



no hope?
KNOW HOPE.

Sermon Series Guide
October 12 – November 5, 2025

NO HOPE KNOW HOPE

Sermon Series

October 12- November 2, 2025

In today's world, we are at times hanging on by a thread. We don't trust the media, our leaders, our neighbors, or the security of our jobs. We fear for our lives or the lives of our children just going to school. We go to church when we have time with hope in our hearts, hope that there is some message, some answer, some help to get us through another day. The world may change but God's love never does. God is hope in a world filled with despair and turmoil.

October 12, 2025: Creation Blessings and Miracles Abound

October 19, 2025: Persistence in Prayer

October 26, 2025: Good News All Over Again

November 2, 2025: Wholly Saints

Resource:

ELCA Lectionary Year C

Prepared by Pam Miller, Adult Ministry Coordinator

Preaching on Hope by Frederick Buechner

If preachers decide to preach about hope, let them preach out of what they themselves hope for.

They hope that the words of their sermons may bring some measure of understanding and wholeness to the hearts of the people who hear them and to their own hearts. The hope that the public prayers they pray may be heard and answered, and they hope the same for the private prayers of their congregations.

They hope that the somewhat moth-eaten hymns, the somewhat less than munificent offerings, the somewhat self-conscious exchange of the peace may all be somehow acceptable in the sight of the One in whose name they are offered. They hope that the sacrament of bread and wine may be more than just a perfunctory exercise.

They hope that all those who come to church faithfully week after week may find at least as much to feed their spirits there as they would find staying at home with a good book or getting out into the fresh air for some exercise. At the heart of all their hoping is the hope that God whom all the shouting is about really exists.

And at the heart of the heart is Christ - the hope that he really is what for years they have been saying he is. That he really conquered sin and death. That in him and through him we also stand a chance of conquering them. "If Christ has not raised from the dead, your faith is futile and you are still in sins," Saint Paul wrote to the Corinthians. "If for this life only we have hoped in Christ, we are of all people most to be pitied." If preachers are going to talk about hope, let them talk as honestly as Saint Paul did about hopelessness. Let them acknowledge the darkness and pitiableness of the human condition, including their own condition, into which hope brings still a glimmer of light.

And let them talk with equal honesty about their own reasons for hoping -not just the official, doctrinal, Biblical reasons but the reasons rooted deep in their own day by day experience. They have hope that God exists because from time to time over the years they believe they have been touched by God. Let them speak of those times with candor, concreteness and passion.

October 12, 2025

Blessings and Miracles Abound

It's a miracle! Multiple miracles! The waters of holy baptism have healed us. The body and blood of Jesus in holy communion have made us clean. We have died with Christ and been raised with him. For all this we have returned to offer thanks. From this place we are sent on our way rejoicing to share the good news.

Opening Prayer: Almighty and most merciful God, your bountiful goodness fills all creation. Keep us safe from all that may hurt us, that, whole and well in body and spirit, we may with grateful hearts accomplish all that you would have us do, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen

Sermon Reflection:

As you reflect on the sermon, what stands out as being particularly helpful, insightful, or difficult to grasp?

2 Timothy 2:8-15 If we die with Christ, we will live with Christ.

Though Paul is chained as a prisoner, the word of God is never shackled or confined. Timothy is encouraged to proclaim that word of freedom in an honest and upright life as well as in his teaching and preaching.

Gospel Reading: Luke 17:11-19 One leper made clean by Jesus gives thanks to God. Jesus' mission includes making people clean again. Unexpectedly, a samaritan healed of leprosy becomes a model for those who would praise and worship God and give thanks for God's mercy.

Notes:

Daily Discipleship

Sunday, October 9-15 (C) - Luke 17:11-19

Discipleship: *A New Gratitude*

Focus Question: *What fills your heart with gratitude today?*

word of life

“Then one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, praising God with a loud voice.” Luke 17:15 (NRSV)

Read Luke 17:11-19

As Jesus traveled towards Jerusalem between Samaria and Galilee, a group of ten lepers approached him. Due to their disease, they were forbidden to come near people, so they kept their distance.

1. *What would it have been like to be a leper in the first century?*
2. *What would it be like to not have contact with family and friends?*

It is not clear if the lepers had been waiting for Jesus to come to their village entrance or if the visit was a surprise. Either way, their prayer was a simple one, “Jesus, Master, have mercy on us!” (Luke 17:13 NRSV) Most certainly it caught the attention of Jesus.

