

**THE BEATITUDES AND WOES  
OF JESUS CHRIST**

FOR THE SLOW SAVOURING  
OF  
SERIOUS DISCIPLES

by

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To the Chinese Christians of our own time  
who  
along with survivors of the gulag and the jihad  
are giving the whole Church  
a fresh vision  
of what it means to be called  
“disciples of Jesus”

## INTRODUCTORY COMMENTS

The Beatitudes and Woes of Jesus Christ are stark.  
Much of our teaching and preaching based on them is not.

Jesus sets them out as ground rules for His disciples.

He places them at the very beginning of His special instructions to them,  
whereas entire theological systems have treated them as an afterthought  
and relegated them to the end.

The problem is that in Jesus' instructions the Beatitudes are descriptive,  
not prescriptive.

That is, they tell us what discipleship is,  
not what it ought to be.

They spell out the everyday norms of discipleship,  
not its far off ideals,  
the bottom line,  
not the distant goal.

This makes us most uncomfortable because,  
fitting us so poorly  
they call into question our very right to claim to be disciples of Jesus at all.

There can be no question that they are addressed specifically to Jesus' disciples,  
both the Beatitudes and the Woes.

Matthew makes that plain in his way (*Matthew 5:1-2*)  
and Luke makes it plain in his way (*Luke 6:20*).

The fact that Jesus singles them out from the crowds which are all around them,  
pressing in on them with their own expectations and demands,  
simply underscores the urgency Jesus felt  
to clarify what He was expecting of them by way of sheer contrast.

How can disciples stay on course with their Master  
when they are sure to be badgered by demanding crowds at every turn?

Only by being perfectly clear in their own mind  
that as disciples they conform to no one's expectations but their Master's.

This requires them, of course, to know beyond a shadow of a doubt  
what those expectations are.

So the Beatitudes and Woes are not subtle.

And that is why it is a huge challenge for disciples of any age  
to hear them without mentally filing off all the sharp edges.

When we claim to love the Beatitudes,  
we are more likely to be referring to their cadence than to their contents.

In a moment of stunning candor, the then Archbishop of Canterbury,  
the Most Rev. Dr. Donald Coggan,  
once admitted to a woman who was declaiming to him her love for the Beatitudes:  
“They terrify me.”

How can it be otherwise when it is the Woes that best describe  
“the good life” most of us take for granted,  
and the Beatitudes that best describe  
the life we go to great lengths to avoid?

We survive the Beatitudes and Woes only by spiritualizing them into harmlessness  
or by rationalizing them away altogether.

But for Jesus they come first,  
they are the ground rules.  
You get nowhere as His disciples without them,  
and without them nothing else He teaches makes sense.

It is true, of course, that they are not the gateway into the Kingdom of God.  
They do not provide a means  
either for Jesus' first disciples or for us

to escape from our bondage to satan  
to become sons and daughters of God.

That gateway for us is Jesus Himself, (*John 10:8; 14:6*)  
in His coming to us in our bondage, (*Luke 19:5,9-10*)  
in His call to leave all and follow Him, (*Mark 1:16-20*)  
in His victory over Sin, Death, and Hell, (*Romans 6:3-4*)  
and especially in His uniting us to His victory by baptizing us into it.  
(*Colossians 3:12-15*)

No, the Beatitudes and Woes may not be the way into the Kingdom,  
but Jesus confronts us with them the moment we step into it.

They correspond to Jesus' reply to certain over-eager volunteers:  
"If you are not prepared to take up your cross when you follow Me,  
turn around and go home." (*Luke 14:25-27*)

And yet there is a peculiar and tantalizing grace to the Beatitudes:  
Each daunting description of what it takes to be a disciple of Jesus  
opens with the word "**Blessed**".

Blessed! Not just happy. Blessed!

Even before Jesus lays His demands on us  
He assures us of their reward.  
He motivates us to want to pay the price of true happiness.

But for us slothful, lukewarm disciples,  
this serves only to raise the ante.

It's Jesus' way of giving us the same perspective that kept Him going  
"who for the joy that was set before Him  
endured the cross, despising the shame." (*Hebrews 12:2*)

Do we really want that perspective?

Clearly, it is meant for disciples intent on heeding Jesus' call  
and following Him all the way,  
through the crowds and the crises of an entire lifetime.

He knows that such disciples need a stiff and consistent dose  
of blessing and encouragement or we won't make it,  
and He makes it abundantly available to us right from the start.  
All He asks of us is a firm commitment to each Beatitude as our way of life  
and its corresponding Blessing is guaranteed to us in advance.

In the beginning new disciples have no clear notion why Jesus would describe  
the real life of real disciples of a real Saviour in such stark terms  
and little natural inclination to embrace that life for themselves.  
But their attachment to Him gives them the courage to say "Yes"  
and the faith to grow into their role.

Now, in those times and places where the Church as a whole  
has been compelled by adverse circumstances  
or enflamed by fresh outpourings of the Holy Spirit  
to embrace the Beatitudes as Her normal way of life in discipleship to Christ,  
it is true and demonstrable that her spiritual vitality  
and her ability to bless deeply the world around her  
have been greatly enhanced.

We have only to acquaint ourselves with the early centuries of the Church in the  
Roman Empire, including the eloquent testimony of the catacombs,  
the Irish Church in the era after St. Patrick and before the Viking Raids,  
the Coptic Orthodox Church through 1300 years of oppression until now,  
die bekennende Kirche under the Nazis,  
the Russian Orthodox and Ukrainian Catholic Churches under Communism,  
the underground, house, and prison churches in China today,  
and many other equally striking examples,  
to become painfully aware that there are a treasure and a power in the Beatitudes

that go far beyond what the members of an affluent Church in prosperous circumstances are likely ever to suspect.

It is the intention of these twenty-four meditations to help serious disciples,  
especially those of us who are seeking to be faithful  
in an environment of affluence and complacency,  
to come to grips with the Beatitudes and Woes of Jesus just as they stand,  
to expose us without apology to the full force of the discomfort they cause us,  
to tease to the surface our confusion, doubts and nagging questions about them,  
to speak these out before the face of the heavenly Father and in our own hearts,  
to struggle to understand what Jesus really wants of us in the here and now,  
and most of all,  
to grow in our desire and resolve to accept the Beatitudes as our job description  
and ultimately to embrace them as our own personality profile.

These meditations are for slow savouring.

They are suggestive.

First, for each Beatitude and Woe we will hear the Voice of our Heavenly Father addressing us through Jesus and the Sacred Scriptures.

Then we will give voice to our response to what we have heard,  
taking a good look at ourselves to see what kind of disciples we really are  
and what kind of disciples we are now challenged and invited to become.

These meditations are the fruit of a very private dialogue  
between one troubled disciple of Jesus and his Heavenly Father  
early each morning during the course of an Advent Season.

My hope is that you will be blessed by this opportunity to eavesdrop on it.

Father Joseph R. Jacobson

Advent, 1997 (original)

Advent, 2014 (revision)

## DAY ONE

**Seeing the crowds, He went up on the mountain, and when He sat down His disciples came to Him. And He opened His mouth and taught them.**

*(Matthew 5:1-2)*

N. \_\_\_\_\_, child of God,

I have rescued you from the power of the prince of darkness and transferred you into the Kingdom of My Beloved Son, Jesus Christ. *(Colossians 1:13)*

I have called you to follow Him out of darkness into My marvelous light.

I have baptized you into a chosen race, *(1 Peter 2:9-10)*

chosen for one purpose only:

to walk with Jesus, your divine Brother and Lord,  
and learn from Him how to be My faithful child,

how to think and feel and respond just as I, your Father, do.

*(Matthew 5:45)*

I have joined you to My holy nation:

Your citizenship is now in Heaven. *(Philippians 3:20)*

I have ordained you to My royal priesthood:

You are now an ambassador of My Son. *(2 Corinthians 5:19-20)*

Through you I make My appeal to the world He redeemed.

Your whole life from now on is nothing but a ministry of reconciliation.

I have bestowed on you a new identity:

You are now My own possession.

My name is now on your forehead. *(Revelation 14:1)*

Once you were fallen and lost,

but Jesus found you and returned you to Me. *(Luke 14:3-6)*

And now, though you live in a lost and fallen world,

your life is hidden with Him in Me,

your mind is set on things that are above. *(Colossians 3:2-3)*

For that reason, and for that reason alone,

you are now in a position to do some real good on here on earth.

I call you and I equip you to do what Jesus did on earth: (*Matthew 10:1*)

To make a piece of Heaven happen no matter where you are.

(*2 Corinthians 2:15*)

I join you to Jesus:

His mind will be in you. (*1 Corinthians 2:16, Philippians 2:5*)

I join you to His Spirit: (*Acts 2:38*)

His power will save through you. (*1 Corinthians 2:3-5*)

I join you to His cross:

You will die with Him.

I join you to His resurrection:

You will triumph over death and rise with Him. (*Romans 6:5,8*)

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Dearest Father,

You have called me to come to Jesus,

and I come.

I know so little of what it means to be Your own child,

Your ambassador in a foreign land that was once my home  
and my prison.

Can I ever really be a piece of Heaven living here on earth?

But I come.

Jesus has taken His seat.

He wants us disciples to gather around Him.

I know all too well,

even without His telling me,

that if the likes of me is to stay true to You in this fallen world

there really is only one thing needful. (*Luke 10:42*)

I know I need to choose “the better part” day after day

or I'll never survive as Your disciple.

So when Jesus opens His mouth to speak,  
You can count on me to be at His feet,  
soaking up His every word. (*Luke 10:39*)

I will let His mind absorb mine,  
His Sacred Heart make mine beat in harmony with His.  
It must become normal for me to love as He loves, (*John 13:34*)  
to empty myself in the service of others as He does. (*Philippians 2:7*)

You call me to listen first of all,  
to absorb,  
and only then to follow Jesus.

Thanks to You I already have all things in Jesus (*1 Corinthians 3:21-22*)  
and You are keeping them safe for me in Heaven. (*1 Peter 1:4*)

Already You have given me a priceless treasure:  
You have received me as Your child and heir  
and made Jesus my Brother (*Hebrews 2:11*)  
and Mary my mother. (*John 19:27, Revelation 12:17*)

I am found, so now I can lose myself in Jesus. (*Matthew 16:25*)  
I am loved, so now I can deny myself for Him and His loved ones. (*Matthew 16:24*)  
I am called, so now I can leave all and follow Him. (*Mark 1:17-20*)  
I am blessed, so now I can discover what real blessing is,  
and real woe.

Dearest Father,  
here I come!

When Jesus opens His mouth to speak,  
I'll be all ears!

## DAY TWO

**“Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the Kingdom of God.”** (*Luke 6:20*)

N. \_\_\_\_\_, child of God,

I call you to be poor.

Be poor as Jesus was poor.

Be really poor.

Lay up for yourself no treasure on earth. (*Matthew 6:19*)

Give away what you have. (*Matthew 19:21*)

Be like the birds of the air,

like the flowers of the field.

I will take care of you. (*Matthew 6:26,28,30*)

Be like Jesus,

no place to lay your head, (*Luke 9:58*)

and I will give you rest. (*Matthew 11:28*)

Do not turn away sorrowful when I ask this of you. (*Matthew 19:22*)

Give away all your possessions and possess all things –

all lands, all houses, all people. (*Mark 10:21*)

Be Lazarus at the rich man’s gate. (*Luke 16:20*)

Be Lazarus in the arms of the angels.

