

Lenten Devotional 2024

Media Presbyterian Church

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February 2024

Dear Friends,

The Spiritual Formation Committee is pleased to be able to once again present you with a Lenten Devotional for your spiritual enrichment during this season of Lent.

This booklet was lovingly put together by leaders of our church family with inspiration and support from the Holy Spirit.

It is always a joy to read the thoughts and sense the hearts of our leaders, as they express their love for Jesus in each devotion.

We hope that this devotional booklet will give you inspiration, revelation and peace.

The Spiritual Formation Committee

Wednesday, February 14, 2024

**2nd Corinthians 5
Deacon Dave Layton**

2nd Corinthians 5 speaks to the necessity to escape the earthly realm and enter into God's presence in Heaven. The first five verses assure us that there is a room for us "up there." The contemporary hymn/song, "That Where I Am there You may also be," speaks to it thusly:

In my Father's House there are many, many rooms.
In my Father's House there are many, many rooms.
And I'm going up there now to prepare a place for you
That where I am, there may you also be.

Verses six to ten mention our preference, to be away from the body, just as we yearn for our Heavenly bodies in verse four. My first feeling on the passage was that there can be a split between mind and body. A rock and roll lyric states that when your mind leaves your body – be very aware – perhaps you will not return to it the same as you left it. My experience was this: while running a two-mile warm-up for rugby practice, I looked to the sky at Springton Lake Middle School, and the orange and yellow and blue clouds of sunset appeared as large land masses that I could just step up and out to run on them. My memory tells me that I did for a few hundred yards.

This is but to realize that we are capable of a glimpse of God's glory. While Lent is a solemn time to contemplate the gory death of the Lamb of God, it also speaks indirectly to the joy of the resurrection. In the words of the famous rock musician Stevie Nicks: "Following the shadows of the skies; Or are they only figments of my eyes; And I feeling close to when the race is run. Waiting in our boats to set sail Sea of Joy."

Prayer: Lord, please bless the works of our hands, our minds, and our very hearts, as we bind up our wounds and search for our new leader. Amen.

Thursday, February 15, 2024

Daniel 9:1-14

Elder Steve Buxton

“In the first year of Darius, son of Xerxes (a Mede by descent), who was made ruler over the Babylonian kingdom — in the first year of his reign, I, Daniel, understood from the Scriptures, according to the word of the Lord given to Jeremiah the prophet, that the desolation of Jerusalem would last seventy years. So I turned to the Lord God and pleaded with him in prayer and petition, in fasting, and in sackcloth and ashes. I prayed to the Lord my God and confessed: “Lord, the great and awesome God, who keeps his covenant of love with those who love him and keep his commandments, we have sinned and done wrong. We have been wicked and have rebelled; we have turned away from your commands and laws. We have not listened to your servants the prophets, who spoke in your name to our kings, our princes and our ancestors, and to all the people of the land. “Lord, you are righteous, but this day we are covered with shame — the people of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem and all Israel, both near and far, in all the countries where you have scattered us because of our unfaithfulness to you. We and our kings, our princes and our ancestors are covered with shame, Lord, because we have sinned against you. The Lord our God is merciful and forgiving, even though we have rebelled against him; we have not obeyed the Lord our God or kept the laws he gave us through his servants the prophets. All Israel has transgressed your law and turned away, refusing to obey you. “Therefore, the curses and sworn judgments written in the Law of Moses, the servant of God, have been poured out on us, because we have sinned against you. You have fulfilled the words spoken against us and against our rulers by bringing on us great disaster. Under the whole heaven nothing has ever been done like what has been done to Jerusalem. Just as it is written in the Law of Moses, all this disaster has come on us, yet we have not sought the favor of the Lord our God by turning from our sins and giving attention to your truth. The Lord did not hesitate to bring the disaster on us, for the Lord our God is righteous in everything he does; yet we have not obeyed him.”