3. *How might the lepers hoped Jesus would extend mercy to them?*
4. *Define and describe mercy.*

Jesus saw the lepers but did not immediately heal them. Instead, he instructed them to go and show themselves to their priest. Did the lepers rush to the priest convinced that they were healed and were eager to receive the blessing? Did they think Jesus was brushing them off? Were they filled with hope at the possibility of being healed? Were they simply obedient?

5. *How might the lepers react to the words of Jesus?*

It is unclear if Jesus healed them because of the amount of faith of the lepers or because of his own compassion for them. Also, there is no way to know the minutes, hours, or days which passed before the lepers discover their own healing. Perhaps the lepers traveled some distance to the priest before the healing of their skin transformed their bodies.

One thing is clear – only one leper noticed his own healing and returned to give thanks. He turned back and retraced his steps in order to personally thank the giver of the gift. This was not a quiet, meek word of thanks. Instead, he praised God with a loud voice. He was healed! He can rejoin loved ones in life. He was given a new chance at living. He threw himself on the ground at the feet of Jesus and thanked him.

6. *If you had been one of these lepers, how would you have responded to the healing?*
7. *What happened to the nine who did not return?*
8. *Why do you think the other lepers did not return to thank Jesus?*

For those in the first century, it would have been shocking to realize the grateful man was a Samaritan, the least likely to do the right and proper thing. Yet, Jesus blessed him with a second blessing. “Get up and go on your way; your faith has made you well.” (Luke 17:19 NRSV) Earlier the leper had been cured of a physical ailment, but in his second interaction with the leper Jesus made him whole.

9. *How does Jesus bless the leper in their second interaction?*
10. *What is the difference between being cured and being made whole?*

word among us

Imagine a scene on a beach where a lifeguard has just risked his or her life in order to save a child who wandered off. The child's mother is frantic until the child is safely placed in her hands. The mother tightly holds her child and turns to the lifeguard and asks, "But where is my child's jacket?"

What? Where is the gratitude? The child's life has been saved.

1. *What would you say to the mother?*
2. *Could you imagine this scene ever happening or is too absurd? Why or why not?*

Gratitude – that is the theme of the story of the ten lepers! Jesus showed mercy to them by healing them. No longer did they need to live in isolation, but Jesus gave them back their life.

3. *Pause to consider what you are grateful for today. How do you show God your gratitude?*

In the story, the lepers cried to Jesus for mercy, but Jesus responded by sending them to the priest. Their healing was not instantaneous. Consequently, it might have appeared at first to the lepers that their prayers went unanswered.

4. *What can we learn from this delayed answer to prayer?*
5. *Do some prayers take longer to be answered? How so?*
6. *How do you understand unanswered prayer?*

The story of the lepers is also about negligence. Nine of the ten did not give thanks to God for their healing. Perhaps the lepers raced to their loved ones first. Perhaps, the priest delayed the other nine. Perhaps there might be other explanations for the behavior of the other nine. Perhaps. Even if we place the best construction on their behavior, the story ends without them coming back to Jesus to acknowledge him as the giver of the gift.

7. *Where do you find yourself in the story?*
8. *What helps you to remember to give thanks to God?*

All ten were made clean and were cured of the leprosy, but Jesus extended a second blessing to the only leper who returned to give thanks. The leper was made well. It does not matter that he was a Samaritan. More importantly, he remembered who healed him and responded with gratitude, worship, and praise.

9. *Is it possible these lepers raced to their loved ones first?*
10. *How else might they have shown their gratitude?*
11. *How have you been made well by Jesus?*
12. *If you lived this week filled with gratitude, what would each day look like?*

Prayer

Giver of all gifts, thank you for your daily gifts to me. Take the wounds of my life and heal me. Make me well. Thank you. Amen

Dig Deeper

Psalm 111

last word

Take time each day
to thank God
for your blessings.



Daily Discipleship

Written by John and Robin McCullough-Bade

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October 19, 2025

Persistence in Prayer

Pray always. Do not lose heart. This is Christ's encouragement in the gospel today. Wrestle with the word. Remember your baptism again and again. Come regularly to Christ's table. Persistence in our every encounter with the divine will be blessed.

Opening Prayer: O Lord God, tireless guardian of your people, you are always ready to hear our cries. Teach us to rely day and night on your care. Inspire us to seek your enduring justice for all this suffering world, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen

Sermon Reflection:

As you reflect on the sermon, what stands out as being particularly helpful, insightful, or difficult to grasp?

