

Diving Deeper into Discipleship for May 15, 2022

Pastor Pete Fowler

The Gifts and the Giver: The Spirit Strengthens and Intercedes

Sermon Reflection Questions:

- What has you groaning inwardly today? A bodily struggle happening to you or to someone close to you? An injustice that reveals how our world is far from God's design and desire for it? A yearning for an even deeper connection to God?
- Are you at a place in life where you've become so spiritually weak or burdened that you don't even know how to pray or what to pray for anymore? Do you know someone who is in a valley like that?
- Invite the Holy Spirit to help you carry something that you know is too heavy for you to carry on your own.
- Ask God to strengthen your faith and conviction that He is at work in all things, bringing forward His good purposes for His people and all of creation.

Devotional Reading and Reflection

- **Revelation 22:1-5** | With the mention of trees in this passage, what do we learn about the healing that will be done within and through creation?
- **Exodus 6:1-8** | Why were God's people "groaning" in this passage? How does God respond? How does this relate to the groaning we do today?
- **Romans 5:1-5** | What does this passage teach us about the nature and roles that struggle and suffering can sometimes play in our lives?

Weekly Spiritual Practice

May Practice: Essentials for Confession | Avoiding Sin

(from *Celebration of Discipline* by Richard Foster, pg. 145, 152-153)

- Confession is a difficult discipline for us because we all too often view the believing community as a fellowship of saints before we see it as a fellowship of sinners. We feel that everyone else has advanced so far into holiness that we are isolated and alone in our sin. We cannot bear to reveal our failures to others. We imagine that we are the only ones who have not stepped onto the high road to heaven. Therefore, we hide ourselves.
- The third essential is a "determination to avoid sin." In the discipline of confession we ask God to give us a yearning for holy living, a hatred for unholy living. It is the will to be delivered from sin that we seek from God as we prepare to make confession. We must desire to be ruled by God, or if we do not desire it, to desire to desire it. Such a desire is a gracious gift from God. The seeking of this gift is one of the preliminaries for confessing to a brother or sister.
- If this seems overwhelming, remember the heart of God, he is like a shepherd who will risk anything to find that one lost sheep. We do not have to make God willing to forgive. In fact, it is God who is working to make us willing to seek his forgiveness.