Be Lazarus in the bosom of Abraham. (*Luke 16:22*)

No pack, no spare sandals, no bag, (*Matthew 10:9-10*)

no fresh change of clothes, (*Mark 6:8-9*)

no false pride to pretend you don’t need the gifts I provide for you. (*Luke 10:5-8*)

Give to all what I give to you

lavishly. (*Matthew 10:8b*)

Receive from all what I send to you,

bountifully. (*Matthew 10:10b*)

Heal people deeply in the name of Jesus.  
Send demons fleeing before you. (*Matthew 10:10a*)

Like Jesus, through your poverty,  
make many rich! (*2 Corinthians 8:9*)

Strip for battle, My child,  
and taste the victory. (*Luke 12:35*)

My whole Kingdom is yours!

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Dearest Father!  
Make me poor,  
just like Jesus.  
Empty me for love of You  
and make me really poor –  
a true bird of the air,  
a true flower of the field,  
no treasure on earth but you. (*Matthew 6:25-34*)

You number the hairs on my head. (*Matthew 10:30*)  
Why should I worry about where I am going to lay it down? (*Luke 9:58*)  
It lies on Your bosom. (*John 13:23*)  
Always.  
Whether lying in pain at the rich man's gate (*Luke 16:20*)  
or deprived even of the crumbs that fall from his table. (*Luke 16:21*)

Make me content whatever my lot. (*Philippians 4:11*)

Am I poor?  
I can make many rich.  
Do I own nothing?  
I possess all things. (*2 Corinthians 6:10*)

Father, let mine be the mind of Jesus,  
for I also am Your child.

Did He renounce the weight of His own Glory  
to take on the burden of our Sin?

Let me also renounce my claim to everything I have that weighs me down  
and holds me back from the claims of Holy Love on me. (*Philippians 2:5-9*)

Let me be crushed by Holy Love as Jesus was.  
You will raise me up as You raised Him up!

I know very well, Father, that this is what it takes to bring Heaven to earth.  
Nothing less!

I see it in all Your apostles,  
ancient and modern,  
in Rome, in China, in Nigeria,  
in the fleshpots of Western civilization,  
in slums, ghettos, monasteries, battlefields.  
Everywhere!

Your Kingdom comes in power only through Your poor.  
Always! (*1 Corinthians 4:11-13*)

And I see how those disciples of Yours who laugh off Your call to be poor,  
who feel entitled to cling to their earthly wealth,  
strangle Your Kingdom almost to death. (*James 5:1-6, 1 Timothy 6:9-10*)

Whatever it takes, Father, make me one of Your poor.  
Use my poverty to bless others with true riches,  
the riches of Holy Love in Your Kingdom.

If You find me, Your little child, fit for that,  
dearest Father,  
You will have made me the richest person in the world!

## DAY THREE

**“Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven.”**

*(Matthew 5:3)*

N. \_\_\_\_\_, child of God,

I call you to be poor in spirit,

always a child before Me,

always a child in your own eyes,

and glad and grateful to be one. *(Matthew 18:3-4)*

Yes, to be sure, you are the light of the world. *(Matthew 5:14)*

But only because Jesus has become your Light. *(John 8:12)*

Without Him, what you'd call your light would really be darkness,

the thickest darkness of all. *(Matthew 6:22-23)*

You are blind without Him,

blinded by your own confidence that you can see. *(John 9:39,41)*

Yes, to be sure, you are a branch of Mine,

drooping with fruit under your life-gathering leaves.

But only because Jesus is your Vine.

Without Him, you'd wither away,

you'd shrivel up and die fruitless.

Without Him you can do nothing,

no matter how hard you try. *(John 15:1-8)*

But through Him you can do all things. *(Philippians 4:13)*

No matter how long you live,

you will never know more than the little child who trusts Me,

and you will often know less. *(Matthew 18:3)*

Embrace poverty of spirit,

and every treasure is yours.

Acknowledge how ignorant you are apart from Jesus,

and know His love that surpasses knowledge. (*Ephesians 3:19*)  
Face the folly of trusting in your own insights,  
and yours can be the Wisdom from Above. (*James 3:13-17*)

Yes, My beloved child,  
celebrate your poverty of spirit above all else!

It is your life.  
It is your joy.  
It is the source of all your power.  
It is Blessing at its purest.

For the Kingdom of Heaven belongs to none but the poor in spirit.

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Dearest Father,  
make and keep me poor in spirit,  
a fool for Christ, (*1 Corinthians 4:10*)  
glad to know nothing but Him  
and Him crucified. (*1 Corinthians 2:2*)

When I awake,  
take my first thoughts captive  
and hold them captive all day long. (*2 Corinthians 10:5*)

Make me grateful when,  
in the teeth of my trials,  
I feel weak and incompetent,  
weak enough to know that I can't handle them by myself  
and grateful for not even being tempted to try. (*2 Corinthians 12:10*)

It is when I feel helpless that I turn to You to be my Helper. (*Psalms 121:1-2*)  
It is when I feel competent that I tend to take over the controls.

I beg You, Father, to keep me from bringing anything to ruin  
by hijacking Your plans for bringing it to glory!

You are my Treasure,  
my true wealth.

The poorer I am in spirit,  
the richer I am in You.

The more I think I see,  
the less I really see.

The more I think I know,  
the less I learn from You.

But if I know I am blind,  
You can restore my sight. (*Luke 19:41-42*)

If I know I am not indispensable,  
You can make me infinitely useful. (*1 Timothy 1:12-16*)

If I have no confidence in myself,  
there's no limit to how much confidence I can have in You.  
(*Philippians 4:13*)

Your apostles of every age help me to want to be poor in spirit:  
as helpless as a John or a Charles Wesley,  
as self-doubting as a Pope Saint Leo I  
or a Pope Saint Gregory the Great,  
as dumbfounded by grace as a Saul of Tarsus,  
as devoid of ego as a Mother Teresa  
or a Pope Saint John Paul II. (*1 Corinthians 15:8-11*)

Whatever it takes to achieve it, Father,  
drive me into poverty of spirit.

And keep me there  
for as long as I live.

## DAY FOUR

**“Blessed are you who are hungry now, for you will be filled.”** (*Luke 6:21*)

N. \_\_\_\_\_, child of God,

I call you to be hungry now,  
hungry here,  
hungry most of the time.

Be hungry like my servant St. Paul the Simple was hungry.

For 100 years in the wilderness I sent my ravens to feed him  
just as I had sent them to feed Elijah in his wilderness  
many centuries earlier. (*1 Kings 17:6*)

The hungrier these men were,  
the greater the blessing they received in the food I sent them.

I was the bit of bread they ate,  
light in the hand,  
strong in the stomach,  
mighty in the spirit!

In the strength of that bread they ran.

They ran where I wanted them to run,  
and nowhere else.

They ran to meet Me at My Holy Mountain. (*1 Kings 19:8*)

If you hunger now and let Me feed you,

My child,

you will have all the strength you need to run and meet Me,

all the strength you need for the journey that will bring you to Me,  
all the strength you need to follow Jesus wherever He leads you.

I am also calling you to be hungry as Jesus was hungry,

hungry for the food of God, (*John 6:31-35*)

hungry to accomplish the work for which I send you,

hungry to gather in the harvest which even some of My disciples can't see

though they are standing in the midst of it. (*John 4:35*)

I want you to hunger as Jesus hungered, My child,  
with an empty stomach,  
an overflowing heart, (*Psalms 23:5*)  
and a soul filled to the brim. (*Luke 6:38*)

Doesn't it all come down to how much you trust Me, My beloved?  
I know that if you are obsessed with your food,  
I can't give you Mine.  
I know that if I can't get you to give up your claim to the lesser blessing,  
I can't give you the greater one.

All I want for you is the best! (*Matthew 7:11*)

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Dearest Father,  
make me one of Your hungry ones.

Make me the smallest of Jesus' brothers and sisters,  
one of the least of those whose hunger is His hunger,  
whose thirst is His thirst. (*Matthew 25:35,40*)

You are calling me to learn what it means for me that You feed the sparrows  
and that You value me more than a whole flock of sparrows.  
(*Matthew 10:29,31*)

You are commanding me to pray for my daily bread and no more,  
to live without worry on the edge of want. (*Matthew 6:11*)

You are asking me to receive my Manna from You afresh each morning,  
to share all with others and to hoard nothing for myself. (*Exodus 16*)

But we have such a big garden and such a good root cellar!  
My pension plan is as secure as anything on earth can get!  
Almost never am I on the edge of want for anything.

I know that some of my brothers and sisters on earth have none of that.  
They are born into hunger and are always hungry,  
and they have no choice in the matter.

But neither do I, really!  
With food everywhere, my only reasons for being hungry are  
to lose the weight I gain from overeating  
or to keep a token religious fast.

Father, I think I am beginning to understand how hard it must be for You  
to teach people like me real trust.  
How sad it must be for You to see me  
condemned to perpetual infancy in my personal discipleship to Jesus,  
how sad to see Your Church  
condemned to powerlessness wherever it suffers from affluence.

Even I can see how different it is in places  
where Your disciples are almost forced to share  
the gnawing hunger and chronic deprivation of those You call them to serve.

When I think of them, I feel only shame and disgust with myself  
and a profound sense of sorrow at how badly Your whole unneedy and  
spiritually enfeebled Church is betraying You. (*Revelation 3:17-20*)

We have, all of us, traded off our birthright as disciples of Jesus  
for a mess of pottage, (*Genesis 25:29-34*)  
and some of our spiritual leaders have the gall to call this “Grace”!

Father, I need to choose hunger right now, and so does Your Church,  
or we could all die of spiritual starvation,  
our stomachs and our souls bloated with worthless straw.

## DAY FIVE

**“Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.”** (*Matthew 5:4*)

N. \_\_\_\_\_, child of God,  
I call you to mourn.

If you want to be My child in this world,  
there can be no escape from mourning.

To escape from mourning  
is to escape from Me.

To escape from mourning  
is to allow this world’s all-engulfing wickedness to turn your love to ice,  
which is the worst fate any child of Mine can suffer. (*Matthew 24:12*)

The truth is that  
the more you discover what it means to be a child of the resurrection,  
the more deeply you will find yourself entering into My mourning.  
(*2 Corinthians 11:28-29*)

I mourn a world that still hugs Death to its bosom  
even though My Son has stripped Death of its power. (*1 Corinthians 15:55*)

I mourn a world that still rewards the pursuit of Evil  
even though My Son has harrowed hell to bits. (*1 Peter 3:19-20, 4:6*)

I mourn a world that is so bewitched by Darkness  
that it can’t stand Jesus, the Light of the world. (*John 3:19-20, 8:12*)

I mourn a world that has no trouble dismembering little children,  
in the womb of their own mother, and outside it,  
when My Son takes them up in His arms and blesses them. (*Mark 10:14-16*)

This is the world so many of My beloved children forfeit their souls to gain.  
They do not know how deeply I mourn their loss. (*Matthew 16:26*)

What more can I do to draw them to Heaven? (*1 John 2:15-17*)  
I love them, I pay the ultimate price to redeem them, I forgive them,  
I warn them, and I even command them.  
And still they choose hell over Me.

How can I not mourn My lost children  
who let themselves be lured into hell?