2 Timothy 3:14—4:5 In the presence of Christ the judge, proclaim the message. The writer of this letter continues his instruction of Timothy, his younger colleague in ministry, by emphasizing the importance of faithful teaching despite opposition.

Gospel Reading: Luke 18:1-8 The widow begs for justice; God grants justice to those who cry to him.

Jesus tells a parable of an unjust judge who is worn down by a widow's pleas. Jesus is calling God's people to cry out for justice and deliverance. For if an unethical judge will ultimately grant the plea of a persistent widow, how much more will God respond to those who call.

Notes:

Daily Discipleship

Sunday, October 16-22 (C) - Luke 18:1-8

Discipleship: *A New Persistence*

Focus Question: *How do you pray always?*

word of life

“Then Jesus told them a parable about their need to pray always and not to lose heart.”

Luke 18:1 (NRSV)

Read Luke 18:1-8

What an introduction for a parable! Jesus desires his followers to pray constantly and to not lose heart. He knows life on earth can be filled with difficulties and trials. Illnesses, accidents, economic woes, broken relationships, and other heartaches can wear people down, leaving them discouraged and disheartened.

1. *What does it mean to “lose heart”?*
2. *What causes someone to “lose heart”?*
3. *What role does prayer have in a person not to “lose heart”?*

The parable describes a judge who has no respect for God or people. He appears to claim a place for himself above others. Into the story comes a powerless widow who persists in making requests to the judge. Technically, she has no voice because she is a woman. The fact she is a widow makes her that much more marginalized. But she does not remain in a confined role assigned to her; she boldly appeals fervently to the judge.

Her request to the judge is specific to her life as she asks, “Grant me justice against my opponent.” (Luke 18:3 NRSV). Yet, the details of her case are left unspoken. What enemies and opponents might she have? What makes this a justice issue? Have people tried to take advantage of the widow?

4. *Describe this widow.*
5. *What might she be requesting from the judge?*

At first the judge refuses to respond to the widow’s request. He seems to underestimate the persistence of the widow. By the end, the judge has been worn down, and in order to get rid of the widow, the judge complies and fulfills her request. It is unclear if the request was worthy or not. The judge does not respond out of a sense of justice or a depth of compassion. He simply wants her to be gone.

6. *Can you identify with the judge? Have you ever been worn down by someone’s request? Explain.*
7. *Did the judge act justly? How or how not?*

Jesus connects his parable to God. If an unjust judge can respond to the persistence of someone in need, imagine what God can do with our prayers for justice. When it comes to issues of justice and the cries from the helpless, God will respond.

8. *What is a cry for justice? Give an example.*
9. *What issue of justice might get someone to pray day and night?*

Jesus compares and contrasts the unjust judge with God. Humans are to be more like the persistent widow who prays to God unceasingly.

10. *Is this parable suggesting God responds to us in order to get rid of us? Explain.*
11. *What can you learn from the widow in the parable?*

word among us

Two-year-old Erika wanted a cupcake from the table, but she couldn't reach it. She kept pulling her mother's skirt and asking for it. Her mother was so engrossed in the conversation; she ignored the request for a while. Enough. She stopped herself in the middle of her sentence and gave her daughter what she wanted—a frosted cupcake.

Sixteen-year-old Peter wanted to borrow the car for Friday night. His parents had refused to consider the option. Each day and night he brought up his requests. Over and over he talked about his request and vowed to take good care of the car. Finally, the parents were worn down. Enough. The parents agreed to loan him the car.

Malachi had always wanted a dog. His bride had never been around dogs and was quite hesitant about the prospect. Malachi began his campaign for a dog with just a single picture on the refrigerator. Then a few more pictures appeared in strategic places, including the bathroom mirror. Enough. Finally his bride agreed to get a dog.

1. *What are some examples of when you have been worn down by someone's request?*
2. *When have we worn down God with our prayer requests?*
3. *What keeps us from praying always and persistently?*

Jesus wants his disciples to pray always. Sometimes it is hard to find time for daily devotions let alone to pray at all times and in all places. But Jesus knows when we pray unceasingly, we change. Our prayers might begin by telling God how to do business and to focus on our own will, but prayer has the ability to transform the one who prays. At some point we shift to God's will and a prayer for God's justice on this earth.

The widow was clear, single-minded, and consistent in her requests. She was a victim of injustice and needed the assistance of the judge. Clearly, she was not going to let go until justice prevailed.

