

Scriptures: Psalm 119; Matthew 5:21-37

Title: **Come, Lord Jesus, Be Our Guest Inviting Jesus**

As Michelle was putting Matthew to bed a week or so ago, alludes to his he asked her to text Jesus and invite him to come to their house the next day. When she asked him why, Matthew explained he wanted to draw a picture of Jesus. Out of the mouths of babes! We chalk that request up to innocence, to lack of understanding. It is that. The world has not yet taught him that he cannot materialize the people he loves. His world is not yet totally bound by the realities of time and space. In many ways, his world is still perfect. It is a world in which those he loves and wants to see can be text messaged and they will come.

What would your perfect world look like? The Bible gives us a vision of God's perfect world a vision of God's good creation embraced by peace and justice.

It is a world where the young dream dreams and the old have visions; a world where everyone sits under their own fig tree; a world of no more hunger, no more thirst, no more illness, no more sorrow, no more broken relationships, no more prejudice, no more hatred, no more war,

It is a world in which all live out the full measure of their days. Who among us has not yearned for such a day, such a world? But, we're adults. We're all grown up, aren't we? We, who are all grown up, know better. We know we live in a world that is far from perfect. We live in a world where ambition and deceit trumps everything else.

A world where an ambitious Japanese composer (Mamoru Samuragochi) hired someone else to write music for him for almost twenty years. Along the way, he gained fame and fortune. But, hiring a ghostwriter is not all he did. He faked deafness to promote his image as Japan's Beethoven.

We live in a world where despair too often seems to have the final say. A world where a fine actor with incredible gifts struggles with addiction and after years of sobriety is found dead in his apartment with a needle in his arm.

We live in a world where the young have no hope for the future and the old fear their money will run out before they do. The Great Recession hit young people between twenty and twenty-five the hardest. The unemployment rate for them was twice as high as the national unemployment rate. In 2012, the national unemployment rate was 8.1%; while the unemployment rate for twenty to twenty-five year olds was 16.2%.

Our elders are faring no better. Too many are having to make hard choices - choices between food and medicine, choices between medicine and heat, choices between air conditioning and food.

With all of this and more rumbling around in our heads, we come to church and hear that anger is sin and lust is sin and divorce is sin and the making of an oath is sin. Can a gracious word, a life-giving word, be found in this reading? So many people are already carrying around a load of bricks. Telling them to tear out their eye if it causes them to sin, just might be the straw that breaks the camel's back. It just might be the straw that causes them to throw up their hands and say, "These are impossible expectations."

Is there a word from God for us in this reading? I believe there is. If we are to hear that word, it is necessary to ask, "What is Jesus doing here? What is it he wants us to understand?"

I believe Jesus, is telling us something crucial, something essential, to all creation's wellbeing.

I think Jesus is telling us that both people and relationships are holy.

People are not objects for us to judge or use or project our feelings onto. Relationships are not to satisfy our desires or further our ambitions or promote our self-interest or silence our fears or anything else.

People and relationships are holy. Forgetting that, our anger can wound, even kill, another's spirit, and our lust can lead us to objectify and use the other. Forgetting that, we can too easily deny the network of relationships marriages create and also fall prey to the temptation to become a weaver of lies.

Friends, people and relationships, including our relationship with this planet, are sacred.

Because they are, we are to respect them and strive to promote their flourishing.

Something wonderful, something marvelous, begins to happen when we begin to respect the other and seek their flourishing. People and relationships begin to grow and blossom. It's what happens when the sun begins to warm the earth after its long winter sleep. The earth springs to new life.

We are everyone one of us immersed in the holiness of God. When we begin to acknowledge this great truth and consciously, purposefully, seek to live as holy people, everything changes - we change, others change, relationships change.

Mahatma Gandhi alluded to this when he said, "Live the change you want to see in the world." Knowing where you want to get is not the same as getting there. As we have watched the Olympic skaters, skiers, and snowboarders this past week, we have noticed that they are graceful, filled with grace.

Yet, anyone, who has ever tried to excel at anything, knows it is not easy.

It starts off as anything but graceful. It takes work, lots of work, to become graceful. We can't sit back and will gracefulness into being. Eventually, if we keep at it long enough, gracefulness does come.

It becomes so natural the practice doesn't show. But, it only happens through daily preparation.

(Adapted from an essay, ["The Grace of Daily Obligation: Shaping Christian Life."](#) by L. Gregory Jones.)

Purposeful living as Christ's disciples takes practice. It takes seeking to follow Jesus every minute of every day. We will not always get it right. Champions in the faith fall down just like Olympic champions. The important thing is to get back up. That is what US champion skater Jeremy Abbott did when he took a hard fall in his short program. He got back up and skated his heart out. If we fall down, and we will, all that matters is getting up and following after Jesus.

We will never create a perfect world, but we can do our part to help ourselves, our family, our congregation, our community, our world be places where everyone and everything is respected and lifted up. It begins when we, like Matthew, ardently desire to invite Jesus to come to our house.

When we say, "Come, Lord Jesus, be our guest."

Amen.