And you, My beloved child,  
the more your heart beats in harmony with Mine,  
the more you will mourn their loss, too.

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Dearest Father,  
You call me to share in Your mourning  
because I am Your child.

Each beloved son or daughter lost to You  
is a brother or sister lost to me.

I can well understand how You would feel  
if I were the one who turned my back on You,  
after all we've been through together.

What if I were to fall in love with the world (*2 Timothy 4:10*)  
and out of love with You?  
The very thought of Your grief over me tears my heart apart!

Of course, by leaving You I could easily avoid mourning with You.  
I wouldn't have to love people as You love them any more.

Who mourns for someone he doesn't love?

It comes down to this, Father:

Either I mourn with You

or You mourn over me.

Either I learn to love as You love

or You have to watch me shrivel up into myself and die.

You have fashioned us all as Your children, dear Father,  
to love or reject You freely.

You didn't have to make Yourself so vulnerable to us,  
but You did! (*Isaiah 65:1-2*)

Because You love us so much,  
You have given us the power to hurt You deeply  
or to bring You joy. (*Micah 6:3-4*)

Father, I want to bring You joy,  
only joy.

I know that the purer my love becomes as I join Jesus on the road to Calvary,  
the less I will care about what it's costing me to bear my cross with Him,  
and that will bring joy to Your heart.

So, let me truly mourn with You!

My comfort in my mourning is that we will be together, You and I -  
You and I and all Your little ones who choose to mourn with You!

Together in our loving.

Together in our mourning.

How could I be more comforted than that?

## DAY SIX

**“Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.”** (*Matthew 5:5*)

N. \_\_\_\_\_, child of God,  
I call you to be meek.

I made the earth for the meek.  
They are the only ones fit for it,  
the only ones worthy of it,  
the only ones I can actually trust to till and keep it. (*Genesis 2:15*)

Everyone else is interested only in exploiting and depleting it.

The whole earth is dying now for want of meekness.  
Too many of its appointed care-givers have bought into Satan’s lie: (*Genesis 3:5*)  
They treat earth as their slave, not their sister.  
They choose to be her taskmaster, not her lover.

I made Adam and Eve and their offspring to be superlative children of God,  
but that works only if they accept the truth that they are not God.

The unmeek act as if I had made all things to serve them  
when in truth I made them to serve all things,  
just like Me.

The earthly Paradise can survive only in the hands of the meek.

Adam was meek when I committed the earth to his care:  
he was happy to be standing under Me when I put everything else under him.

Anything I put under the meek thrives.

The meek are strong  
because they rely on Me, not on themselves.

Everything they touch is blessed by their touch  
because they reverence Me and respect all that I have made.  
They regard nothing as insignificant which is Mine.  
That is why the earth is a better place when their time comes to leave it  
than it would have been if they had never lived here.

Jesus, My eternal Son, is meek and lowly of heart, (*Matthew 11:29*)  
and He is the perfect image of Me! (*Hebrews 1:3*)  
So what, do you suppose, that makes Me? (*Isaiah 57:15*)

And Mary, His mother and yours, is meek and lowly of heart, (*Luke 1:48*)  
and she is the model disciple! (*John 2:5*)  
So what do you suppose that calls the rest of you disciples to be? (*Matthew 11:29*)

When Jesus, the Meek One, walked among the unmeek,  
He found much to cleanse and heal.  
As you walk meekly on earth, My child, you will find it, too.

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Dearest Father,  
make and keep me meek,  
gentle and caring towards all Your creatures,  
strong to cleanse and heal earth's wounds.

Thank You for showing me what meekness really is –  
the source of superhuman strength to live as Your child.

You Yourself called Moses the meekest man on earth. (*Numbers 12:3*)  
Yet through him You liberated Your people from bondage,  
You wrought prodigious wonders in the wilderness, (*Exodus 17 et al.*)  
You overwhelmed vast armies,  
You transformed a mob into a community.

Jesus called Himself “meek and lowly in heart”. (*Matthew 11:29*)

Yet He burst through the gates of hell, (*Matthew 27:52-53*)  
trampled Satan underfoot, (*Luke 10:18*)  
robbed him of his prey, (*1 Peter 3:19*)  
bore the crushing load of a whole world's sin, (*John 1:29*)  
met death head-on (*Mark 10:45*)  
and emerged from His own grave. (*John 20:5-8*)

If that's what Jesus means by being meek and lowly in heart  
and He is asking me to learn this from Him, (*Matthew 11:29*)  
then surely You are not calling me to be weak by calling me to be meek!

So what is the meekness You are seeking to form in me? (*Galatians 4:19*)

To make me wholly impregnable to sin and evil  
by making me wholly vulnerable to You. (*Philippians 4:13*)  
To enable me at all times to live fully alive to God. (*2 Timothy 4:6-8*)  
To learn to flee for refuge to You at the very first hint  
that I am living as if You were not there.

I cherish this wondrous earth, dear Father.  
I stand in awe of the myriads of magnificent creatures You have made  
and the secrets You have woven into the lives of them all!

I don't care if I ever "inherit" it.

That's up to You.

But I do care very much  
that I till and keep it well,  
to Your satisfaction.

Make me meek, Father.

Make me strong.

## DAY SEVEN

**“Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness,  
for they will be filled.”** (*Matthew 5:6*)

N. \_\_\_\_\_, child of God,  
I call you to hunger and thirst for righteousness.

I do not need disciples who are mildly inclined toward righteousness.  
I need disciples with an insatiable craving for it.

I do not need disciples who pay it eloquent lip service. (*Matthew 15:7-8*)  
I need disciples who pay it daily life service.

The most dangerous enemies of My righteousness are not its open opponents.  
Its worst enemies are its half-hearted supporters. (*Revelation 3:15-16*)  
More harm is done to My righteousness in this world by those who misrepresent it  
than by those who oppose it.

I need disciples whose hunger and thirst for My righteousness would be idolatrous  
if directed toward anything less.

In this world My righteousness cannot survive  
unless it is hungered and thirsted for.  
In this world those who do not seek first My Kingdom and its righteousness  
do not seek it at all. (*Matthew 6:33*)  
They oppose it and join the crowds facing ruin. (*Matthew 7:13-14*)

Either My Kingdom is the Pearl of Great Price to you  
or it is a trinket. (*Matthew 13:45-46*)  
It is either your life’s passion  
or it is nothing to you.

Jesus is My Kingdom,  
He is My righteousness. (*Romans 3:21-26*)

He is your Gateway to the Kingdom, (*John 14:6*)

He is your righteousness. (*1 Corinthians 1:30*)

I am not calling you to keep an eye on Him from a polite distance:

I am calling you to throw in your lot with Him. (*Ephesians 4:22-24*)

I am not calling you to keep up to speed on the latest news about Him.

I am calling you to be absolutely clear about one thing:

Either you are with Him all the way, or you are not. (*Luke 9:62*)

I call you to a driving hunger and thirst for Jesus,

knowing that to be deprived of Him is to die.

You can't begin to see the shape of My righteousness in this world

unless you learn to see it through His eyes.

And it is only by uniting your heart to His Heart

that you will have what it takes to live and die for it.

+

Dearest Father,

give me a fierce appetite for Your righteousness alone.

Show me what it is.

Show me how it works.

Show me why the world needs it so desperately.

Show me how much You want the world to have it.

Show me Jesus and never let anything come between us! (*Romans 8:38-39*)

When I am in Him and He is in me,

nothing looks or feels the same.

Everything I see through His eyes looks different. (*2 Corinthians 5:16-17*)

His are the eyes of Your righteousness,

and what I see through them truly makes me crave it above all else.

His eyes make inner beauty shine through outer squalor,

and I hunger for it.  
They reveal the deep-down worth of the most pitiful human cast-offs,  
and I thirst for it.  
They show me seeds of life sprouting all over the place in our barren wastelands,  
and I long to nurture them most tenderly.

As long as I am with Jesus it is easy for me to see it all.

But when I wander away from Him,  
scales form over my eyes  
and my hunger and thirst for righteousness fades away.  
I trivialize the coming of Your peaceable Kingdom,  
I domesticate Your violent overthrow of Satan's tyranny,  
I turn the triumph of Jesus' Holy Heart into a pious wish,  
I even find a comfortable nook for the bloody Cross  
on which He won the world's redemption,  
and I enshrine it there, all beautified and cleaned up.

When I start allowing this to happen to me, Father,  
leave me utterly comfortless.  
The moment I start to rely on my own eyes and ears and arms,  
let raw panic clutch at my throat and strangle my heart.  
Nauseate me, Father, at the first whiff of food or drink for my body, mind or soul  
that does not come from Jesus.

I want to see my craving for anything but Your righteousness for what it really is:  
Deadly poison served on a silver platter.

Yes, Father, I will stay close to Jesus.  
I want to see everyone, everything, through His eyes,  
to share His passion for Your righteousness on earth,  
to be driven by the folly of His love for us all,  
the lost, the trapped, and the defiant.

I want to walk with Jesus, Father, all the way to the Cross. (*Luke 19:10*)

## DAY EIGHT

**“Blessed are you who weep now, for you will laugh.”** (*Luke 6:21*)

N. \_\_\_\_\_, child of God,  
I call you to weep now,

“Tears are a sign of holiness.”

My Eastern saints say that,  
and they are right.

Remember the tears My Son shed at Bethany? (*John 11:35-36*)

“Behold how He loved him,” they said.

Yes, that was a part of it,  
the smaller part.

The larger part only holiness can understand.

Remember the tears My Son shed over Jerusalem? (*Luke 19:41-44*)

He told you Himself what those tears were:

The tears of a faithful but jilted lover.

The tears of a heart-broken mother ignored by her children  
at the very moment they need her most. (*Matthew 23:37-38*)

His tears are My tears.

And, dear child of Mine, they are your tears.

My Son has many other tears. (*cf. Matthew 25:31-46*)

The tears of a mother watching helplessly as her children die of starvation.

The tears of a father unable to provide for his family’s basic needs.

The tears of children whose little bodies are being gnawed away by hunger.

The tears of families shattered by violence, brutality, hatred, war.

Tears of remorse, guilt, shame, despair.

Tears of pain, fear, loss, bereavement.

All these tears,  
and so many more,  
are also My tears.

And because you are My child,  
they are your tears, too.

My Son and I and Mary your Mother weep over Our lost children, (*Isaiah 65:1-2*)  
especially over those who don't know enough to weep over themselves.  
(*Luke 23:27-31*)

This is the bitterest fruit of all  
from Satan's evil sowing in this poor world. (*Matthew 13:27-28, 38-39*)

But, little one, this grief will come to an end.  
Satan is banished from the New Heaven and the New Earth. (*Revelation 20:10*)  
Sorrow and sighing will flee away.

I Myself will wipe every tear from your eyes; (*Revelation 21:4*)  
the sound of your laughter will fill the heavens with joy! (*Revelation 19:6-7*)

+

Dearest Father,  
grant me the gift of tears now.

Grant me the gift of a holiness that is moved to tears  
easily, naturally.

Draw me into the bosom of Your Beloved Son.  
Lay me open to His tender heart. (*Romans 12:15*)  
Lay me open to the arrows of Your children's cries.

When I am far from Jesus I weep mostly for myself.

When I am close to Him I weep mostly for others.

In Him I know what it means at the death of a friend  
to weep more for the bereaved than for the deceased.