4. *What issue of justice concerns you?*
5. *How do you pray about that?*
6. *What do you pray fervently for?*
7. *If you have no fervent prayer, how might you discern your prayer request?*

Jesus encourages people to pray and not lose heart. If our prayers do not get answered instantaneously, we can lose heart. Living with injustice on a daily basis can become discouraging.

8. *Who has inspired or is currently inspiring you to keep the faith?*
9. *What do you do when you become disheartened?*
10. *What do you hope you remember from this passage?*

Prayer

Wise and Just Ruler, hear our prayers for justice. Use us to work towards your justice on this earth. Amen

Dig Deeper

Genesis 32:22-31

last word

Make a plan to pray always !
Share that plan
with other one person.



Daily Discipleship

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October 26, 2025

Good News All Over Again

Rooted in the past and growing into the future, the church must always be reformed in order to live out the love of Christ in an ever-changing world. We celebrate the good news of God's grace, that Jesus Christ sets us free every day to do this life-transforming work. Trusting in the freedom given to us in baptism, we pray for the church, that Christians will unite more fully in worship and mission.

Opening Prayer: Holy God, our righteous judge, daily your mercy surprises us with everlasting forgiveness. Strengthen our hope in you, and grant that all the peoples of the earth may find their glory in you, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen

Sermon Reflection:

As you reflect on the sermon, what stands out as being particularly helpful, insightful, or difficult to grasp?

John 8:31-36 Jesus says, Continue in my word and you will know the truth. Jesus speaks of truth and freedom as spiritual realities known through his word. He reveals the truth that sets people free from sin.

Gospel Reading: Romans 3:19-28 Justified by God's grace as a gift. Paul's words stand at the heart of the preaching of Martin Luther and other Reformation leaders. No human beings make themselves right with God through works of the law. We are brought into a right relationship with God through the divine activity centered in Christ's death. This act is a gift of grace that liberates us from sin and empowers our faith in Jesus Christ.

Notes:

Daily Discipleship

October 31, Reformation Day (C) – Romans 3:19-28

Discipleship – *A New Law on our Hearts*

Focus Question: *What would it be like if the only law was to love?*

word of life

“Then what becomes of boasting? It is excluded. By what law? By that of works! No, but by the law of faith. For we hold that a person is justified by faith apart from works prescribed by the law.” Romans 3:27-28 (NRSV)

Read Romans 3:19-28

Apostle Paul spent a lot of his life and energy debating the law, but what law?

To understand Apostle Paul is to come to terms with the deep and abiding role of the law in his life. Paul grew up as a devout Jew being raised as a Pharisee, born a Roman citizen in Tarsus, a city in Asia Minor. (See Philippians 3:5)

At the time of Paul, the Pharisees and Sadducees were flourishing Jewish movements who examined the implications of the 613 commandments (including the Ten Commandments) given to the Israelite people. The Pharisees were known for their strict adherence to the written Law of Moses for rituals, religious practices, and daily life.

1. *What do you know about the Pharisees?*
2. *Describe a person who has much zeal for the law.*

Paul devoted his early life to the study of the law of God and developed a zeal for enforcing it. He was convinced Jesus was in violation of the law of God. Paul was determined to destroy the followers of Jesus. With great passion, he pursued Christians in their houses and jailed them when they were found. (Acts 8:3) Paul was convinced he was right.

That was until the road to Damascus when he was blinded by a flash of light. There he encountered Jesus. There his life was forever changed. He heard Jesus say to him, “Why do you persecute me?” (Acts 9:4) Paul was left to struggle with his own inadequacy to fulfill the law, his own imperfection, and all that he had been taught. What do you do when it’s not enough? Ouch! Paul realized that he would never be able to fulfill the law.

3. *Describe Paul’s internal struggle.*
4. *What does it feel like to not meet God’s standards—to not fulfil the law?*

But that is not the end of the story. On the road to Damascus, Paul discovered God’s grace. He was able to let go of his own hold on the law and the law’s hold on him. He became open to a new law—one of love. Paul was freed to serve God out of his faith in God’s grace made known in Christ, trusting in the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

Apostle Paul wrote his letter to the Romans towards the end of his life. It reflects conclusions from his own long and personal struggle with the use of law, and the gift of grace. Paul recognized the benefits of God’s law. In Romans, Paul explained how the law had taught him something important. “For ‘no human being will be justified in his sight’ by deeds prescribed by the law, for through the law comes the knowledge of sin.” (Romans 3:20 NRSV)

5. *How does the law help us to be aware of our sin?*
6. *Why might that be helpful?*

word among us

Jeffrey had a rough week at work. As he drove from work to his house, he could feel his anxiety rise. He was concerned about losing his job. Dare he share all this with his bride of two months? How would she react? As a couple they were still figuring out the dynamics of marriage.

