stood weeping outside the tomb. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb; and she saw two angels in white, sitting where the body of Jesus had been lying, one at the head and the other at the feet. They said to her, 'Woman, why are you weeping?' She said to them, 'They have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid him.' When she had said this, she turned round and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not know that it was Jesus. Jesus said to her, 'Woman, why are you weeping? For whom are you looking?' Supposing him to be the gardener, she said to him, 'Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have laid him, and I will take him away.' Jesus said to her, 'Mary!' She turned and said to him in Hebrew, 'Rabbouni!' (which means Teacher). Jesus said to her, 'Do not hold on to me, because I have not yet ascended to the Father. But go to my brothers and say to them, "I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God."' Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples, 'I have seen the Lord'; and she told them that he had said these things to her.

John 20:11-18

Did you know that today is the feast day of St. Mary Magdalene? It is! And this is the gospel reading that you would hear if we had a church service in memory and community with her. Read it over again. It's pretty important.

St. Mary is called "the apostle to the apostles," which means that she was the first person to tell the people who would tell everyone about Jesus - about Jesus (few, that's a mouthful!). She was the first one. She was the spark from which the news of the Resurrection came. She bore that torch when everyone else was in mourning. She may not have known or understood what was happening, but she told everyone her story.

St. Mary reminds us to listen to people's stories about God, and that we should trust them. They may seem far-fetched, incredible, or beyond belief, but we should listen to them. They are incredibly personal (see how Jesus calls Mary by her name!), and they are powerful. They can strengthen our own faith, and they can cause us to grow. Or, if we encourage the person to tell their story to others, they can grow as well.

Christianity is about transformation. Sometimes it is us who are transformed. Sometimes it is others. Sometimes it is our whole society. And we are transformed by our stories and listening to the stories of others.

Prayer: God, help me listen to others and may I help the Spirit transform our world.

Sunday, July 26th, 2026

When I consider your heavens, the work of your fingers,

the moon and the stars you have set in their courses,
What are we humans that you should be mindful of us?
the son of us that you should seek us out?

Psalm 8: 4-5

Have you ever had to thank someone from the bottom of your heart? No, not write a thank you card, because your parents told you that you have to, or say thanks to the bus driver for dropping you off. I mean from deep down, from the depths of who you are as a person, have you ever realized how much someone has helped you and had the words “thank you” spring from your lips?

It’s an amazing thing, but even as powerful as this feeling is, it looks away from what we’re feeling and what we’re doing to another person. In other words, it is a humbling thing to thank someone from the bottom of our hearts. When we do, we realize that we are not as great or powerful or in control as we think we are. We can’t do things alone. We *need* others to help us get through life.

For the person who wrote this Psalm, thankfulness comes from looking at the world around them. When they look at Creation, they are amazed. They see all that God has done for them and for others, and how God created the world and keeps it going. How wonderful is the work of God! Can we make moons and stars? No, we are just simple humans. The Psalmist feels small and insignificant, that he doesn’t matter.

And yet, God cares for that person. God cares for the Psalmist and for you. God may have been busy creating everything from blades of grass to black holes, and God is surely busy with loving it all and keeping it going, but in all that, God has love for little you. In all the vast stretches of outer space, among all the eight billion humans, God cares about *you* and seeks you out. Isn’t that amazing?

Prayer

God, thank you for seeking me out. When I am lost, when I am afraid, or when I do bad things or hurt people, you still look for me and rescue me. Thank you for everything, and may I join you in seeking out others and rescuing them, too.

Sunday, July 29th, 2026

”The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which someone found and

hid; then in his joy he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field. Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls; on finding one pearl of great value, he went and sold all that he had and bought it.”

Matthew 13:44-46

Often, Jesus talks about this thing called “The Kingdom of Heaven.” What is it? Is it a castle in the sky? Is there a king and a queen sitting on thrones there? Are there knights in shining armor and horses and jewels and treasure and everything you might think of being in a medieval kingdom?

Well, Jesus’ disciples were a bit confused, too. They heard “kingdom” and they thought that Jesus was going to lead them in war against the Roman Empire. The disciples, and the people of their country, wanted to be free to rule themselves. But Jesus wasn’t a war leader. He didn’t like violence at all. He came to save people in a different way, and the Kingdom that he talked about was pretty different.

So, in order to describe this Kingdom to people, he used similes and metaphors. The Kingdom of Heaven *is like* this or *like* that. Here in St. Matthew’s gospel, he talks about how precious the Kingdom is. It is something that’s worth more than all the money you have or will ever have or even that exists in the whole world. He’s not telling you to go out and sell your possessions, not really, because the Kingdom of Heaven isn’t something that can be bought like a car or a house (or a castle). It’s something that is more precious than all wealth. Elsewhere, he talks about it being even more precious than family. Wow! What can be more important than our parents and our siblings and our grandparents and all the people we see on holidays?

God is, and the way to love others is to love God. Remember a few days ago when we talked about how giving food to the hungry and drink to the thirsty is like giving things to God? Well, in a similar way, loving God gives us the heart to love others *just like* we love and cherish our families. All the things we do and have are only important if we do them in relation to loving God.

To talk about: What is your most prized possession? Can you imagine loving it even more than you do now? That’s what happens when we love God with all our hearts.

Somedays' Meditations

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If you're interested in joining us on this project, feel free to get in touch with us at rector@christchurchmanlius.org!