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I believe it is widely accepted that America is deeply divided. This passage from DANIEL takes us back to a time of another deeply divided nation, and one which fell under God's judgment. After King David and King Solomon exit the scene, the nation divides — literally. A nation of Israel is formed in the North, and Judah in the South. Both nations were guilty of great sin against God, one of the greatest was idolatry. This sin continued even after God split the nation, so further punishment ensued. Israel was conquered by Assyria to the North. Later Judah was conquered by and taken into exile by Babylon to the East. This is how Daniel ended up in Babylon, which was subsequently conquered by Medo-Persia.

In this passage, Daniel is praying to God – expressing his complete understanding of why the Jewish people were in the predicament they found themselves. He admits the shame they have been subjected to was deserved. The people had been “unfaithful,” had “rebelled,” “transgressed,” disobeyed, and sinned. He acknowledged that God had warned them that if they did so, “calamity” would follow – and so it did. I believe it's safe to say that America is completely losing her moral underpinnings and foundation. American culture has slowly but surely been turning away from the biblical principles on which she was built. At this point, it would be legitimate to ask whether the divisiveness we are experiencing is just a first sign of pending “calamity”? Are at least some of the things happening in this country a result of God's judgment? Are we as a people becoming increasingly unfaithful, rebellious, disobedient and sinful in the eyes of a God who has so blessed us as a nation? Does the passage and prayer of Daniel resonate with us? What is our hope? God is merciful as well as just.

A familiar passage from Chronicles is the pathway to God's mercy on us: “If My people who are called by My name humble themselves and pray and seek My face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, will forgive their sin and will heal their land.” Who are “My people who are called by My name”? That's us, the Church. The revival America needs, must begin inside the church. We need to humbly repent, turn back to His Word, turn away from the “idols” of our age and be only IN the world, rather than OF the world. (continued)

It's up to us; there's a fork in the road. He is waiting to see if we choose deepening judgment, or forgiveness and restoration. Daniel warned us.

Prayer: Dear Merciful Father: We were once a Nation who valued and cherished our faith in you. But now, we have turned away from your ways and are walking in our own ways. Please help us to heed your warnings and return to you before it is too late. We are so sorry, and ask for your mercy and forgiveness. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Friday, February 16, 2024

Psalm 25:1-10

Elder Kate Meehan

Time Magazine reported that the phrase, “In God We Trust” began appearing on American coins during the Civil War. It was removed by President Teddy Roosevelt in the early 1900’s because he thought it was vulgar to mix religion with currency. But, the public rebelled, and so the phrase returned to our money, and in the mid-1950’s, it was also included on paper currency. Despite legal challenges based on separation of church and state, the phrase has remained. In 1983, Supreme Court Justice William Brennan wrote that slogans such as “In God We Trust” have lost any true religious significance.

David knew that trusting in God was more than a slogan - more than “religion.” It is a relationship, and is essential to life and survival. This psalm is David’s proclamation of God’s faithfulness and enduring love for him. David experienced God’s faithful love throughout his life - including correction. David’s psalm traces the trustworthiness of God by asking for His guidance and mercy, and remembering his goodness. By recounting these things, David shows that he can have hope and trust in the Lord — and so can we!

Prayer: Dear awesome and powerful God, you are the lord of the infinite and colossal, but also the microscopic and undetectable. You rule the universe with your feet up. Help me to trust in you completely with whatever troubles I am experiencing. Amen.

Saturday, February 17, 2024

**Psalm 25:1–10 (NRSV)
Elder Elizabeth Rohr**

“To you, O LORD, I lift up my soul. O my God, in you I trust; do not let me be put to shame; do not let my enemies exult over me. Do not let those who wait for you be put to shame; let them be ashamed who are wantonly treacherous. Make me to know your ways, O LORD; teach me your paths. Lead me in your truth, and teach me, for you are the God of my salvation; for you I wait all day long. Be mindful of your mercy, O LORD, and of your steadfast love, for they have been from of old. Do not remember the sins of my youth or my transgressions; according to your steadfast love remember me, for your goodness’ sake, O LORD! Good and upright is the LORD; therefore, he instructs sinners in the way. He leads the humble in what is right, and teaches the humble his way. All the paths of the LORD are steadfast love and faithfulness, for those who keep his covenant and his decrees.”