Then things got worse. In his rear-view mirror, he saw the flashing light of a police car. Jeffrey pulled over, rolled down the window, and let out a long sigh. The police officer asked for Jeffrey's license and wanted to know how he was doing. Jeffrey shook his head. "Not well."

To Jeffrey's surprise the police officer did not give him a ticket for speeding, but instead provided a stern warning about disrupting traffic due to his slow driving. Jeffrey sighed again. He was totally unaware that his anxiety had manifested in a slowing down. Clearly, Jeffrey was not paying attention to his driving and was a risk to other drivers.

1. Give other examples of how police officers might enforce the law for good and safety.
2. Give an example of when the enforcement of the law has caused harm.

Theologians have long debated the uses of the law. The list varies, but many consider civil law as the first use of the law in that the law becomes a valuable aid to help a community of people live among and alongside each other with both good order and justice.

3. Describe what it would be like if there were no civil laws. Begin with no traffic laws.
4. Why are civil laws a necessary part of a just society?

In his letter to the Romans, Apostle Paul describes another use of the law—to show our sin. Like a mirror, the law shows our shortcomings. For we do not love God and others in a perfect way. Again and again, we fall short. The law becomes a teacher for those who are ready to learn.

5. What and when does the law of God teach us about sin?
6. If the law of God is a mirror, what do you see when you look at that mirror?

An additional use of the law might be as a moral compass. The law becomes a helpful guide on how to live daily in this world. Because we have experienced the love of God, we choose to love others. We freely choose to follow the Ten Commandments not out of fear of punishment, but because we love God. Thus, we don't lie, kill, or steal because we have been changed by God to be persons of love. Christ has set us free for love.

7. How are you freed to follow the law?

Jesus said, "I give you a new commandment, to love one another." Take a moment to imagine a world in which we followed this single commandment and we loved one another.

8. What would it be like if the only law was to love?

Prayer

Gracious God by your grace you have set us free. We are freed to be a good neighbor. Thank you for sending Jesus Christ to release us and empower us to be people of love. Amen.

Dig Deeper

Acts 9

last word

Live this week under the law of love.



Daily Discipleship

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November 2, 2025

Wholly Saints

In holy baptism God makes saints out of sinners. In holy communion God forgives the sins of all the saints. In worship today we give thanks for all the saints “who from their labors rest.” In the same breath we petition our God for the strength to hear and to heed the admonitions of Jesus in today’s gospel. Sealed by the Spirit and sustained by the Savior’s body and blood, we live with joy as God gives us breath, to the praise of God’s glory.

Opening Prayer: Merciful God, gracious and benevolent, through your Son you invite all the world to a meal of mercy. Grant that we may eagerly follow his call, and bring us with all your saints into your life of justice and joy, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen

Sermon Reflection:

As you reflect on the sermon, what stands out as being particularly helpful, insightful, or difficult to grasp?

Ephesians 1:11-23 God raised Christ from the dead and made him head over all the church. After giving thanks for the faith of the Ephesians, the writer of this letter prays that they might understand the wisdom, hope, and power of God that is embodied in Jesus Christ.

Gospel Reading: Luke 6:20-31 Jesus speaks blessings and woes.

In echoes of the prophet Isaiah and Mary’s song of praise, Jesus reveals surprising things about who enjoys blessing and who endures woe. He invites his disciples to shower radical love, blessing, forgiveness, generosity and trust even on enemies and outsiders.

Notes:

Daily Discipleship

November 1, All Saints Day (C) – Luke 6:20-31

Discipleship: *A New Blessing*

Focus Question: *What surprises you about the way Jesus blesses you?*

word of life

“Then he looked up at his disciples and said: ‘Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God. Blessed are you who are hungry now, for you will be filled. Blessed are you who weep now, for you will laugh.’” Luke 6:20-21 (NRSV)

Read Luke 6:20-31

Jesus had spent the night on the mountain in prayer, discerning which of his followers to choose to be his twelve disciples. (Luke 6:12-16) After extending a call to them, he descended from the mountain and stopped at a level place where a large crowd gathered around him. They came to hear Jesus and to be healed by him. Many in the crowd tried to touch him, confident a mere touch would ease their troubles.

