

Bible Study: Pray for the nations

You will get more out of this study if you read the verses and ponder the questions several times a day. You'll also get more out of the study if you discuss it with others. Jesus says where two or three are gathered together in his name, he is there with them.

Monday Mark 11:15-17 (NRSV)

Then they came to Jerusalem. And [Jesus] entered the temple and began to drive out those who were selling and those who were buying in the temple, and he overturned the tables of the money changers and the seats of those who sold doves; and he would not allow anyone to carry anything through the temple. He was teaching and saying, "Is it not written, 'My house shall be called a house of prayer for all the nations'? But you have made it a den of robbers."

Most of the big churches in America have gift shops or book stores near the entrance to their sanctuaries.

Would this be okay for Jesus?

(Do you think he was upset about any commerce in the temple or just price gouging?)

Tuesday Isaiah 56:1-7 (NRSV)

Thus says the LORD: Maintain justice, and do what is right, for soon my salvation will come, and my deliverance be revealed. Happy is the mortal who does this, the one who holds it fast, who keeps the sabbath, not profaning it, and refrains from doing any evil. Do not let the foreigner joined to the LORD say, "The LORD will surely separate me from his people"; and do not let the eunuch say, "I am just a dry tree." For thus says the LORD: To the eunuchs who keep my sabbaths, who choose the things that please me and hold fast my covenant, I will give, in my house and within my walls, a monument and a name better than sons and daughters; I will give them an everlasting name that shall not be cut off. And the foreigners who join themselves to the LORD, to minister to him, to love the name of the LORD, and to be his servants, all who keep the sabbath, and do not profane it, and hold fast my covenant— these I will bring to my holy mountain, and make them joyful in my house of prayer; their burnt offerings and their sacrifices will be accepted on my altar; for my house shall be called a house of prayer for all peoples.

This is the passage Jesus quoted when he tossed out the money changers, saying God's house should be a house of prayer for all nations.

In it, Isaiah took two groups – foreigners and people with deformities – and said they were not only acceptable to God, but God was going to bless them greatly in God's temple. At the time this was written, foreigners and people with deformities were not allowed into the main areas of the temple, and foreigners were commonly excluded from table fellowship.

In its original context, the quote means that people from every nation and race were welcome to come to pray in God's house.

Although Jesus confined his mission to the people of Israel, in the first century of the Christian church, the mission rapidly expanded from 1) just the people in Israel to 2) just the Jews in all the nations to 3) all the people of all nations.

What is your part in God's house being a house of prayer for all peoples?

Wednesday 1 Timothy 2:1-4 (NRSV)

First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for everyone, for kings and all who are in high positions, so that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and dignity. This is right and is acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, who desires everyone to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.

It is strategic to pray for leaders, because when leaders make mistakes or sin, the people under them often bear the consequences. Paul says one of the reasons we pray for leaders is because "God wants everyone to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth."

Who do you pray for on a regular basis?

Who are you praying for today?

Thursday Psalm 96:1-4 (NRSV)

O sing to the LORD a new song; sing to the LORD, all the earth.
Sing to the LORD, bless his name; tell of his salvation from day to day.
Declare his glory among the nations, his marvelous works among all the peoples.
For great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised; he is to be revered above all gods.

What are some ways you are declaring God's glory among the nations?

What are some ways your church is declaring God's glory among the nations?

Friday Psalm 86:8-10 (NRSV)

There is none like you among the gods, O Lord, nor are there any works like yours. All the nations you have made shall come and bow down before you, O Lord, and shall glorify your name. For you are great and do wondrous things; you alone are God.

What are some things God has done that you think are wondrous?

What are you grateful for?

Saturday

Last week we recommended an exercise to try:

- 1) Pick any gospel (Matthew, Mark, Luke or John)*
- 2) Read a chapter a day*
- 3) Do what Jesus tells his followers to do.*

Did you try it?

What was your experience?

What are have you done this week because of Jesus?

What do you want to do next week because of Jesus?

What do you need help with?

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