In Him I know what it means to weep over a whole city, a whole civilization,  
hell-bent on its own destruction.

In Him I know what it means to shed two tears  
for every tear shed by victims of lust and cruelty.

In Him I know what it means to shed floods of tears  
for those who cannot or will not weep for themselves:  
for remorseless abusers,  
for wastrels who have not yet “come to themselves”, (*Luke 15:17*)  
for unborn children ripped from the safety of their mother’s womb,  
for people too depraved to feel the torment they inflict on others.

I cling to Your promises, Father.

You will wipe away all tears from our eyes. (*Revelation 7:17*)

You will shut up Satan and his evil hosts forevermore. (*Revelation 20:10*)

Former things will pass away,  
and You will make all things new. (*Revelation 21:4-5*)

In the New Heaven and the New Earth  
the sound of laughter,  
our laughter,  
will fill Your ears.

Your eyes will sparkle on that Day, Father,  
not with tears of sorrow  
but with tears of joy,  
joy over the innocent laughter of all Your children.

Forever.

## DAY NINE

**“Blessed are the merciful, for they will receive mercy.”** (*Matthew 5:7*)

N. \_\_\_\_\_, child of God,  
I call you to be merciful.

For I, the Lord your God, am a God  
merciful and gracious,  
slow to anger  
and abounding in faithful love. (*Exodus 34:6*)

I call, indeed, I command all My children  
to be merciful as I am merciful. (*Luke 6:36*)

Only to the merciless do I show no mercy.

I call you to tear from your heart every trace of that servant of Mine who,  
though forgiven much,  
would not forgive his fellow servant in return. (*Matthew 18:23-25*)

I call you to renounce whatever in you resembles that Pharisee Simon  
who thought he was entitled to My mercy  
and who thought everyone else should earn it just as he had. (*Luke 7:36-50*)

Rather, I want you to see yourself in the woman  
who anointed Jesus' feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair,  
forgiven much, loving much.

I want you to see yourself in the woman He met at the well at noon,  
too ashamed to draw water with the other women earlier in the day,  
but too precious in His eyes for Him to ignore and dismiss. (*John 4:1-41*)

I want you to learn from your walk with My Son the difference  
between costly mercy that restores life and re-opens the future  
and cheap sentimentality that strangles both, (*John 4:16-18*)

between severe mercy that cleanses and really heals  
and gutless mercy that can't touch deadly sin, (*John 8:1-11*)  
between true mercy that enables the disabled  
and false mercy that further disables them. (*John 5:6,14*)

Jesus' mercy is real mercy.  
It's the only mercy worth anything to you, My child.  
I call you to exercise it in every part of your life.  
It is the only reason You are alive to Me.  
As you extend it to others  
you will receive even more of it from Me.

+

Dearest Father,  
make me merciful.

Show me in Jesus how real mercy works  
to bring life and a future to real sinners like me.

Help me to learn never to withhold it  
where You bestow it,  
and never to bestow it  
where You withhold it. (*James 2:13*)

Grant me the wisdom and the courage  
to waste little mercy on the merciless, (*Matthew 18:6*),  
to be far less moved by their hollow pleas (*Luke 16:22-31*)  
than I am by the cries of their victims. (*Psalms 79:11*)

Help me to grasp fully the stuff real mercy is made of, (*Romans 11:22*)  
to see clearly what is so blurred in the eyes of all who do not know Jesus:  
the life-and-death difference between mercy and sentimentality.  
(*Jude 17-23*)

Your mercy says, “Neither do I condemn you.  
Go and sin no more.” (*John 8:11*)

Your mercy cannot ignore Your own image still present in sinners like me.  
It honors me by holding me accountable for my actions  
to the highest level of my actual ability. (*John 5:14*)  
It never offers me an easy way out that would trivialize both me and my sin.  
It never tells me I can’t help it when in fact I can. (*Mark 2:1-12*)  
It never settles for a solution that makes my future just a repeat of my past.  
It always insists that I join Jesus on the Narrow Way, (*Matthew 7:13-14*)  
because otherwise I am not on the Way that leads to life. (*John 14:6*)

Dear Father, I see why there is in Jesus no place for cheap sentimentality.  
It whittles away at Your image in us until finally there is nothing left of it.  
(*2 Corinthians 3:18; Ephesians 4:22-25*)

Real mercy is a shock treatment that jolts Your image back to life in us.

I am often in awe of Jesus’ deft use of mercy to make people stronger,  
to give them the courage and the means to start over with God,  
to expose the phoniness of the deceptive victim mentality  
that tells them they are helpless  
when actually they are just being lazy.

I know that when You call me to be merciful, Father,  
You are not talking about our feeble brand of mercy,  
the flimsy stuff that can’t save anyone from real sin.

You’re talking about Jesus’ brand of mercy that attacks sin at the root.

Keep working with me, Father,  
until I am so familiar with real mercy  
that I can offer it in the toughest situations.

## DAY TEN

**“Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.”** (*Matthew 5:8*)

N. \_\_\_\_\_, child of God,  
I call you to be pure in heart.

I don't mean by that “untouched by Sin”.

Nor do I mean ignorant of Sin's ways, sadly.

For that, you would have to go right out of this world. (*1 Corinthians 5:9-10*)

Remember, when you are in a state of grace I see you through the Blood of Jesus.  
Sinless. (*Revelation 1:5; 7:14*)

You have come through the waters of Baptism.

You have died to Sin and been raised to new life in Jesus. (*Romans 6:3-4*)

Now you have to spend the rest of your life learning how to see yourself  
as dead to Sin in every way, and alive to Me in Christ Jesus. (*Romans 6:11*)

As you do that, My child, your heart is purified.

It is not divided between many competing allegiances. (*Luke 14:26*)

It is fixed on your new life in Me through Christ Jesus.

You see, a heart that tries to divide itself between Me and anything else  
loses its vision of Me and its vision of everything else. (*Luke 21:34*)

A heart that unites itself just to Me, to Me alone,  
sees Me, and everything else through Me, with astounding clarity.

A heart weighed down by dissipation can't see Me  
or it would never squander its treasure so carelessly.

A heart weighed down by drunkenness can't see Me  
or it wouldn't need to anesthetize itself to cope with life.

A heart weighed down by the worries of this life can't see Me  
or it would not be so anxious about the very things I am looking after.  
(*Matthew 6:25-34*)

By calling you to be pure in heart, this is what I am asking of you:

To seek the “one thing needful” at Jesus’ feet. (*Luke 10:38-42*)

To strive to enter by the narrow gate. (*Luke 13:24*)

To seek first My kingdom and its righteousness,  
trusting Me for all the rest. (*Matthew 6:33*)

To be meek and merciful in My strong way.

Your vision of Me will get clearer and clearer, My child,  
and your heart will grow purer and purer,  
as you keep your eyes fixed on Jesus all the way through life. (*Hebrews 12:2*)

+

Dearest Father,  
make me pure in heart.

Drive me by the vision You give me in Jesus.

Make me long to see everything through You and You in everything  
so that I can respond to all things only in harmony with Your response.  
(*Matthew 6:43-45*)

I have much to learn here, Father.  
Until You taught me otherwise, by painful experience,  
I thought that to be pure in heart meant to be unacquainted with Sin.

If that were true,  
no one could ever leave a protected childhood without losing purity of heart.

But now You tell me that Jesus’ Blood covers that risk.  
You tell me that You want something more than that from me:  
You want my undivided loyalty in all circumstances.

The pure in heart cannot be only those who are insulated from the ravages of Sin  
in the lives of Your fallen children.

They must above all be those who follow Jesus wherever He leads them,  
without question or hesitation,  
without concern for what other people are thinking,  
whether they feel like it or not.

They keep on following Jesus until, with hearts purified, they see You  
and feel more and more like doing what Jesus is doing.

The pure in heart will follow Jesus anywhere.  
It's their heart's one desire.

They will follow Him to sit with sinners without embracing their sin.  
(*Matthew 9:10-13*)

They will follow Him and find themselves touching lepers. (*Matthew 8:3*)

They will follow Him and reveal to prostitutes their true worth. (*Luke 7:39,47*)

They will follow Him and bring light into the dark world of addicts. (*1 Peter 4:1-6*)

They will follow Him into the mansions of the wealthy and the influential  
to shake them loose from enslavement to their idols. (*Luke 19:1-10*)

They will follow Him to expose  
evil driving the decisions of power-brokers, (*Luke 16:14-15*)  
corruption turning shepherds into wolves, (*Acts 20:30; Matthew 23*)  
abuse ripping families apart and leading children astray. (*Matthew 18:6-14*)

They will do this because they are learning to know Sin as Jesus knows it,  
unmasked, hideous, the enemy of all that is good. (*John 16:23; 8:44-47*)

Father, if this is what it means to be pure in heart,  
please help me to achieve it.

Help me to see Sin through the eyes of Jesus.

Help me to seek Your Kingdom and its righteousness first, last and always.

Make me pure in heart.

## DAY ELEVEN

**“Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called children of God.”**

*(Matthew 5:9)*

N. \_\_\_\_\_, child of God,  
I call you to make Peace.

Nothing identifies you better as My child  
than being a Peacemaker,

I am not calling you to make armed truces.

I am not calling you to fashion fragile accommodations with Evil  
in a vain effort to avoid conflict at all costs.

No, I call you to make Peace, My Peace:

The holy Peace proclaimed by angels at Jesus’ birth. *(Luke 2:14)*

The Peace He wrested from hell through His death and resurrection.

*(Colossians 1:20)*

The Peace that surpasses all understanding which keeps your hearts and  
minds united in Christ Jesus. *(Philippians 4:7)*

The Peace that makes warriors for God sure-footed

in their deadly combat with Evil. *(Ephesians 6:15)*

The Peacemaker I am calling you to be will not fit the stereotype  
of what most people think of as a peacemaker. *(John 14:27)*

My Peacemakers do not cave in to the blandishments of Satan. *(Matthew 4:1-11)*

Ever.

My Peacemakers do not support any version of “peace” that offers Evil  
fresh opportunities to insinuate itself into people’s lives undetected,  
new occasions for doing violence to those I love. *(Isaiah 59:7-8)*

I am not calling you to cry, “Peace! Peace!”

when there is no Peace. (*Jeremiah 8:11*)

My Peacemakers all know how to wield the Sword of the Spirit. (*Ephesians 6:17*)

They have learned from Jesus the things that make for Peace (*Luke 19:42*)  
and the things that don't.

It took His Blood at the Cross for My Son to gain a foothold for Peace on earth.  
You can expect that being My Peacemaker will take its toll on you, too.  
(*Ephesians 2:13-14*)

After all, He is My Son (*Matthew 3:17*)  
and you are My child. (*Galatians 4:4-7*)

+

Dearest Father,  
teach me well the things that make for Peace.

Make me a Peacemaker like Jesus.

For Him, making Peace begins by reclaiming people and territory  
usurped by Satan.

And Satan does not give them up without a fight to the death.

No one held captive by Satan can have Peace or make Peace.

Jesus is willing to suffer violence and to inflict it  
to release Satan's captives. (*Mark 5:1-19*)

He does not back away from it Himself

and He arms His Peacemakers for it right from the start:

He gives us full authority over unclean spirits. (*Matthew 10:1*)

What are the things that make for Peace?