No one is certain how old David was when he wrote this passage, but it’s clear that he is not only asking for God’s help now, he is also asking for Him to forgive him the many sins he committed during his younger years. Despite the numerous enemies he has gained, David continues to seek out God and His truths and His teachings as the only way forward.

This view is admirable, because it clearly shows how committed David is to his faith in God – as the only one in whom he trusts. He implores God to continue to show him the right way forward, as he firmly believes that He is the God of His salvation, for whom he will wait until his last days. It’s interesting to note how desperate David seems to be as he prays for the Lord’s forgiveness. He goes so far as to remind the Lord of His steadfast love and mercy, which have been known from the days of old. David also asks the Lord to forgive him the sins of his youth – making it clear that David himself is aware of those sins and is not denying that they occurred.

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This is a powerful testament to his ongoing faith and awareness that the Lord is eternally good and genuinely committed to showing those who have sinned 'the way'. If only we could be as humble as David is in these circumstances! How often do we deceive ourselves and others by 'explaining' away our actions, or 'redefining' them, so that our sins become cleansed in our minds and the minds of others?

If the Lord can be humble at all times, isn't it our duty, as His followers, to be equally humble in our prayers to Him? We have nothing to fear by being humble and living lives of goodness and truth, because the Lord's steadfast love and faithfulness towards us is guaranteed to be there whenever and wherever we need it. The Lord is not interested in a 'pay to play' mentality; as long as we keep His covenant and decrees, we will be under His shield. We do not have to hide our sins and transgressions in order to win His favor. In this passage, David's reminder to himself of His promise is just as significant for today's world as it was when he wrote it. How can we function in our daily lives if we don't believe as David believed?

Prayer: Our Father & Our God: We bow in humble submission to your will and to your way. We are guilty of being prideful, arrogant, and self-centered. Please forgive us for taking our eyes off of you. Create in us a pure and a clean heart, and renew a right spirit in us this very moment. We ask this in Jesus' Precious Name. Amen.

Monday, February, 19, 2024

Ephesians 2:1-10
Elder Luann Crosby

When we become Christians, we do not decide to merely try harder. We receive a new power; we are made alive! All of this is by grace, not by our works. Yet while grace means new creations, tendencies and patterns, it does not mean perfection. Each one of us, with varying degrees of struggles and successes, continues to sin. The presence of God's grace, however, means that God completely forgives us, just as when faith first moved into our hearts. It is this grace that produces in us Godly patterns of love, kindness, and joy.

Does it really matter then how we live our lives? Well, it doesn't matter how we lived *before* we faithfully received God's grace. It does matter, however, how we live *after* we faithfully receive His grace. That's why the cross is important. It reminds Christians that whether we are contemplating the sins for which God forgave us years ago or the ones God forgave us this morning, God's gracious gift of salvation inspires both humility and gratitude. God's grace gradually makes us, as Jesus' adopted brothers and sisters, more like Jesus.

Prayer: Gracious God, You are my creator who has chosen me to be in a relationship with You. Through Jesus, You have extended grace to me. By grace, I have been saved. Day by day, help me to comprehend Your grace more and more in my life. Thank you for Your loving kindness and Your unfailing grace that allows me to be capable of many good works. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Tuesday, February 20, 2024

1 Peter 3:8-18

Deacon Jean Furey

Do you ever wonder if you are doing life properly? The words of these verses of First Peter offer us a road map on which to ponder.

Here are a few directions we might want to follow.

1. "Having compassion one of another, love as brethren, be pitiful, be courteous:"

We should make every attempt to live in harmony and community with others. In a world where so many feel isolated, we should seek opportunities to create fellowship. In a world where anger and shouting rule, we should remember the power of a kind word. In a world where there is so much dissent, we should remember the possibility of civility.

2. "For he that will love life, and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile:"

Having a positive attitude makes such a difference in the outcome of your day. Look for the good, even when it is so very hard to see.

2. "And who is he, that will harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good? But and if ye suffer for righteousness' sake, happy are ye: and be not afraid of their terror, neither be troubled."

We can't always expect not to be criticized or suffer for good works. But always bear in mind the gift that the suffering of Christ has brought us.

