

Usually sometime around late spring, when the school year begins to feel just a bit too long, I begin to daydream alternative livelihoods: cross-country truck driver, chicken farmer, Tehachapi's seafood delivery man, long-form journalist have all made the list.

Another option that has circled back more than once is the idea of becoming a junk haul away guy. A diesel truck, a dump trailer, an honest task with tangible results, and endless need...who doesn't have junk to get rid of?

There's something so simple yet so satisfying about purging, letting go, getting rid of. Marie Kondo has built an empire on this idea, not to mention the cottage industry that has popped up selling us goods and services to help us achieve minimalism (yes, that is ironic.)

The question is what do we do with that reclaimed space, that recovered room? What fills the void? We can think of this physically and spiritually.

Moving through the first two triads of beatitudes and the first two ways of classical spiritual formation, we have found the need that unlocks purgation and the desire that cultivates illumination. We need help. We need God to show us how.

We've acknowledged and cleared away some junk. We've taken on the role of student, willing to shed old habits and learn new ones.

But where is this all leading? What is the goal? Anyone who has cleaned out a drawer, a closet, or a garage knows that the stuff can come right back in. Scripture indicates that the same thing can happen in a spiritual sense.

What fills the space? What achieves the goal? What holds the junk at bay? It's not a what, but a who. It's Him. It's our union with God.

What does that union look like? It looks like peace and it looks like persecution. How can those two things fit together? The clearest, brightest and only salvific example is Jesus, The prince of peace who was persecuted for our sins. To know him, to form an ever-deepening bond, to forge a union with him is to come to know these two seemingly opposite elements, and to come to know the blessing within them.

This week we will ponder this invitation to union and the acts of submission that lead us to that place. To enter into his will necessarily means laying down our own. Here again, our example, the archetype is Jesus.

As we read this week, let us be reminded that the words are his. And even as we wrestle to understand his teachings, he is with us.

### Small group Direction

- Begin by reviewing last week's spiritual discipline.
- Did you practice Lectio Divina?
- Did the practice bear any fruit?

9Blessed are the peacemakers,  
for they will be called children of God.

- Consider the difference between peacekeeping (the absence or avoidance of conflict) and peacemaking (the presence and joy of peace).
- In what areas of your life might you be called to be a peacemaker, what would that look like?

10Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness,  
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

- Consider the difference between persecution and inconvenience.
- In what ways have you seen both?
- How can we rely on the Spirit to endure the prior and not fall into grumbling about the latter?

11“Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. 12Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

- Consider the difference between verse 10 and verse 11.
- How can we “rejoice and be glad” and yet honestly/authentically “mourn” as noted in verse 4?
- How can we pray for those experiencing persecution and honestly prepare our hearts for persecution we might be invited to endure.

This week we will *practice* another spiritual discipline: submission. Warning: this may hurt.

- In what specific tangible ways might you submit your will this week to God or to his people?