

# GRAND MARAIS PRAYER INITIATIVE

December 2021 Newsletter / Issue 8

## MISSION

Cultivate an urgency for unified prayer through its committed/disciplined practice.

## VISION

Holy Spirit-led prayer movement makes disciples & transforms the community by radiating Christ-like character.

## PRAYER MAP FOR DECEMBER 2021

The central topic for this month's prayer map (attached at the end of this newsletter) is "Embracing the Spiritual Economy". The map is based on two scriptural promises; the first is Romans 8:1-4:

[1] There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. [2] For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death. [3] For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do. By sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh, [4] in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. (ESV)

The first verse of this passage is the heart and soul of the Gospel message; the next three verses add important context to it. To exhaustively debate the use of the word "law" in verses 2-4 is beyond the scope of this newsletter. Therefore, I will use the judgment of two credible commentators who define the law of the Spirit of life to be "the Mosaic Law properly apprehended by the

power of the Holy Spirit in believers; the law of sin and death the Mosaic Law improperly understood and perverted by our old, sinful nature into a legalistic system of earning God's approval by our own works"<sup>1</sup>. "The inadequacy of the [Mosaic] law [referenced in the first sentence of verse 3] is not due to its content; the weakness of the law is located in the flesh, the unregenerate nature of human beings"<sup>2</sup>.

The second scriptural promise serves as the link between the passage in Romans 8:1-4 and the Spiritual Economy serving as the central topic for December's prayer map. This second promise comes from Jesus as attested in Matthew 13:12, Matthew 25:29, Mark 4:25, Luke 8:18, and Luke 19:26:

**Matthew 13:11-12** - And he answered them, to you it has been given to know the secrets of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been given. For to the one who has, more will be given, and he will have an abundance, but from the one who has not, even what he has will be taken away. (ESV)

**Matthew 25:29** - For to everyone who has will more be given, and he will have an abundance. But from the one who has not, even what he has will be taken away. (ESV)

**Mark 4:25** - For to the one who has, more will be given, and from the one who has not, even what he has will be taken away. (ESV)

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<sup>1</sup> The text in quotes comes from: Stern, David. *Jewish New Testament Commentary*. Jewish New Testament Publications, 1992. Page 381. The other commentary I consulted to determine that Stern's text had support was Schreiner, Thomas. *Romans*. Baker Academic, 1998. Pages 397-401.

<sup>2</sup>Schreiner, Thomas. *Romans*. Baker Academic, 1998. Page 401 .

**Luke 8:18** - Take care then how you hear, for to the one who has, more will be given, and from the one who has not, even what he thinks that he has will be taken away. (ESV)

**Luke 19:26** - I tell you that to everyone who has, more will be given, but from the one who has not, even what he has will be taken away. (ESV)

We see that Jesus uses three different contexts in the above passages to drive home the promise of what life in the kingdom of heaven—that is, life in Christ—holds in store for His disciples. In Matthew 13:11-12 Jesus explains to His disciples the reason He uses parables in His teaching; in Mark 4:25 and Luke 8:18 Jesus asks His disciples a question having an obvious answer, that is, whether a lamp is brought into a room to be put under a basket (Mark) or bed/jar (Luke); and in Matthew 25:29 and Luke 19:26 Jesus presents to His disciples the parable of the ten talents/minas (Matthew/Luke). Even though these three contexts differ, the promise conveyed is obviously the same since the phrases used in presenting it are practically identical. Jesus underscores the importance of this promise by directly labeling it in Matthew 13:11-12 as one of the “secrets of the kingdom of heaven”.