Above all, the Blood of the Cross

and everything touched by It! (*Colossians 1:19-20*)

It slays the slayer. (*Revelation 19:11-16*)

It unmask the deceiver. (*Revelation 12:9-11*)

It despoils the usurper. (*Revelation 20:13*)

It redeems and brings Your lost children back home. (*Mark 10:45*)

It reunites them with their brothers and sisters in the Kingdom. (*Revelation 1:5-6*)

It establishes a beachhead of Heaven on earth. (*Matthew 10:7*)

The things that make for Peace all flow from the Cross: (*1 Peter 1:18-19*)

The Gospel of Peace proclaimed and believed. (*Romans 1:5, 15:13*)

Holy Baptism breaking Satan's dominion and creating Yours.

(*Colossians 2:9-15*)

The Body and Blood of Jesus that shape us daily in the Eucharist.

(*1 Corinthians 11:23-26*)

Your two-edged Sword which is Your life-giving Word.

(*Hebrews 5:12; Luke 24:32*)

The Our Father Prayer Jesus gave us to sustain us in the battle with Evil.

(*Matthew 6:9-13*)

Our new life in the Communion of Your Saints. (*1 John 1:7*)

The birth pangs of Christ being formed in us. (*Galatians 4:19*)

The Holy Spirit, our Power from on High. (*Acts 1:8, 2:1-13; Luke 24:49*)

Loving one another as Jesus loves us. (*John 13:34-35*)

The authority to destroy the strongholds of Satan. (*2 Corinthians 10:3-4*)

All these are gifts from You

which can make me Your kind of Peacemaker.

I want them all, dear Father.

I want to be fully equipped to be a maker of true Peace.

## DAY TWELVE

**“Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake,  
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.”** (*Matthew 5:10*)

N. \_\_\_\_\_, child of God,  
I call you to be persecuted.

Yours is the persecution of the loyal few among the many traitors. (*John 16:2*)  
Yours is the persecution of the seekers of God among the seekers of self.  
(*2 Timothy 3:11-13*)

I call you to the persecution of those who depart from evil  
and make themselves a prey. (*Isaiah 59:15*)

I call you to the persecution of those who pray, “Thy Kingdom come!”  
while serving Me in the kingdoms of this world. (*Revelation 11:15*)

I call you to the persecution of those who love Jesus  
more than their own family, (*Mark 13:12-13; Matthew 10:35-38*)  
who love My praise more than the praise of their peers, (*John 12:43*)  
whose obedience to Me supersedes their obedience to men. (*Acts 5:29*)

I call you to the persecution of those who out of reverence for Me offer people  
what they most need, not what they most want. (*Acts 20:30*)

In following Jesus, you take up a very real cross. (*Matthew 16:24*)

People who find Him dangerous will find you dangerous. (*Matthew 10:25*)

People who are threatened by Him will be threatened by you. (*John 15:20*)

People who write Him off will write you off. (*Luke 10:16*)

But you can handle it, My child.

You are never alone. (*Matthew 28:20; John 14:16*)

When people persecute you because of Jesus,  
they are actually driving you into His bosom,  
the safest place of all.

They are actually bearing witness to your true status:  
Yours is the Kingdom of Heaven.

+

Dearest Father,  
I hear Your call to be persecuted.  
I want to be able to accept it without reservation.  
But I have some problems.  
Help me.

You say I am blessed when I am persecuted for righteousness' sake.

I can accept that.

But how can I tell when I am being persecuted for righteousness' sake  
and when I am being persecuted for the sake of my own sins,  
or for my own stupidity,  
or for my own disobedience?

How can I tell the difference between  
being nailed with Jesus to His Cross  
and being nailed with the thief to his cross?

When am I being accounted worthy to suffer for Jesus' sake, (*Acts 5:41*)  
and when am I receiving the due reward of my deeds? (*Luke 23:42*)

You call me to suffer innocently, (*1 Peter 2:19-21*)

not as a wrong-doer. (*1 Peter 3:17*)  
But when am I really innocent? (*1 Peter 4:15*)

There have been times of persecution when I knew I was mostly innocent.  
But how often I have had good reason to wonder!

Will it ever be any different?

Perhaps it is not for me to lay claim either to innocence or to blessing.

Only You really know, Father.

When I imagine that I have a right to Your blessing,  
I probably don't.  
When I think I least deserve it,  
perhaps then I do.

Your apostles Peter and Paul were often persecuted, (*2 Corinthians 11:23-29*)  
but they were not always innocent. (*Galatians 2:11; Acts 15:38-40*)  
Not even they! (*Matthew 26:75*)

Save me, Father, from getting all tied up in introspection. (*Matthew 27:3-5*)

I know I have disappointed You often,  
and will disappoint You again and again.

Help me not to lose sight of Jesus when I start slipping under. (*Matthew 14:28-33*)  
When I disappoint You, give me the grace  
to renew my commitment and carry on. (*John 21:15-19*)  
Help me to cast all my cares on You and leave them there. (*1 Peter 5:7*)

It does me no good to look at myself in times of persecution.

After all, I am Your child only because You have redeemed me with Jesus' Blood.  
And it is only as Your redeemed child that I could ever gain victory in persecution.

## DAY THIRTEEN

**“Blessed are you when people revile you...on My account.”** (*Matthew 5:11*)

N. \_\_\_\_\_, child of God,  
I call you to be reviled because of Jesus.

It's the most degrading thing that can happen to a person.

To be written off so completely that you're not even worth persecuting,  
you're beneath the criticism of serious-minded people,  
you don't even rate a decent slandering.

You're a fool,  
a raving madman,  
easily dismissed because you're out of your mind.

In this you truly suffer the loss of all things for Jesus' sake: (*Philippians 3:7*)  
your reputation,  
your standing among your peers,  
your good name,  
your academic respect,  
sometimes even your job,  
and above all, your right to be heard and taken seriously.

“O, he's harmless enough.”

“She's just off in la-la-land somewhere.”

My servant Paul, your brother, knew all about what it means to be reviled.  
So will you.

Those whose opinion he once valued most (*Philippians 3:4-8*)  
wrote him off. (*Galatians 1:14*)  
They had held him in the highest esteem.

Now he was human rubbish to them. (*1 Corinthians 4:13*)  
Once, they hung on his every word.

Now he was a clown at best, (*Acts 26:4-8*)  
a wild boar in the vineyard at worst. (*Acts 23:5*)  
He went from being an object of deference (*Acts 7:58*)  
to being an object of pity. (*Acts 26:24*)

He went from a man handsomely remunerated for what he did and said  
to a man who chose to live hand-to-mouth by his tent-making.  
(*Acts 20:33-35; 1 Corinthians 4:11-12; 1 Thessalonians 2:9*)

This is what it cost him to be My chosen instrument  
to carry the Gospel to the nations. (*Acts 9:13-16*)

And, like all my apostles, he counted it all joy! (*James 1:2-3*)

+

Dearest Father,  
I accept your call to be reviled for Jesus' sake,  
to be a fool for Christ.

He has made me His own.  
Whatever I must give up for that  
is worthless to me without Him.

I hold back not even the smallest part of my hard won dignity,  
the tiniest scrap of my former need for affirmation.

I hold back no part of my belly – (*Philippians 3:19*)  
my appetites,  
my cravings,  
my addictions.  
No part of my glory –  
my standing in this world,  
how I appear to others.

No part of my personal goals –  
my achievements, my life's work,  
my success. (*Acts 20:24*)

I cling to nothing in preference to Jesus,  
nothing at the cost of my loyalty and obedience to Him.

All other honours fade in comparison with the honour of being called by Him.  
It takes the sting out of all the resulting dishonours:

“Pay no attention to him.”  
“He’s a fanatic.”  
“He’s so conservative.”  
“Don’t you know? He’s homophobic.”  
“He’s living in the past.”  
“He’s more Catholic than the Pope.”  
“He’s out of touch with reality.”  
“Frankly, I think he’s lost it.”

What would it take for these detractors to find me acceptable to them again?

The mere thought of what it would take,  
dearest Father,  
makes me shudder.

To gain the world and forfeit my soul? (*Matthew 16:26*)

Never!

I will gladly be a fool for Jesus' sake! (*1 Corinthians 4:10*)

I will gladly embrace the Blessing You have in store  
for those of us whom You call  
to be reviled by our peers  
on account of Jesus.

## DAY FOURTEEN

**“Blessed are you when people utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on My account.”** (*Matthew 5:11*)

N. \_\_\_\_\_, child of God,

I call you to be slandered on account of Jesus.

I call you to expect people to make up stories about you,  
and to believe them;

to attribute thoughts to you that have never crossed your mind,  
to blame you for actions you would never have dreamed of carrying out,  
and to be absolutely convinced that you did;

to pay no attention to what you really say,  
and yet to report their version of it to others  
as your very words.

Many people will have their own reasons for needing to believe a lie about you,  
their own reasons for feeling no need to check out the actual facts.

For some it is malice,

but for many it is a mixture of paranoia and envy, (*Philippians 1:15,17*)  
a vivid or even a vague sense that you are a threat to them.

And for many it is sheer laziness, indifference,  
preoccupation with their own agenda.

Whenever it comes, it will always take you by surprise. (*Galatians 2:13*)

The people who show no respect for you  
will often be people you respect a lot.

You see them as brothers and sisters.

They see you as a wolf in the flock. (*2 Corinthians 6:11-13*)

There's not much you can do, My child,  
about what they think of you.

But there is a lot you can do  
about how you respond to it. (*Romans 12:21*)

My call to you, My child, is really very simple:

Expect to be slandered, and just take it. (*1 Corinthians 4:13*)  
Never be lured into the travesty of self-defense.  
(*Romans 12:17,19; 1 Peter 2:21-13; 4:19*)

Listen humbly for whatever truth there may be in the slander. (*Matthew 5:44*)  
Be slow to discount those who discount you.

You need not correct your slanderers.

It is futile to try.

That is My job.

The when and the where is for Me to decide.

As for you, My child,  
just keep on following Jesus  
and loving your enemies. (*Matthew 5:44*)

+

Dearest Father,  
slander is so hard to take,  
lies about me that people receive as truth.

But I beg You to help me to learn how to take it  
until I truly do accept it without grumbling or retaliation  
as a normal feature of Your call to all of Jesus' disciples.

After all, Jesus was slandered,  
and all the apostles were slandered,  
and the whole world slanders the Church from its infancy to the present moment,

and faithful disciples never escape personal slander.

I think that I could get used to that  
if only I could believe that slander about me contains no truth!

But often I suspect that it does,  
and not just a little bit.  
I'm sure that often there's more truth in the slander I receive  
than I'd like to admit.

Or else, I may be perfectly innocent of a particular piece of slander,  
but far from innocent in other ways. (*1 Peter 3:15-17*)

I may not have done or said  
what I'm being charged with doing or saying.  
But what about all the other nasty things I have done and said  
for which I have never been charged?

So who am I to play the maligned one?  
The innocent victim?

There is, however, one form of slander against me that grieves me deeply,  
dear Father.  
It is the slander against me that is designed to demolish people's faith in You  
by demolishing their trust in me.

You have said that You hold such slanderers, (*Numbers 12 and 16*)  
whether careless or vicious, (*Galatians 1:6ff; 5:10,12; 3:1; 3 John 9-10*)  
directly accountable to You  
for the damage they wantonly wreak on the faith of others.

