

**Ps 119:1-8; Dt 30:15-20; 1 Cor 3:1-9; Mt 5:21-37
02-12-17 – Clear the Road – the King Is Coming**

Western Forest Products of Canada advertised that they were looking for a good lumberjack. The very next day, a short, slight man showed up at the camp with his axe, and knocked on the foreman's door.

The head lumberjack took one look at the little man and told him to leave. "Just give me a chance to show you what I can do," said the skinny man.

"Okay, see that giant Doug Fir over there?" said the lumberjack. "Take your axe and go cut it down."

The skinny man headed for the tree, and in five minutes he was back knocking on the foreman's door.

"I cut your tree down," said the man. The lumberjack couldn't believe his eyes and said, "Where did you get the skill to chop down trees like that?"

"In the Sahara Forest," replied the puny man.

"You mean the Sahara Desert," said the foreman. The little man laughed and answered back, "Oh sure, that's what they call it now!
(jokes.christiansunite.com)

Lots of folks have the idea that to be faithful to God means giving up all the fun stuff – and become a boring, dull person. But, Jesus is listening for you and me **to tell Him** what we want and need out of life. He is waiting. He is listening. Not just little things, but big things as well.

We remain on the hillside with Jesus from last week. Let's continue with Jesus' discourse on our ethical and moral fiber as His followers. The overall message of the passage for today is that real Jesus-followers are called to a deeper and more demanding standard than the over-pious Pharisees who have it in for Him.

At about verse 33 of this passage, Jesus is telling you and me, "Don't say anything you don't mean." (Mt 5:33 MSG) Jesus warns His true disciples not to give the false impression of super spirituality. Don't promise somebody you will pray for them. Just pray with them then and there. Don't go around talking about how sincere you are – just be truthful and honest.

At a church meeting a very wealthy man rose to tell the rest of those present about his

Christian faith. "I'm a millionaire," he said, "and I attribute it all to the rich blessings of God in my life. I remember that turning point in my faith. I had just earned my first dollar and I went to a church meeting. The speaker was a missionary who told about his work. I knew that I only had a dollar bill and had to either give it all to God's work or nothing at all. So, at that moment I decided to give my whole dollar to God. I believe that God blessed that decision, and that is why I am a rich man today."

He finished and there was a respectful silence as he moved toward his seat. When he sat down a little old lady sitting in the same pew leaned over and said to him: "I dare you to do it again." (jokes.christiansunite.com)

Don't swear by anything, especially not yourself. Just speak an honest "yes" or "no". This clears the road for Jesus to come into the situation.

Jesus spends a good bit of time talking about sexual sin – lust, divorce and adultery in general. He calls each of us to a high regard for marriage and the sanctity of that relationship. The way He describes the sin of adultery, pretty much every person in the world is tempted and has lustful

thoughts. Jesus is calling His disciples to admit our moral failures. What can we do? We can tell Jesus. (*cf* Mt 5:32 MSG) We can confess and repent and ask Jesus to cleanse our conscience, our talk and our behavior. This attitude clears the road of debris.

Thinking murderous or violent thoughts and saying vile things is sinful. Jesus warns that contempt and name-calling are equal to murder – called character assassination or slander. (Mt 5:21-22 MSG) Calling your opponent a fool is a punishable act, says Jesus. This sin – belittling and insulting your opponent makes your and my offering to God invalid. Leave your offering at the altar, says the Lord, then run and apologize to your adversary – ask for forgiveness. Make friends quickly with the one you have offended. Confess to the Lord and repent. Clear the road and then stay on the King’s highway.

Jesus says, “Clear the road, Disciple!” He is listening so you and I can confide in Him. He truly, deeply desires you to pour out your heart to Him. This is by prayer – sometimes by Christian conferencing with a trusted brother or

sister in the faith. The Word of God is our guide. The Holy Spirit is our inspiration.

St. Augustine wrote: “Great are you, O Lord, and exceedingly worthy of praise; your power is immense, and your wisdom beyond reckoning. And so, we men (and women), who are a due part of your creation, long to praise you – we also carry our mortality about with us, carry the evidence of our sin and with it the proof that you thwart the proud. You arouse us so that praising you may bring us joy, because you have made us and drawn us to yourself, and our heart is unquiet until it rests in you.” (piercedhearts.org)

Try this: Draw a graph where 1 indicates “deeply restless,” and 10 indicates “utterly content.” Where would you place yourself at this moment?

Jesus offers not “heaven then” – but here and now. Jesus is not so concerned with perfect ethics and morals – He is coming down the road toward us. He desires a personal relationship with you now. When you and I surrender our hopes, dreams, past, present, future, fears, insecurities, talents, sins, money, habits, time,

possessions, careers, marriages, children, families, accomplishments, wounds, successes, failures, energy, thoughts, actions and hobbies to Him, we are clearing the road – so we can meet Him and receive all He has for us – here and now. In Christ we are reconciled to God and to one another – without pretending. Amen.