Jesus is direct as he blesses and warns the crowd. The Gospel of Matthew describes this scene as taking place on a mountain. Take a moment to read the beginning of the Sermon on the Mount found in Matthew 5:1-12. (Note the spiritual emphasis found in Matthew’s sermon.)

1. *Compare and contrast the blessings found in Luke 6:20-23 and Matthew 5:1-12.*
2. *The Gospel of Luke contrasts the blessings with woes, but the Gospel of Matthew does not. Which is more effective—to include the woes or not? How so?*
3. *In your own words, describe that scene as Jesus teaches his followers about blessings.*

The blessings by Jesus are in the present tense. “Blessed are you who are poor for yours is the kingdom of God.” (Luke 6:20 NRSV) Luke’s gospel is particularly attentive to the poor and disfranchised. No doubt the poor in the audience would have listened with great interest.

4. *How are the poor blessed now?*
5. *Why does Jesus take such an interest in the poor?*

Jesus continues his blessings by including the hungry, those who weep, and those who are rejected. Twice he uses the word *now*, but Jesus also shifts to the future. There is a perplexing present reality about his words, but he leaves the door open for future blessing. For those who are poor, hungry, or weeping, the immediacy of blessing might be hard to identify in tangible ways.

6. *How do you explain the present tense of the words of Jesus?*
7. *How might the blessing occur in the future?*

In addition to the blessings, Jesus warns the people. Again the language is direct and includes a realized action. Jesus warns the rich, those full of food and laughter. Because they have experienced those things, the future is full of the opposite for them—hunger, mourning, and weeping. It sounds bleak without hope. Yet, if people are so full of themselves and the things of this world, there is no space for God and a relationship with Jesus Christ.

8. *How might you express these woes in today’s language?*

Jesus is not done and has more to teach. He wants his followers to follow a radical path by loving enemies, blessing those who curse them, praying for those who abuse them, turning another cheek, and giving generously.

9. *How are people blessed if they do these things instructed by Jesus?*

word among us

Marcus was a college graduate working his first job. A promising future was in front of him. He loved making money, but loved spending it even more. It became a race – to have the best car, clothing, computer, and sports equipment. Then all came crashing down around him. He felt blindsided when he was fired. Since he chose to blame everyone else, his exit from work was not a pretty scene. One thing led to another, and after about one month, he had managed to offend and abuse all of his friends. He was alone, grieving, and hungry for something, but he did not know what.

1. *What do you believe was the heart of Marcus' problems?*
2. *What was he hungry for?*
3. *What might you ask Marcus?*
4. *What blessings might come out of this experience for Marcus?*
5. *What would prevent Marcus from experiencing a blessing?*

Hardships such as poverty, hunger, and grief can strip a person bare. Where is there hope? Many have learned to rely on God to sustain them through trials and tribulations. No longer able to rely on themselves, those who go through hardship can experience God and the love of Christ in new ways. They become dependent on God's grace to get them through the day.

6. *Have you ever been poor, hungry, or grieving? Describe that experience.*
7. *How were you blessed by God in that experience?*
8. *What tough questions did you ask God during that time period?*
9. *How did God respond to you?*

The witness of those who keep their faith in times of difficulty can be inspiring. Yet, most people would not choose to go through poverty, hunger, or grief in order to be blessed and to deepen their faith. And, if the poor, hungry, and grieving people of the world would be interviewed, it is doubtful many would willingly choose to remain in their current state. Instead, they would choose to change their status quo and be removed from their pain.

10. *What might we learn from the poor, hungry, or grieving?*
11. *Do all people who experience poverty, hunger, or grief turn to God? Why or why not?*
12. *What are the dangers of romanticizing poverty, hunger or grief?*

Jesus is very direct with his woes to those who choose to place their security in riches and good times. It might be easy to generalize about the rich and pronounce a final indictment against them. But in reality, by the world's standards, we in the United States of America are the rich. This is a wake-up call—for us. These words of Jesus serve as an important warning to all who get caught up in the activities of this life, full of self-gratification. Jesus is calling for a radical life of prayer, love, and generosity.

13. *What changes does Jesus expect from us because we have been blessed?*
14. *In what ways do you expect to be blessed in the future?*

Prayer

O Blessed One, you bless us as you walk with us in suffering and pain. Continue to be with us and remind us of your presence. Show us ways to walk with others in their journey. Amen.

Dig Deeper

Psalm 149

last word

Count your blessings.

Consider how you might be a blessing to others.



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