So teach me, Father, how to take slander (*Luke 6:28*)  
and respond with a blessing.  
If I am to rise to Your call for the sake of Your people,  
I really need to learn how to do that.

## DAY FIFTEEN

**“Blessed are you when people hate you...on account of the Son of Man.”**

*Luke 6:22)*

N. \_\_\_\_\_, child of God,

I call you to be hated on account of the Son of Man.

I call you to be hated by the world on His account. (*Matthew 24:9*)

And I call you to be hated by your own brothers and sisters (*John 17:14*)

who fall away. (*2 Corinthians 11:26*)

I have chosen you out of the world for the sake of the world. (*John 17:6, 16-19*)

You are an offense to virtually everything the world sets its heart on.

Just by being who you are, you undermine its evil systems and Godless powerbase.

You lay bare the truth it works so hard to cover up.

You are inured against both its blandishments and its intimidations.

People can't bribe you or threaten you.

You are living evidence that its definition of happiness is all wrong.

And you never give up.

The world has no hold on you and cannot find one.

Your only loyalty is to Me.

You don't belong to the world,

and yet no human being cares about the world more than you do.

You threaten everything it stands for

just because you exist,

and it has no way of changing or softening that fact.

Count on it.

The world will hate you.

It hates Jesus, (*John 15:18*)

and in its eyes you look too much like Him.

Sadder still, and equally as inevitable, is the hatred heaped on you  
by your brothers and sisters who have fallen in love with the world  
and lost touch with Me.

They are proud that they have moved on to something better than Jesus,  
whereas in their eyes you have not. (*Colossians 2:8-10*)

They see you as a hindrance to the world's peace and development.  
(*John 11:49-50*)

You refuse to put man at the centre and they hate you for that.  
They may indulge you for a time,  
but only so long as they have hope of enlightening you.

When they find out they can't, they will turn on you,  
but you will continue to love them as I do, (*Acts 26:28-29, Romans 9:1-3*)  
and either it will drive them mad  
or it will convert them. (*2 Timothy 2:24-26*)

+

Dearest Father,  
since You are calling me to be hated for Jesus' sake,  
I ask You to help me to know Him very well  
and to love Him very much.

I need to know Him very well so that when I am hated  
it will be for the right reasons,  
not the wrong ones.

I need to love Him very much  
so that I will be able to handle being hated  
and still return good for evil. (*Romans 12:17*)

If I don't grow daily in my intimacy with Jesus and in my love for Him  
I'll never stand up under hatred.

What else will keep my love from growing cold (*Matthew 24:12*)  
when wickedness multiplies and turns against Jesus and His disciples,  
when lawlessness overruns all attempts to contain it,  
when the strong and the wealthy conspire to ensure their privileges  
at the expense of the helpless and the poor, (*James 5:1-6*)  
when even leaders of religion and the academy are co-opted  
by the rulers of this age  
and cloak the treacheries of this world in garments of honour,  
and I cannot keep silent?

What will keep me from sinking to hatred myself  
when all legitimate efforts to set this world on a new course fizzle out  
or are taken over from within  
by the very spirit they were designed to expel?

My love will not survive for one day  
detached from Your love for this world in Jesus.

My vision of the coming of Your Kingdom  
will vanish like a mirage  
the moment I cease to see all things through the eyes of Jesus.

All my high-mindedness will disintegrate  
the moment my mind comes unglued from the things that are above  
where Christ is seated at Your right hand. (*Colossians 3:1*)

Without You, Father,  
and without the constant companionship of Your Son,  
I know very well what will happen to me  
when I have to bear the brunt of so much hatred:  
I will become hate-ridden and hateful myself.

So do not leave me or forsake me,  
or all is lost. (*Hebrews 13:5*)

## DAY SIXTEEN

**“Blessed are you when people exclude you...on account of the Son of Man.”**  
(*Luke 6:22*)

N. \_\_\_\_\_, child of God,  
I call you to the lonely life of the excluded.  
Get used to it.

Most people will always see you as a fringe person.

I Myself may at times put you in the centre,  
and some of My people will accept you there.

But many will not.

They may defer to you in public,  
but they will sidestep your leadership.

They will call it impractical,  
out of touch today's realities,  
too heavenly-minded to do any earthly good.

They will sideline you.

You are not their idea of an effective leader. (*2 Corinthians 10:1*)

Get used to being sidelined.

Anyone serious about following Jesus can expect it.

I have so much to offer people through Jesus' disciples,  
but so often their minds are already made up:

They see themselves as a “special case”.

They already know that My answers don't fit them.

You won't usually find yourself all alone in your exclusion.

In most places I have a small group of My excluded ones.

They have drawn a circle around themselves that includes many other people,  
but others have drawn a circle around themselves that excludes them.

You are the misfits that some admire from a safe distance,  
some pity,  
some shun.

Few people will listen to you if they aren't misfits too.

Unless, that is, they are forced to come face to face with a rare Moment of Truth.

In that rare Moment of Truth, suddenly you are the only ones they want to hear.  
Some unexpected crisis will turn the lights on for them all too briefly:

They will see with crystal clarity that following Jesus is the only way to go,  
that His teachings and example are the only way to live,  
that only the Heavenly-minded can do any real earthly good.

And so they will come beating at your door. (*Jeremiah 37:16-21*)

They will listen to you intently until the crisis is past  
and things return to "normal" again.

Then, except for a few, you will become the nuisance to them you were before,  
and they will "bless" you by excluding you again.

+

Dearest Father,  
if the price of being included by You  
is to be excluded by others,  
I will gladly pay it.

If the price of being included by others  
is to be excluded by You,  
I will never pay it!

Sure it hurts to be excluded by those I love.

Jesus loved the rich young ruler, (*Mark 10:21-22*)

but that didn't stop the man from turning his back on Jesus.

What did Jesus do to bring on this rejection?

He lovingly told the man the truth he needed to hear.

How could He have said anything else?  
When the combination of Love and Truth fail to win someone over,  
what can?  
Jesus could have loved him falsely to keep him from leaving.  
To prevent the man from abandoning Him,  
He could have abandoned You!

It was the man's own choice:  
He chose to sacrifice a life lived in Truth and Holy Love  
in order to hang onto His wealth.

Dear Father, how often do Your disciples receive the same treatment from people  
for the same reason?

I admit that I often face the same dilemma Jesus faced.  
Help me to make the same choice He made  
never to sacrifice Truth and Love,  
even if it means being rejected by someone I love.

I need Your strong help to do this, Father!

There are so many legitimate reasons why people might exclude me,  
reasons that have much more to do with my attachment to myself  
than with my attachment to You.

What You want is true martyrs,  
not self-righteous sinners who have a martyr complex.  
True martyrs love Jesus to the very end, (*Acts 7:55-60*)  
and they love people as He does,  
whatever the results.

If one of the results of loving Jesus and loving people  
is to be rejected and excluded by many of them without wanting to be,  
then, Father, I accept this as the price of my friendship with Him,  
and I trust Your word that I will be blessed because of it.

## DAY SEVENTEEN

**“Blessed are you when people cast out your name as evil on account of the Son of Man.”** (*Luke 6:22*)

N. \_\_\_\_\_, child of God,

I call you to a great humiliation,  
the very humiliation My Son had to endure  
just for being My Son:

I call you to the humiliation of being designated as a tool of Satan (*Mark 3:22*)  
by those whose duty it is to preserve the Faith. (*Matthew 10:25*)

The more I actually do through you,  
the more these people will think they see Satan in it.

There’s a good reason why.

As My Holy Spirit uncovers the Truth  
and you speak and live it,  
the only way they can dodge it is by discrediting its source.  
I have come too close to home for them through you.  
I am trying to befriend them through you,  
but they treat us, you and Me, as though we were their enemy.

You are, in fact, sane and level-headed.  
But they have to see you as a perverter of Truth.  
Otherwise they’d have to change their ways.

You are operating in and through the Spirit.  
But they have to see you as the very personification of Evil  
in order to justify their unwillingness to respond to your message.

Some people will find you so repugnant  
they won’t be able to bear even the mention of your name.

Remember: You are not the one they are finding so repugnant:  
I am.

It was people who couldn't stomach what Jesus was showing them about Me  
who cast out His name as evil. (*John 8:48; 10:20*)

You will experience the same thing. (*Matthew 10:25*)

It's the end of the line for people when they do this.

Someone who can no longer tell the difference  
between the gifts of the Holy Spirit and the works of the devil  
is beyond help. (*Mark 3:28-30*)

As for you, My child, stay close to Jesus.

Share in the blasphemy of His name and the defamation of His character,  
and be blessed.

+

Dearest Father,  
as long as You continue to call me Your child,  
I don't care what others call me.

If my name is written in your book (*Luke 10:20*)  
and they choose to cast it out as evil, (*Revelation 20:12*)  
why should I care?

Just don't let them douse the fire of Your love in me, (*Romans 12:11*)  
not by a single degree!

Don't let them deflect Your attack on Satan's strongholds through me,  
not by the smallest hesitation. (*Luke 10:17-19*)

Don't let them tone down the Word of Truth You speak through me,  
not by a single notch. (*Acts 4:18-20*)

You may change me in any way You like, Father,  
by hardship, disappointment, sorrow, humiliation, anything.  
But don't let Evil and its empty accusations alter me in the slightest.  
(*Matthew 6:13; John 17:15*)

Let its threats fall powerless to the ground.  
Let its promises vanish into the thin air  
of which they are made. (*Matthew 4:10-11*)

It is easy to understand why unrepentant sinners need to see Your people as evil.  
St. Paul did until Jesus drew him up short. (*Acts 26:9-11*)

After all, Your Word exposes whatever is false. (*2 Timothy 2:15, 23-26*)  
Your Word brings to light anything darkness is covering. (*1 John 1:5, 2:7-8*)  
Your Word demands change from top to bottom. (*Mark 1:15*)  
Your Word requires complete accountability from everyone. (*Revelation 1:16*)  
Your Word values what most people despise  
and despises what most people value. (*Luke 16:15*)

If people do not let Your Word give them a whole New Birth, (*1 Peter 1:23*)  
they need to see it only as a plague, a curse, evil.  
And if they do let Your Word give them a New Birth,  
then they will be the ones who become "evil" in the eyes of their peers.

Jesus is Your Word, (*John 12:31, 49-50*)  
mighty to destroy the Destroyer,  
mighty to restore life to the destroyed. (*Revelation 11:18*)

When You call us to follow Him,  
He, and He alone, becomes our Way,  
our Truth,  
and our Life. (*John 14:6*)

That's when it dawns on us that it is actually a blessing in disguise  
that Evil feels obliged to cast out our name as evil!

## DAY EIGHTEEN

**“Rejoice in that day, and leap for joy, for behold, your reward is great in heaven.”** (*Luke 6:23*)

N. \_\_\_\_\_, child of God,  
I call you to joy,  
    joy unspeakable and full of glory! (*1 Peter 1:8*)

Leap for joy when you are persecuted for righteousness' sake.  
Leap for joy when people revile you on account of the Son of Man.  
Leap for joy when those who hate Him hate you.  
Leap for joy when you are shunted off to the side.  
Leap for joy in the day you hear your name cast out as evil.