As I'm writing this, the funeral of Rosalyn Carter is fresh in my mind. Her grandson said that she didn't need a eulogy, her life was a sermon. Her pastor said that when she read scripture she let the words move into her mind. From there, she brought them into her heart. And finally, she let them flow into the world through the actions of her hands. (continued)

I think she was traveling on the right road and living life properly. Where are you headed today? I hope you bring the words of First Peter along with you.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, as we travel out into the world today, let us use the words of your scripture as our road map. Guide us on the right route, and be with us when we go off course. Thank you for your guidance and the example of your saints. Amen.

Wednesday, February 21, 2024

Matthew 4:1-11

Deacon Robin Kauffman

The temptation of Jesus in the wilderness is the focus of the reading today.

I recently read a suggestion for a children's sermon on this reading. The leader opened by asking the youngsters, "Who is #1?"

Funny answers likely ensued about sport teams / parents / stuffed animals, but in the end the leader broke it down saying that after Jesus had spent forty days in the wilderness, the devil was asking Jesus: Is anything other than God #1?

With each test, Jesus answered that God is the #1. Because Jesus modeled this for us, we can use this confidently when we are put to a test or temptation: God is #1.

Prayer: Lord, thank you for the opportunity to read and think about your Word. Help us to remember in the complications and trials of daily life that, if we answer that God is #1, we are headed in the right direction. Amen.

Thursday, February 22, 2024

Genesis 15:1-6

Deacon Sue Hare

In these verses there are messages about the reliability and timing of God's promises, lessons about prayer, and a verse that provides understanding about the relationship between faith and works.

For me, I am struck by the example God gives Abram. God used stars to birth faith in Abram.

Genesis 15:5 NIV "He took him outside and said, 'Look up at the sky and count the stars - if indeed you can count them?'" "Then he said to him, 'So shall your offspring be.'"

Stars have been important in my life too. It was while a senior in high school around a campfire that I looked up at the stars and after being raised in the church that I was amazed at creation. I said to myself there must be a God.

This year at Vacation Bible School the theme centered around those stars. Hopefully, the children and each of us can learn lessons from those stars as Abram did.

Prayer: Dear God, In the sky, you provide us with wonders that direct us towards you. May our faith grow as we contemplate you and the plans you have for each one of us. Help us to see and count the stars and your immense love and care for us as we view your creation. Amen.

Friday, February 23, 2024

Psalm 22:23-31

Deacon Kim Gilchrist

We certainly have heard the expression, “No one promised a rose garden.” This cliché is used to describe how we may feel challenged with a difficult situation. Maybe you are struggling with a family member who cannot get along with you and has challenging behaviors. Maybe you are struggling with a difficult situation at work or in personal situations where you feel unable to measure up despite your efforts. To make it worse, you feel tired, battered, and unable to find the strength to think through the situation.

Psalm 22 describes how David feels he is suffering —according to the verse, it is not working out as he planned. Others are speaking harshly and mockingly. It was a difficult situation to suffer through the hostile words and actions by others. We have been in difficult situations, and wonder where is God.

We may even ask God, “Do you see what I am going through?” The situation may not resolve quickly, and you may find your circumstances persist, and your questions remain the same.

Psalm 22 reveals that now David has changed his sentiment and begins praise for God. We should know that God is aware of our suffering, and the Bible tells us our faith will see us through to an end and relief of our suffering. Whatever the outcome of our difficult situation, we need to thank God, share our praise, and maintain our faith.

We should proclaim praise for God. His awareness of our situation and our praises can possibly take our journey to a new level of comfort or in a different direction. (continued)

While we might feel suffering is harsh, — our praises to God are heard. Our praises and our faith can help us find joy and celebration in the journey. Our faith in God will get us through difficult times.

