

Driving through town this week, I caught sight of something that brought back some happy memories. Two boys, about 12 or 13, were tearing down the sidewalk in a go-cart, one driving, one hanging off the back, both wearing big bug-catching smiles.

I had a go-cart at about the same age. I bought it from a neighbor kid down the block who had got his use out of it and was sending it down the line. As I recall, I paid 40 bucks. It didn't run; I pushed it home.

My dad wasn't convinced, as I was, that I had made a good deal. But day over day, weekend over weekend, we began making progress towards putting it back on the road. I had the vision, but I needed help. I needed to know how.

We stripped it down to the frame. I learned to use wet/dry sandpaper and then a paint sprayer: one coat of primer and three finish coats. He showed me how to pack axle bearings with grease. I rebuilt a carburetor and strung a new starting cord. We broke down the wheels, replaced tubes and tires, and painted them Rick Mears Indy-winner yellow.

And then that day finally came. It ran. And I drove it all day with a big bug-catching smile.

There's a discernible pattern in most restoration projects. First, there is the tear-down, demo, stripping, deconstruction phase. In classical spiritual formation terms, we looked at this movement last week: purgation.

Then there is the rebuilding phase, restoring, and re-assembling the pieces. Here, we find ourselves figuring, learning, most often looking for a guide to show us how. Here again, there is a parallel with spiritual formation: illumination.

Finally, there is completion which almost always invites participation. We fire the engine. We drive. We smile. We'll get there next week when we explore the last three beatitudes' description of union.

But this week let's carefully consider the reconstruction phase, the show-me how phase.

As we let go of our worldly pursuits, God replaces them with a genuine hunger and thirst for his righteousness, his justice.

As we see our brokenness in the light of grace and come to understand what He has done for us, even as we mourn our sin, we grow in mercy for others who are broken and in need of grace just as we are.

As we discern and untangle our worldly allegiances, God simplifies our desires and purifies our heart. He becomes the one thing that matters.

If this sounds like work, that's because it is. It is His work in us, but it requires our attention and intention. He will show us how, but we will put our hands and hearts to the task.

When our hands and hearts ache we can be assured of a few things. He is very near the broken-hearted, and he is leading us on to our rightly lived place in his righteous kingdom. That kingdom has already come near and someday soon it will

come in full. That engine will run in perfect time with all of creation. We'll get to drive. We'll get to smile. And he will smile on us. Indeed, He already is.

Small Group Direction

- Begin by looking back on last week's spiritual discipline.
- How did you enter into worship of the Lord.

Let's consider each of the next three beatitudes in light of the idea of illumination. In what ways are they showing us how?

6Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.

- Dikaioisune is the Greek word that gets translated as righteousness (personal) but it can also be translated as Justice (communal)
- What circumstances (external or internal) cause you to thirst for righteousness?
- What burdens do you carry to see God's righteousness carried out?
- Is there a calling to be answered in that burden?

7Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy.

- In what ways have you received mercy?
- In what ways have you given it?
- How is mercy viewed differently by the world and the kingdom of heaven?

8Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.

- What habits of mind and body help purify your heart for the Lord?
- What type of distractions pollute your heart for the Lord?

Lastly, this week's Spiritual discipline is Lectio Divina (divine reading). Here is Adele Calhoun's helpful description: *"Lectio Divina or hearing of Scripture requires an open, reflective, listening posture alert to the voice of God. This type of reading is aimed more at growing a relationship with God than gathering information about God."*

Or as Hal Perkins says: "Are you listening to me?"

- So this week, open the word, read, and then pause, still yourself and listen.
- Ezekial 36:26-27 is a great place to begin this practice.

26I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will remove your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. 27And I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes and to carefully observe My ordinances.