

HEART-TO-HEART

We are reminded that Christ is in our hearts and we are in His and that love connects us all in unity.



The earth laughs in flowers.
Ralph Waldo Emerson

Spring Is In The Air

March 20 is the first day of Spring. When we think of Spring, we imagine sunshine, fresh air, clean linen on clotheslines. We feel renewed and rejuvenated.

A quote from Virgil A. Kraft is, "Spring shows what God can do with a drab and dirty world;" one from Lady Bird Johnson is, "Where flowers bloom, so does hope;" and the third one to share is a Russian proverb, "A kind word is like a Spring day."

These three quotes share a message - God can color our world with hope, and we can bring that hope to others through kindness.

Having hope is crucial to our well-being. Focusing on Jesus helps us to keep that hope in our hearts and to share that hope with others.

So, the next time you see a flower, praise the Lord for his goodness, and pass that joy on to others through a kind word.



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The Be Attitudes: A Matter of the Heart

by Alli Oshiro

Matthew 5:1-2 (ESV)

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....

Jesus' first sermon, the Sermon on the Mount, begins not with rules or regulations, but with the heart. The Beatitudes—what I like to call the Be Attitudes—make it clear from the very beginning that Jesus is concerned with our posture before God. In modern terms, He is speaking directly about our attitude.

Matthew's Gospel emphasizes Jesus as both King and Teacher, greater than Moses, and was written to show that Jesus is the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy. One of the clues to the author's intent is how often the phrase "Kingdom of Heaven" appears—far more than in any other Gospel. Matthew wants his readers to understand that Jesus is ushering in a new way of life for God's people, one that goes beyond external obedience and reaches straight into the heart.

The Sermon on the Mount takes place on a hillside overlooking the Sea of Galilee. It is not difficult to imagine the scene: the breeze coming off the water, the low murmur of voices in the crowd, people gathering around Jesus and His disciples. What would it have felt like to sit there, listening to the greatest sermon ever given by the greatest teacher who ever lived?

The Beatitudes describe what it looks like to live in God's kingdom and the blessings that result. But they are not meant to remain abstract ideas. As we read them, we must continually ask ourselves how what we are learning is shaping the way we live. Scripture is not only meant to be read and discussed—it is meant to be applied. God does not measure us by how well we check religious boxes; He measures us by the posture of our hearts.

Matthew 5:3 — "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."
Jesus begins with the poor in spirit—those who recognize their deep spiritual need. This includes all of us. Our spiritual standing apart from God is one of poverty. We are needy, dependent, and unable to provide for ourselves. Yet this is exactly where Jesus starts, because the kingdom of heaven is not given to the self-sufficient, but to those who know they need Him.

Matthew 5:4 — "Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted."
This mourning is not surface-level sadness, but deep grief over our fallen state. The comfort Jesus promises comes from knowing that brokenness and sin are not the end of the story. Christ has entered into suffering Himself, and because of Him, mourning gives way to hope.

Matthew 5:5 — "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth."
Meekness is strength under control. It is not passivity or weakness, but power submitted to the authority of God. The meek harness their abilities, emotions, and passions under His guidance. Their inheritance is not necessarily land or possessions, but life as co-heirs with Christ.

Matthew 5:6 — "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied."
This hunger is intense and persistent. It is not a casual desire, but a deep longing to be made holy. Not people who are righteous, but people who want to become more like Jesus. And the promise is satisfaction—Christ Himself meets and fills that desire.

Matthew 5:7 — "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy."
Those who show mercy do so because they have already received it. This is not transactional or karmic. It is a response of gratitude. When we remember how much mercy God extended to us when we were undeserving, our natural response is to extend that same mercy to others.

Matthew 5:8 — "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God."
Jesus distinguishes between external purity and internal honesty. The religious leaders knew how to appear clean, but Jesus addresses the heart. A pure heart is not a perfect heart—it is a truthful one. The reward is intimacy: a deeper relationship with God.



*Create in me a pure heart, O God,
and renew a steadfast spirit within
me.*

Psalm 51:10.

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The Be Attitudes cont.

Matthew 5:9 — “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.”
Peacemaking is active work. It involves reconciliation—between people and God, and between people and one another. This requires empathy, compassion, time, and reliance on God. Yet peacemakers reflect God’s own heart and are called His children.