Prayer: Dear Heavenly Father: Thank you for your presence through all of our journeys — the difficult road with struggles, fatigue, lack of supporters to the roads which may be easier to travel. We are grateful for your Son, Jesus, and the difficult path he took for our salvation. Thank you for always watching over us on our difficult journeys, and may we bring our praises for the gift of your son and his salvation. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

Saturday, February 24, 2024

Mark 8:27-30

Deacon Betsy McKeone and Albert McKeone

In Mark 8:27-30, Jesus asks the apostles and us a simple but very important question: “Who am I?” Jesus is trying to get the apostles and us to take personal ownership of our faith. The apostles give Jesus many different answers but Jesus stops the static by asking the question again: “Who am I?” Then Peter, that topsy-turvy fellow, gives the definitive answer: Master, you are the Messiah.”

Then Jesus gives this confusing command: “Don’t tell anyone else this fact.” This contradictory statement can be explained if we remember that Jesus is the same yesterday, today and tomorrow. Jesus’ mission agenda is not the same in all time periods. In that time period He had to be more careful; and in this time period we are free to spread the good news of His salvation.

The concept of a name has two parts. One we are given. The other we compile over our lifetimes. This second name some would define as reputation, but I would define it as character. This second name is the one Jesus will use to evaluate us when we meet him in heaven. Then the question to us brothers and sisters is which one of the names of character will Jesus bestow upon us when we see him in heaven. The three names are: *sheep*, *goats*, and the most wonderful, joyful one of all is *good and faithful servant*.

Prayer: Dear Heavenly Father: In this Lenten time, let us truly have an attitude of repentance and reflection of our relationship to one another and to you, God. We sometimes worry about how we will be evaluated in heaven while we are still living our lives here on earth. Please give us the mindset of the song, The Gambler: “You never count your money when you’re sitting at the table. There will be time enough for counting when the dealings are done.” God, you are the ultimate dealer, potter and master of our lives if we lean into Your love. You will mercifully give us the name we carry throughout eternity. Amen and Hallelujah.

Monday, February 26, 2024

Psalm 105:1-11 RSV
Deacon Renee Erickson

In the early 1970's, my mom and dad traveled to South Vietnam where my dad had a two-year assignment with the University of Saigon helping to manage their engineering program. My mom had several concerns, which included adjusting to a brand-new culture and living in a war zone. The hardest thing for her, though, being a mom, was leaving her three daughters on their own. Of course, we were well grown by then — I was newly married, and Dawne and Melanie were in college — but we were not terribly excited about her leaving us either.

Later, she loved to tell the story of what happened when she took her concerns to Jesus. As she buckled into her seat on the plane, she began to pray, "O Lord, please be with my daughters." Unexpectedly, the Lord spoke to her – and when she told the story, she spoke slowly and dramatically – "I AM with them. PRAY that THEY will BE with ME." I remember that story often and wonder about all the times I have prayed for God to be with me, or with my family, or with our church. Should I instead be thanking Him that He is with us, and praying that we will be with Him?

What does it mean to be with God? And how do we get there?
Psalm 105:4b gives us a big clue.

"Seek His presence continually."

Open our eyes. See who is right here.

"Give thanks to the Lord" (v1);

"Sing to Him" (v2);

"Glory in His Holy Name." "Rejoice" (v3);

"Seek His strength." (v4);

"Remember the wonderful works that He has done."(5)

"He is the Lord our God." (v7); (continued)

God is, and He is here. Hurray!

That's what Emmanuel means.

Prayer: Lord, thank You that You are with us. Help us to be with You.
“We yield ourselves to Your Presence, Your purpose, Your pleasure,
Your plan.” (Lectio 365 app, January 9, 2024)

Tuesday, February 27, 2024

Psalm 105:1-11; Genesis 22: 1-19

Deacon Pam Orr

Our first reading reminds us to praise our Lord: to remember all He has done and all He has promised. He keeps his promises. We are called to look to Him and to remember.

Our next reading is the story of Abraham and his response to God's instruction to prepare to sacrifice Isaac, his only son. While a difficult story to read and imagine ourselves in Abraham's place, what an amazing witness to fully trust in God and His pledge to keep His promises to us. As our third reading illustrates, Abraham knew that God had promised him that Isaac would have children. He knew that God could bring the dead back to life — even a one and only Son.

