

Small Group Study Guide

Who Gets Approved -Part 2

Series: God's Stump Speech

Matthew 5:3-12

From Sunday January 17, 2021

Take a moment to pray for the Lord to still your mind, as well as direct your thoughts, conversation and response to the study.

Appetizer:

Take a moment to read through the beatitudes again found in Matthew 5:3-12. Note any further observations that you have found in the passage.

Last week we talked about how the beatitudes show us that Jesus is available in life circumstances that are beyond human hope. In a nutshell, Jesus is available to everyone, regardless of whether their circumstances seem blessed or not.

The challenging question that arises out of our text today is this: If Jesus opens the doors to all the places humanity is found... why don't we?

Take a moment to ponder that question. Ask yourself the question: are there people in society that I don't like to think are reachable by Jesus?

Main Course:

Like Santa, it seems like we can't help but make naughty and nice lists of people. We have checklists in our minds of those who make the list (whether that's of friendship, or of a good co-worker, or a model citizen, or a Christian), and those who don't make this list.

Activity: In this past week's sermon, Jeff took some time demonstrating some of the lists that we make that categorizes others into categories of being blessed and not being blessed. Take some time to make two different lists as a group:

1. List number 1: A list of people that society usually sees as blessed and a contrasting list of people that society usually sees as unblessed.

2. List number 2: A list of people that YOU usually see as blessed and a contrasting list of people society usually sees as blessed.

Question: Compare the two lists. Are there types of individuals that find their way onto both lists? Who has made it on to your list that you don't consider on the blessed list? If you are comfortable, share those types of people with the group.

READ 1 Corinthians 1:26-31 out loud to the group. Where do you place yourself in the "list" of people that Paul talks about?

Dessert:

If Jesus opens the doors to wherever humanity is found, so should we. But this is not easy. **How can we practice welcoming people into God's country, especially those who come from circumstances that seem hopeless?**

In the sermon, Jeff talked about the need of a change in attitude, and suggested that North American Christians have tended to cross their arms rather than open their hands in welcome towards challenging people. **Ask: Why is it that we tend to be protective and threatened by others in the church?**

It was suggested that we are like this because "old habits die hard, and so does fear." In other words, regardless of the words of Jesus, we have been trained to fear people that don't look as blessed as we think they should.

In an attempt to have grace for others, it was suggested that we remind ourselves that "If you're in, then anybody can get in." If Jesus has grace for you, then he has grace for anybody. **Ask: Is this phrase helpful for you in your attitude towards others?**

It was also mentioned that we need to have a change in behaviour: living as if we believe that it really is true that Jesus is available for everyone.

Dallas Willard once said, "If the group is totally nice, that is a sure sign something has gone wrong."

Final Question: If we, as representatives of God's Country are to embrace getting our hands dirty, what does a messy church look like?

Take away: Make a list of people in unfortunate circumstances that you are aware of and seek to find a way to demonstrate Jesus to them this week. Whether it's dropping them an encouraging note, or giving them a phone call, or sending them a care package. Share your list with the group (it doesn't have to be large) so that people are aware of your intentions and so can be in prayer for you.

Pray for one another as a group in closing.