In essence, Jesus is telling His disciples to expect things in the kingdom of heaven to be turned upside down from how things operate in the world. This is evidenced by Jesus’ parable in Luke 19:11-26 where the servants protest the nobleman’s directive:

[24] And [the nobleman] said to those who stood by, ‘Take the mina from him, and give it to the one who has the ten minas.’ [25] And they said to him, ‘Lord, he has ten minas!’ (Luke 19:24–25 ESV)

The economy of the world would have us protest in a like manner. That is, no one who has sufficient resources would be expected to be *given* more. Of course, a worldly economy would not prohibit one with sufficient resources from *working* to amass more, but the thought of *giving* someone that is already rich even more riches borders on the absurd. Yet this is exactly what Jesus is preparing His disciples to expect from an economy in which the Spirit is the operative agent. The Pulpit Commentary<sup>3</sup> discusses the ‘hidden’ meaning of the parable of the ten talents in Matthew as follows:

“... the grace of God, duly stirred up and exercised, receives continual accession, "grace for grace" (John 1:16). The Christian's spiritual forces are developed by being properly directed; Providence puts in his way added opportunities, and as he uses these he is more and more strengthened and replenished ... the spiritually unprofitable shall be punished by utter deprivation of the grace which was given for his advancement in holiness. If applied to the special circumstances of the time and of the persons to whom it was addressed, the parable would teach that the disciples who recognized and duly employed the riches of the doctrine and powers delivered unto them would receive further revelations; but that the people who spurned the offered salvation and neglected the gracious opportunity would forfeit the blessing, and be condemned.”

Jesus’ promise of giving added gifts of the Spirit to those who have begun to fruitfully use what was originally disclosed to them can undeniably be regarded as the law of the Spirit of life. Worldly values and precepts get pushed to the rear as the joy of experiencing growth in the Spirit is bestowed upon us. We see the upside-down nature of life in Christ relative to life as the world demands:

- Our self-worth is proven by Jesus’ sacrifice rather than by accomplishments;
- Our focus moves from the desire to accomplish big things to demonstrating the gift of Spiritual wisdom via service in the smallest things;
- Our weaknesses become strengths;
- Our timetable becomes less urgent because we realize God’s timetable is perfect;
- Prayer becomes our most important means for growth in the Spirit and community rather than any sufficiency we have in ourselves; and

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<sup>3</sup> Spence-Jones, H. D. M. (Henry Donald Maurice), 1836-1917, editor. The Pulpit Commentary. New York : London :Anson D.F. Randolph; Kegan Paul, Trench, 1883. Excerpt quoted taken from the Bible Hub website.

- We strive to make our understanding of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection the driving factor in everyday choices rather how it makes us feel in the moment.

The law of sin and death (our sinful nature driving us toward a legalistic system of earning God's approval by our own works) would pull us in a direction opposite of that identified in the above bullet points, but as the Apostle John states in 1 John 4:4 "... he who is in [us] is greater than he who is in the world."

## **DECEMBER'S PRAYER MAP: HOW TO USE IT**

December's prayer map seeks to serve as a daily reminder that we have been given the gracious promise of bountiful growth in Spiritual gifts provided we use them fruitfully in our effort to abide more closely in Jesus. Use the map as part of your daily prayers to praise God for the Spiritual Economy within which the kingdom of heaven will operate and of which He has given his disciples (i.e., us) a foretaste. As well, look for areas where you feel a deep need for the Holy Spirit 's leading and pray accordingly...and often!

## **CHRISTMAS 2021**

May God bless you this month as you prepare for and celebrate the birth of Jesus, our hope and strength in facing each day's opportunities and challenges.

Now to him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you blameless before the presence of his glory with great joy, to the only God, our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion, and authority, before all time and now and forever. Jude 24-25 (ESV)

## **WANT TO KNOW MORE? WANT TO ADD SOMETHING TO THIS NEWSLETTER? HAVE OTHER SUGGESTIONS?**

Pray-ers are encouraged to contribute input that would provide for the outgrowth of Spirit-led prayer in the community. Email the editor a note at [online@grandmaraisfree.church](mailto:online@grandmaraisfree.church) if you have something that should be shared to encourage others' growth in prayer!

**Grand Marais Prayer Initiative:  
Embracing the Spiritual Economy  
December 2021 Prayer Map**

**Embracing the Spiritual Economy**