Matthew 5:10–12 — “Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake... Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven.”

Jesus makes it clear that this way of life will not always be celebrated. Opposition, criticism, and misunderstanding are to be expected. Yet we are called to endure with hope, because our reward is eternal.

Jesus did not come to abolish the law, but to fulfill it. Righteousness cannot be achieved through effort or appearance alone. We need Jesus. Transformation begins with the heart.

I was reminded of this truth while walking with my boys one day. Skyler kept asking, “Where are we going?” as we were walking and following Jason. Finally, I said, “Just follow Daddy.” In that moment, I sensed God asking me the same question: do you trust your Heavenly Father to lead, or will you question every step?

The Beatitudes remind us that blessing flows from attitude. The path to blessing is found in humility, dependence, and trust. May our prayer be this—that we would have a heart like heaven.

Just 1 Word

by Jeanne Nagatani

“Just 1 Word” was the topic of Pastor Stan’s message in January 2025. My one word for 2023 and 2024 was JOY. This came from a book marker that was in our church in 2023. The book marker read:

Love Jesus
Love Others
Love Yourself

The word JOY has been a constant reminder to me of Jesus’ love for us and his new commandment that we love one another, but first and foremost, that we need to love Him first. I’m always trying to make Jesus first in my life. It also reminded me that I should think of others before I think about myself. I have to remind myself that I’m a work in progress and I make imperfect progress; three steps forward, one step back. The point is making progress however imperfect it may be.

It’s funny that when I was thinking about a new word for 2025, the word that came to mind was, FOCUS. I asked God if this should be my new word, and He answered by having it come up more than once in my devotionals that morning. He also confirmed it by using Pastor Stan’s message that spoke to me.

As I am getting older, I find that if I don’t do something that I think about, it will become elusive and later I will think to myself, “See, you should have done it when you thought about it.” But if I do the something that distracted me, I find that I come back to the other thing that I was doing earlier and find it undone. HUH!?! What to do...do I finish what I was doing, or do I complete the other something that I was distracted by. This is where the word FOCUS comes in. I have to prioritize my somethings and determine if I will regret not doing the other something that comes to my mind. Confusing yeah? I’ll have to wait and see how long God wants me to have this as my “Just 1 Word.” Since I’m a slow learner, this may be my word for 2026 too, maybe longer. I just have to remember to live life with the least number of regrets.

As I try to remember to FOCUS, I can also try to remember to have JOY in my life. Life is too short to be unfocused and unjoyful.

So, what shall my “1 Word” be for this year? Maybe it was supposed to again be FOCUS, but I forgot what it was. LOL



“Where you go, I will go, and where you stay, I will stay.”
Ruth 1:16



“I tried to do two things at once, but I forgot what the first thing was.”
— Unknown

Inevitability of Aging

by Julie Morita

I can't believe I'm at that age. What age, do you ask?

When I was a kid, I used to think that my parents were so old. In reflection, they were only in their 30s! When I was in my 30s, I started getting called "aunty". That was a shocker! I've come to make peace with it...reluctantly.

The first senior discount I got was in my early 50s. It was both great (discount!!!) but not so great (hey, I don't even qualify for the discount yet). When I went to a bar with a group of co-workers who are my children's age, everyone was carded but me. I asked the "bouncer" if he needed to see my ID too, but he said, "No need Aunty. You good." Sheesh, so disrespectfully respectful. He could've at least humored me.

I recently read an article in the paper that said, "an elderly pedestrian was..." I asked my friend who is the same age as me, "hey, do you think that we would be categorized as 'elderly'?" His answer to me was, "yeah, probably you because you got the white hair that's all crazy looking." That was "rubbah slippah" worthy. It was time for cracks.

Although I do feel like I'm catching up to my mother's age, I have to make peace with it. Aging is inevitable, but I have to look on the bright side and count my blessings - I'm still physically able to do stuff and have a sound mind, most days. And with those blessings I am still able to serve my Lord every day.

So, I don't need to focus on my actual age. I just need to focus on keeping myself physically healthy and my mind sharp. As the saying goes, "you are as young as you feel."

*Gray hair is a crown of splendor; it is
attained in the way of righteousness.*

Proverbs 16:31



*"Aging is not lost youth but a new
stage of opportunity and strength."
—Betty Friedan*



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