I call you to leap for joy at all those times. (*Philippians 4:4*)

Joy that no force on earth can dim your vision of Heaven. (*Acts 7:55-56*)  
Joy that My love so fuels your love that it cannot grow cold. (*Matthew 24:12*)  
Joy that the song of the Bethlehem angels still rings in your ears. (*Luke 2:14*)  
Joy that the lordlings of earth cannot unseat your Lord Jesus. (*1 Corinthians 8:4-6*)  
Joy that I count you worthy to share Jesus' suffering for the world. (*Acts 5:41*)  
Joy that you are on the Hard Way leading to life, (*Matthew 7:13-14*)  
    that you are heading for the Narrow Gate into the Eternal Habitations.

Your inheritance is imperishable. (*1 Peter 1:4-9*)  
    No one has power to defile it.  
    No one can even tarnish it.  
    Jesus has won it for you  
        and He is keeping it for you.  
Your trials for His sake only make it more glorious.  
Your times of testing only drive you closer to it.

In the midst of all your pain,  
    all your disappointments,

all your heartaches,  
give in to joy!

Just think of it:

Wherever I gather you disciples together around Jesus, (*Matthew 18:20*)  
whenever you witness Me baptizing someone from death to life, (*Acts 2:38-42*)  
as My Son's Body and Blood draw you daily to Calvary, (*1 Corinthians 10:16*)  
every time My Word makes your heart burn within you, (*Luke 24:32*)  
when you see the young grow in grace, and watch Satan fall, (*Luke 10:38, 21-22*)  
    leap for JOY, My child!  
    Leap for Joy!

+

Dearest Father,  
Jesus has sought me out when I was lost  
    and brought me home to You.  
If there is joy before the angels of God over one sinner who makes it back home,  
    the joy in the sinner's heart, in my heart, defies description! (*Luke 15:4-10*)

Jesus has turned my prison into a palace, (*Acts 16:25-26*)  
    my cross into the Narrow Gateway  
        that takes me straight to Paradise! (*Luke 23:43*)  
Who now will rob me of joy?

My heart is no longer all twisted in a knot and shriveled up. (*Luke 24:25,32*)  
    You have untwisted it and coaxed it wide open.

I am no longer cut off, but connected (*2 Corinthians 5:17-19*)  
    to You,  
    to all creation,  
    to myself.

Sin is no longer my lord. (*Romans 6:11,22*)

Jesus is!

Satan is no longer my father, (*John 8:42-44*)

You are! (*John 8:36*)

I am no longer driven by my lusts. (*Ephesians 5:3-20*)

Your Holy Spirit drives me!

You have lifted me out of my lowliness,  
the plague of thinking I am worthless.

And my spirit rejoices in You, my Saviour. (*Luke 1:46-53*)

And now You call me to leap for joy

when people heap reproaches on me for loving Jesus so much.

O yes, I will!

You can count on me to leap for joy

to suffer reproach and dishonour for His name.

In fact, I will rejoice whenever my sufferings

in any way complete something that is lacking  
in Christ's afflictions for His Body, the Church. (*Colossians 1:24*)

I will rejoice when any pain or hardship of mine,

occasioned by Jesus' love alive in me,

reveals the heart of our Redeemer

to one of His wandering children.

(*1 Thessalonians 2:1-12; 2 Corinthians 4:11-12*)

It is my highest joy,

dearest Father,

to share even a tiny piece of the Cross of Jesus.

## DAY NINETEEN

**“Be glad!”** (*Matthew 5:12*)

N. \_\_\_\_\_, child of God,  
I call you to have fun.

Your joy runs deep,  
to the very bottom of your heart.  
It glows from deep within.  
It anchors you in any storm.  
It makes your tears holy.

I call you to let it bubble to the surface often in sheer playfulness, (*Psalm 104:26*)  
to let your delight in others spill out all over the place, (*2 Samuel 6:14-15,21*)  
to leap with dolphins,  
to prance with horses, (*Exodus 15:1-2*)  
to scuffle with puppies, (*Psalms 147-150*)  
to crow with roosters,  
to rise with larks,  
to soar with eagles.

I call you to laugh often at your foibles, (*Matthew 11:16-19*)  
to give free rein to a sense of humour  
that is amused by life’s little incongruities, (*Psalm 104:15*)  
that knows how to tease and be teased,  
tenderly,  
that savours life’s lighter moments.

Do it especially when someone tries to insult you.  
Through sheer winsomeness,  
move them from laughing at you to laughing with you.

You are My fool, after all, (*Jeremiah 32,33*)  
glum when others are glad, (*Ezekiel 24:15-27*)

giddy when others are gloomy. (*Luke 15:22-32*)

To be sure, as My child you see much in the world to make you mourn.

But life is full of funny things, too,  
just plain funny.

I made it that way.  
I enjoy a good laugh.

And I especially enjoy the sound of My children's laughter. (*Revelation 19:1*)  
So have some fun in life! (*Revelation 19:6-7*)

+

Dearest Father,  
You call me to have fun?  
What a gift!

Fun that cleanses.  
Fun that makes people feel good.  
Fun that brings people together.  
Fun that melts away ill-will.  
Fun that celebrates life.  
Fun that celebrates You!

Holy fun!

Fun at no one's expense  
except my own.  
Fun that sends the spirit spiraling upwards,  
never downwards.  
Fun that supercharges the pleasures of marriage,  
never enflaming lust for lust's sake. (*Ephesians 5:3-4*)  
Fun that dissolves meaningless barriers,

never erecting new ones.

Dear Father,

You have built so many funny things into creation.

I am certain that the serious business of routing Satan  
and undoing the damage he has done  
does not keep You from enjoying Your amusing creations all the time.

When You raised Jesus from the dead,  
You gave us permission to laugh again. (*John 21:7*)  
You turned our tears into laughter. (*Psalms 126*)

Never again would we be subject to the chilling fear  
that the beautiful side of life  
might be destroyed by its ugly side, (*Romans 8:18-23, 35-39*)  
that the tender things in life  
might be crushed by its cruel things. (*Revelation 11:15-18*)

You have given us an absolute guarantee, dear Father,  
that Your struggle with Sin, Death, and the hosts of Evil  
is a winning struggle. (*1 Corinthians 15:28*)

By taking our struggles into Yours,  
You have made us winners, too.

Father, I hear Your call to be glad.

You do not want us to behave as if Jesus' death had been final!

What a betrayal that would be!

So, Father, I will have fun.

There will be many lighter moments when Your children gather around Jesus.

## DAY TWENTY

**“But woe to you who are rich, for you have received your consolation.”**  
(*Luke 6:24*)

N. \_\_\_\_\_, child of God,  
I call you not to seek riches.

There is nothing in the story of Zacchaeus that I want you to emulate  
except what he did when salvation came to his house. (*Luke 19:8-9*)

The rich young ruler has it all wrong: (*Luke 18:18-25*)  
You can't keep My commandments  
and hang onto your money, too.

You just can't.

So don't even try to fool yourself into thinking that you can.

What's the point?

Why would any child of Mine want to be cozy with the root of all evil?  
(*1 Timothy 6:10*)

Why even entertain the notion that you are going to be the exception,  
the one who will show everyone else how it's done,  
how to serve both God and Mammon  
and get away with it? (*Matthew 6:24*)

Why delude yourself into imagining that you are the camel  
that can make it through the eye of the needle? (*Luke 18:25*)

Do it My way, My child,  
the way of Blessing,  
not the way of Woe.

The Woe that will come to you  
if you ignore My way  
is just as certain as the Blessing that will come to you  
if you follow it. (*1 Timothy 6:6-10*)

Don't let anyone convince you otherwise.

Be especially wary of those who take material wealth  
as an infallible sign of My Blessing  
and material poverty  
as an infallible sign of My disapproval. (*Luke 12:13-21*)

Such people are ignoring the message I gave the world  
by choosing Bethlehem's stable for Jesus' birthplace  
and the humble home of Mary and Joseph in Nazareth  
as the privileged place where He was raised.

I always call you to Blessing, My child, never to Woe.  
So shun riches!

+

Dearest Father,  
I gladly surrender to You all desire to accumulate wealth.

If any piece of that desire gets stuck in me and won't leave,  
please pry it out and throw it away.

You are my treasure. (*Matthew 13:44*)

It is a treat to be invited to sell all I have to gain You.

What is it worth to me without You?  
If I can't have both, there's no contest.

That's the problem with being rich:

Without even trying,  
reliance on our money  
replaces reliance on You.

We think we possess it  
but before long it possesses us.

We end up fearing the loss of money  
more than we fear the loss of You.

It becomes easy to justify disobeying You to avoid losing money  
just this once.

Being rich gets in the way of following Jesus many times a day.  
We turn away from Him again and again, grieving,  
but not enough to let go of the stuff that stands between us and Him.

So the Peter in us never learns from Jesus how to fish for people  
because we can't bring ourselves to leave our nets. (*Luke 5:1-11*)

The Paul in us never consents to serving as Your chosen instrument  
because we can't face the loss of our privileged lifestyle. (*Acts 26:19*)

The Matthew in us has no Gospel to write  
because we remain glued to our seat of customs. (*Matthew 9:9*)

Father, You call me not to be rich  
so that I can possess all things  
and be possessed by none. (*2 Corinthians 6:10*)

You call me not to adorn the earthen vessel (*2 Corinthians 4:7*)  
so that everyone can see the heavenly treasure it contains. (*1 Peter 3:3-4*)

You call me not to let the delight in riches choke out the Word of Life  
so that I do not turn out to be a spindly disciple. (*Matthew 13:7,22*)

Possess me, Father, all of me.

And help me to be supremely happy possessing only You.

## DAY TWENTY-ONE

**“Woe to you that are full now, for you shall hunger.”** (*Luke 6:25*)

N. \_\_\_\_\_, child of God,  
I call you not to be obsessed with food.

It is not for you to feast sumptuously every day, (*Luke 16:19*)  
to wallow in the flesh-pots of Egypt, (*Numbers 11:4-6; Exodus 16:3*)  
to defile yourself with the sweet meats of Babylon. (*Daniel 1:8-16*)

For your daily provisions, choose simple fare in moderate amounts,  
and don't let food run your life. (*Philippians 4:5, 11-13*)

I put you on high alert:

It is very easy for your belly to become your real god. (*Philippians 3:19*)  
Appetites have a way of taking over.  
Excessive concern for your physical health can ruin the health of your soul.  
Never care for your body  
at the expense of your soul.

Remember the crowds Jesus tried in vain to feed with Himself?

They were so preoccupied with food for their mortal bodies  
that they bypassed the offer of Food  
for their immortal souls. (*John 6:26-27*)

I have appointed to you days and seasons of feasting on earth. (*1 Corinthians 5:8*)

They serve as foretastes of the Wedding Banquet  
awaiting you in Heaven.

I have also appointed to you days and seasons of fasting on earth, (*Luke 5:35*)

reminders of your mortality  
and the price Jesus paid to overcome it.

Celebrate these Holy Seasons with all your heart!

They are Blessings I have fashioned for you.

But let your normal daily fare be simple.

Receive it with a thankful heart. (*1 Timothy 4:4-5*)

Share it with others.

Make more of the fellowship around the table  
than of the food on it.

Meet your needs.

Do not pander to your wants.

Rejoice more over the little that suffices, My child,  
than over the much that surfeits.

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Dearest Father,

You call me not to be preoccupied with what I eat.

How can I help it?

I live in a land where even the poor can gorge themselves  
if they know how to manage what they have.

I live in a land where anyone can grow enough food to feed many people.