For me, this is a call to trust God even when difficult things are happening, and I am pleading for a quick answer that makes sense to me. I want to resist walking the path with God and trusting that He will keep His promises, that He will work all things together for good, and that He wants good things for me. I struggle to put my ideas down and quietly listen to Him. I want to fix it and move on.

But when I do walk with Him and know He hears my pleas, there is a peace that is unexplainable. When I trust in God and follow Him, I can see the greater good. I may not see the resolution to every issue in this lifetime. But I can do my best to listen to God, build my relationship with Him, praise Him and trust Him as I work for His kingdom and accept situations that might not make sense to me.

Prayer: Oh God: You are not a man that you should lie, or the Son of man that you should repent. Whatever you say, you will do; and whatever you speak, you will bring to pass. You are a covenant keeping God, who keeps His promises. Please increase my faith and strengthen me when I am weak. Forgive me when I am filled with doubt, fear and unbelief. Please help me to hold on to the truth of your word and lean on your everlasting arms. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Wednesday, February 28, 2024

Psalm 105:1-11, 37-45; Jeremiah 30:12-22
Deacon Kim Gilchrist

Psalm 105 shares the special message to give praise to God for all his wonderful acts. Do you see God in our daily lives? Do you feel his spirit at work? Have you shared praise for his good works and how he has led generations forward? This verse reminds us to keep the Lord, our God in our hearts and rejoice at his continual presence.

The scripture reminds us that God has kept his promises to guide us and share his covenant with us — which requires that we remember the covenant and share our praises. He has led our society from difficulties over the years such as oppression, famine and poverty. These things still exist in our world today in many different cultures.

God asks us to have faith in him and journey with him in love and compassion. We need to have faith to bring others from their dark places to find God's presence and light in our world.

In Jeremiah 30:22, God states, "So you will be my people, and I will be your God."

Although we may have storms and difficulties in our lives, the Lord will carry us through and enable us to face any challenges that may come our way. He will protect us and shelter us. All this is worthy of our praises for God.

Prayer: Dear Heavenly Father: Thank you for always staying with us through our difficulties and helping us to praise your presence in our lives. You continue to remind us to keep you in the center of our lives, offering your covenant to watch over our days. We share our praises for all of the good things in our lives, for, everything comes from you. We thank you for sending your Son, Christ Jesus, to share compassion and love here on earth and to sacrifice His life for our sins. Again, we give our thanks and praise for your Son, who lives and reigns in our lives, Amen.

Thursday, February 29, 2024

Scripture: Psalm 19
Elder Eric MacDonald

Today is an unusual day; a day that occurs only once every 4 years. It is a great day, early in the season of Lent, to stop and ponder the unique gift that God gives us through His grace and forgiveness.

As I read Psalm 19, I am struck by both its familiarity and its depth. Let's focus on verses 12 and 14, as I think they have much to ponder. Lent is a time of repentance as we prepare to remember Jesus' sacrifice for our sins and celebrate His resurrection.

Psalm 19:12 reminds us that we cannot always see for ourselves the plank in our own eyes (Matthew 7:4); the ways that we go astray. Like Psalm 51's prayer for God to cleanse our hearts and renew a right spirit within us, Psalm 19:12 asks God to cleanse our hidden faults.

The final verse of Psalm 19 is well-known, but notice carefully the pronoun that is modified by a pastor before a sermon. This verse strikes me as ripe for meditation and repetition throughout the season of Lent. If we were to begin each day asking God that our words and deepest thoughts would be pleasing to Him, imagine the impact that might have in our daily decisions and our witness in the world.

Prayer: During this season of Lent, cleanse me from my hidden faults. Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable to you this day and always, O Lord, my rock and my redeemer. Amen.

Friday, March 1, 2024

Psalm 19

Deacon Doug Crosby

Psalm 19, written by King David, is an inspirational devotion for any day, but as a Lenten devotional, it is glorious!

Out of love for us, God's omnipotent power provided an earth where we are surrounded by beauty. Think of the night sky, and think of the world as if seen from the moon 240,000 miles away. How amazing is this "Blue Marble"? Sometimes the jaw just drops and there are no words for the joy we experience through His creation. What an awesome God we have!

