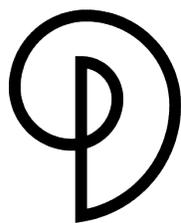


SMALL GROUP STUDY GUIDE



**PRINCE
OF PEACE**
Called to Connect



What good will it be for someone to gain the whole world yet forfeit their soul?

February 25 & 26, 2023

Scholar and theologian Thomas Merton once said, “People may spend their whole lives climbing the ladder of success only to find, once they reach the top, that the ladder is leaning against the wrong wall.” Jesus will challenge us in much the same way in this week’s scripture reading.

SCRIPTURE TEXT: MARK 8:34-37

Read the scripture text together as a group.

BACKGROUND INFO

Jesus and his disciples had been together for nearly three years. During that time, the disciples heard Jesus teach with profound wisdom, and saw him do miraculous things. They finally figure it out, and Peter proclaims of Jesus, “You are the Christ, the Messiah, the Son of the living God.” While the disciples begin to envision the wealth, power and prestige that will surely come from their association with the Messiah, Jesus quickly attempts to reorient their expectations. Today’s lesson captures his words to them.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Share a story about an experience you have had with a ladder: literal or metaphorical.
- Share about a time that you achieved a “worldly” goal, but found that it didn’t give the lasting happiness or fulfillment that you expected.
- Read John 10:6-10. Share a story about a deeply satisfying (abundant) life experience you have had.
- Reread Mark 8:34. From Jeff’s sermon: *Taking up the cross means being willing to suffer the consequences of following the way of Jesus faithfully, whatever those consequences might be. It means putting Jesus’ priorities and purposes ahead of our own comfort or security. It means working for justice rather than demanding our rights. Working for peace rather than insisting on our own way. Forgiving instead of retaliating. Tending to the poor rather than tending to our wealth. When have you “taken up the cross” in one of these ways? What were the consequences?*
- Read Luke 12:16-21 and Psalm 90-12. When you reach the end of your physical life and reflect back, what lasting impact do you hope to have made? What from your life will bring you a sense of peace and fulfillment?

CHALLENGE: During this Lenten season, slow down and ask the Spirit to help you to see yourself and your life more clearly. Come to terms with those aspects of your thoughts, actions and decisions that are out of alignment with the way of Jesus. And whatever the Spirit reveals, confess it, knowing that you’ve been forgiven. Then, ask the Spirit to guide you in whatever may need to change in your life.