I live in a community where overeating does not mean eating too much:  
it means stuffing yourself to the bursting point.

I live with loved ones who express their love by feeding me well.

My diet is carefully balanced.

I avoid mass-produced foods that cost less.

I pay extra for foods that are free of pollutants.

For me, going hungry means postponing dinner for an hour.

How is it possible, Father, for me not to be well fed?

True, there are still famines on earth.

Natural disasters, human greed, violence and war  
continue to create pockets of hunger.

There are slums where children are starving.

I've seen mothers picking through garbage  
in search of something to feed their famished children.

Some peasants toil hard for next to nothing.

Some places have too many people for the available food.

But these days there is no good reason

why everyone everywhere should not be well fed.

Help me to understand what You desire of Jesus' disciples  
in conditions like these.

Is it simplicity, like Daniel's friends? (*Daniel 1:8-21*)

Is it the moderation St. Paul commends? (*Philippians 4:5, 11-13*)

Is it frequent hidden fasting to add muscle to our prayers,  
as Jesus enjoins? (*Matthew 6:16-18*)

Is it systematically sharing what I have with the needy? (*2 Corinthians 8:13-14*)

Or is it developing the personal habit

of eating less than I feel like eating,  
less than I think I need?

Dearest Father,

You call me not to be fixated on food.

I am not as sure as I would like to be

about what this means for me in my everyday life.

I need Your help to get it right,

to develop a daily pattern that puts food where it belongs in my life.

## DAY TWENTY-TWO

**“Woe to you that laugh now, for you shall mourn and weep.”** (*Luke 6:25*)

N. \_\_\_\_\_, child of God,  
I am calling you not to have fun.

You have a right to be confused about this, My child,  
but let Me show you what I mean.

There is fun that cleanses  
and fun that pollutes.

There is fun that heals  
and fun that wounds.

There is fun that ennobles  
and fun that degrades.

There is fun that comes as a by-product  
and fun that becomes a god.

There is fun that makes you more aware of others  
and fun that makes you more callous toward them.

There is fun that reveals My love for all  
and there is fun that buries it. (*1 Corinthians 10:6-7*)

There is fun that is the playful surface of joy  
and fun that camouflages despair.

There is fun that draws people closer to My heart  
and fun that drives them away from it.

There is fun that is inspired by Me  
and fun that is inspired by the Evil One.

There is My servant, Fun,  
and there is My adversary, Fun.

Some laughter is the breath of Heaven,  
some is a belch from Hell.

Holy fun helps you carry out your duties cheerfully.  
Demonic fun gives you an excuse for evading them.

Demonic fun makes you laugh  
    when you should be crying,  
and it makes you cry  
    when you should be laughing.

So now you know, My child:  
    It is demonic fun I am calling you to renounce.

But have as much Holy Fun as you can stand!

+

Dearest Father,  
I accept Your call not to have fun  
    when You are grieving.  
not to laugh  
    when Your Heart is breaking.

I do not want to find humour  
    where You see only tragedy.

Your creation is so full of true humour, Father.  
    Laughter can unite us with the angels  
    and entwine our spirit with the playfulness of Your creatures.

But when humour makes light of Satan's devastations,  
    it is no servant of Yours.  
When it serves only to blind us to the pain of others,  
when it benumbs us to their true plight,  
    it is no gift from Heaven.

I have seen Satan's laugh.

It is present in all those who delight in the suffering and torment of others.  
You can see it hideous in their eyes.

It revels in the triumph of evil in a human soul.

It is especially gleeful when Your children pounce on one another (*Galatians 5:15*)  
when Your work of reconciliation seems to be falling all apart.

Satan's cackle is a mockery of holy humour.  
And he teaches it well to his human children.  
Their fallen nature and his fallen nature are so akin to one another  
that his ways and their ways merge quite naturally. (*Matthew 16:23*)

Diabolical humour serves as the perfect mask for Satan's real intentions.  
It is the ideal anesthetic for all twinges of what remains of a person's conscience.

It is the consummate mechanism for manipulating a mob:  
Get everyone to make fun of what should be making them weep,  
and you've got them in the palm of your hand.

This kind of humour is so contagious.

It works like a charm.

Any of Jesus' disciples caught weeping when everyone else is laughing  
is immediately discounted,  
if not ridiculed outright.

O Father, I hear You now.

You call me to inhale deeply the sweet fragrance of Your humour.

That is my best test of the kind of humour I am hearing.

Having breathed in Your Holy Humour,  
now even a whiff of Satan's cruel humour  
becomes a stench in my nostrils.

## DAY TWENTY-THREE

**“Woe to you when everyone speaks well of you, for so their ancestors did of the false prophets.”** (*Luke 6:26*)

N. \_\_\_\_\_, child of God,  
I call you to find out what’s wrong with you  
when everyone heaps praise on you.

I call you to uncover the treason in your heart  
when you offend no one. (*Acts 20:30*)

I call you, My appointed messenger, to a rigorous examination  
of how you respond to people with itching ears. (*2 Timothy 4:3-4*)

When everyone speaks well of you,  
I call you to find out fast which part of My whole counsel  
you are shrinking from proclaiming to them. (*Acts 20:26-27*)

In that case, you must ask yourself in what ways My Word has become for you  
a pretext for securing your own status and popularity,  
your servant and no longer your Master,  
transforming you yourself from a shepherd into a wolf. (*Acts 20:30*)

Trust least of all your own admirers:  
they can destroy you more swiftly and more surely  
than any of your foes could. (*John 2:23-25*)

I have constituted you a Shepherd in My Flock:  
That means My people are called to follow you in My name.

There is only one way you can avoid betraying both Me and the Flock in your care:  
You yourself must be following Jesus most faithfully  
or you will mislead them. (*1 Corinthians 11:1*)  
You yourself must take up His cross daily, (*Luke 9:23*)

or you, as their role model, will be guilty of their blood  
when they fail to take up theirs. (*Acts 20:26*)

If people are following you, hang on to Jesus for dear life.

Some will stop following you because you refuse to stop following Him.

Let them go. (*John 6:66-69; 1 John 2:18-20*)

You're not helping them if you stop following Jesus because they want you to.  
It is no service to the blind for their leader to close his eyes. (*Matthew 15:14*)

In the end, there is only one "Well done!" that matters, My child:  
Mine! (*Matthew 25:21*)

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Dearest Father,  
You have touched on a very tender spot here.

I see that it is a deadly flaw in any of us servants of Yours  
to become so sensitive to what people are saying about us  
that we betray You, our chief Shepherd, by failing (*1 Peter 5:1-4*)  
to govern ourselves and our message by Your Word. (*Galatians 1:10*)

It is so hard to resist the desire for popular acclaim. (*John 12:42-43*)  
It can twist even the most refined sense of right and wrong all out of shape.

Statesmen who let opinion polls guide them have deserted You.

Bishops and pastors who can't stand up to majority opinion (*Exodus 23:2*)  
have ceased to tend Your Flock and have become the wolf. (*Acts 20:30*)

It is hard enough for us servants of Yours to fall out of public favour,  
but it is harder still for us to fall out of favour with our own family.

This is truly the acid test of our loyalty to Jesus. (*Matthew 10:35-38*)

I may care very little how well the world speaks of me:  
I care very much how well my loved ones speak of me.

Falling out of favour with others for Jesus' sake hurts a little.  
Falling out of favour with my own family for His sake hurts a lot.

It has never been easy to follow Jesus' call  
when your loved ones think you are betraying it.

It throws you into doubt and dismay.  
Am I self-deceived?  
Could they be right?  
Am I wrong to expect at least them to speak well of me?

Only You, Father, can see me through perplexities like these.

Jesus says He will often stand between His disciples  
and the members of their own family. (*Matthew 10:34-39*)  
My family agrees,  
but they think I am the one who has abandoned You.

And yet if I were to make concessions to them "to keep the peace",  
that's when I fear I would be abandoning You.

What I need, dear Father, is the grace and the humility  
to love Jesus at all times  
and to love those who despise me because of Him.

In the end I pray that I might win their approval  
for having clung to You and not to them,  
for having cared more about Your approval than theirs.

I pray that one day they will be thankful for what today they resent so much.

## DAY TWENTY-FOUR

**“Everyone then who hears these words of Mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house upon a rock.”** (*Matthew 7:24*)

N. \_\_\_\_\_, child of God,  
I call you to follow Jesus, My Son,  
everywhere and in all things,

He is your Good Shepherd. (*John 10:3,9,16*)  
He calls you by name.  
He leads you in and out.  
He knows where to find good pasture for you  
and how to steer you clear of poor pasture.  
He knows how to take you to safe places  
and avoid dangerous ones.

He leads you out of the place of Woe  
into the place of Blessing.

That is why He calls you  
to be poor, really poor;  
to be poor in spirit;  
to be hungry now;  
to mourn;  
to be meek;  
to hunger and thirst for righteousness;  
to weep now;  
to be merciful;  
to be pure in heart;  
to make true peace;  
to suffer persecution for righteousness' sake;  
to be reviled for Jesus' sake;  
to be slandered for Him;  
to be hated on His account;

to be excluded because of Him;  
to have your name cast out as evil;  
to be joyful in all your trials;  
to be glad;  
to shun riches;  
to embrace hunger;  
not to laugh with evil;  
to find out what's wrong when everyone speaks well of you.

This is the Way of Blessing for Jesus' faithful disciples on earth.  
These are the rewards and the costs of being My child in a hostile environment.  
This is how the Kingdom of Heaven looks on earth while it is still coming.  
(*Matthew 6:10*)

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Dearest Father,  
I admit that until I get used to the ways of Heaven,  
it is a real challenge to see Jesus' way as a Way of Blessing.

It looks so much like a recipe for disaster at first,  
a guarantee of a life of misery.

Seen from the outside,  
much of it looks like an exercise in self-punishment, (*1 Corinthians 15:19*)  
a plot to rob life of all its pleasures.

Seen through the eyes of Jesus, however,  
everything changes.

Now, with my hopes and aspirations linked to Yours,  
what the world holds out as happiness seems so paltry to me.

I am learning to love the world in a new way, Your way,  
redemptively.

I can no longer love it possessively.

Jesus opens up to His disciples the Heart of Love You have  
for all that You have made,  
and He rips the seductive mask from the face of evil.

Now I am learning to love what I once feared  
and to fear what I once loved.

He has shown us that the only way to bless a fallen world is to redeem it,  
and the only way to be blessed in a fallen world is to be a redeemer with Him.

We never see Him backing away from the price of that redemption. (*Luke 9:51*)  
His love and dedication to Your Will impel Him to embrace it. (*John 18:11*)

Where there is a price to be paid,  
He pays it. (*1 Corinthians 6:19-20*)

Where there is an enemy to be fought,  
He fights him. (*1 Corinthians 15:25*)

Where there is a death to be died,  
He dies it. (*Luke 12:50; 24:26*)

Where there is a hell to be harrowed,  
He harrows it. (*Matthew 27:51-54*)

Where there is a resurrection to gain,  
He gains it. (*Romans 1:4; Acts 2:22-24*)

Dearest Father,  
to be called to join to Jesus in His life, death, and resurrection  
for the sake of the world  
is truly to be blessed beyond our wildest imagination. (*2 Timothy 1:8-14*)

It is a high and holy privilege to clasp to my heart His Way of Blessing.

Thank You, Father!

Thank You!