Just like His creation, our relationship with God brings joy. His laws, statutes, and commands guide us on the path to build a strong relationship with Him. Through His Son, Jesus Christ, His new command of "love one another" sets a high bar.

When we acknowledge the sprouting of a seed, the call of a hawk over our head, or the laughter of a child, we are revealing God's glory. When we share these common, everyday things with others, we are glorifying God's desire to "love one another." We must rely on God's grace as we strive, with His help, to reach this command and ask for forgiveness when we fall short.

Prayer: Father God, thank you for providing this awesome world in which we live. Please help us in loving one another, as well as, loving your first creation, planet Earth. Amen.

Saturday, March 2, 2024

Mark 9:2-8

Elder Kate Meehan

In state court, when making statements of fact to the court, litigants are required to sign a statement certifying that, under legal penalty, the facts they state are the truth. The statement is called a verification. An affidavit is another way a witness can attest to facts in their knowledge. Finally, I'm sure we've all seen court testimony where a person swears on a Bible that he or she will tell the truth. All of these things are done so that we (and the court) can have confidence that what the witness is saying is true.

In today's passage, God offers a verification of his own. Jesus, along with James, Peter, and John, go to a high mountain, where Jesus was changed in appearance (transfigured) before the disciples. We are told that Jesus' garments became bright white, and Elijah and Moses appeared with him and were speaking with him. A cloud surrounded them, and the voice of God was heard saying, "This is my son, whom I love. Listen to him." The disciples would have known the story of Moses, the deliverer, who met with God often on mountain tops to receive instruction. And Elijah the prophet often spoke with and was guided by God during his life on earth. Thus, this appearance by God in a cloud and on a mountain top, was consistent.

While the disciples had seen Jesus doing miraculous things and knew he was special, here they witnessed God's verification of who Jesus is. We also know that God spoke over Jesus at his baptism. But in this instance, there was a specific audience who were led up to a specific location — likely to underscore the significance of what was about to occur.

If there is ever a time in your faith journey when you question whether Jesus was, in fact, divine, or simply a nice and good guy, remember the significance of this transfiguration event, as well as the witnesses and verifier. (continued)

Prayer: Holy God, thank you for making it plain to us who Jesus is — your Son. Please help me to know Him and to listen to Him through the words that have been preserved for us in the Bible. Strengthen my faith and trust in Your truthfulness. Amen.

Monday, March 4, 2024

1 Corinthians 3:10-23 NIV
Elder Paul Tutton

“By the grace God has given me, I laid a foundation as a wise builder, and someone else is building on it. But each one should build with care. For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ. If anyone builds on this foundation using gold, silver, costly stones, wood, hay or straw, their work will be shown for what it is, because the Day will bring it to light. It will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test the quality of each person’s work. If what has been built survives, the builder will receive a reward. If it is burned up, the builder will suffer loss but yet will be saved—even though only as one escaping through the flames. Don’t you know that you yourselves are God’s temple and that God’s Spirit dwells in your midst? If anyone destroys God’s temple, God will destroy that person; for God’s temple is sacred, and you together are that temple. Do not deceive yourselves. If any of you think you are wise by the standards of this age, you should become “fools” so that you may become wise. For the wisdom of this world is foolishness in God’s sight. As it is written: “He catches the wise in their craftiness”; and again, “The Lord knows that the thoughts of the wise are futile.” So then, no more boasting about human leaders! All things are yours, whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas or the world or life or death or the present or the future — all are yours, and you are of Christ, and Christ is of God.”

In this passage, the Apostle Paul stresses the need for sure foundations. MPC has been blessed with a beautiful historic building and, as property chair, I think about that a lot. Years ago, I was involved in the effort of trying to save a church structure of about the same age as MPC. It had a large, impressive stone tower that was starting to shift. It turned out that the mortar from the original construction in the 1870’s was of a poor quality. A major project was undertaken to reinforce it, but eventually, in 2004, it collapsed onto Chestnut Street; nothing could compensate for the poor foundational mortar. (continued)

Fortunately, no one was injured, and the congregation merged with a nearby church, but "...great was the fall of it."

As with the house built on the sand in Matthew 7, Paul urges the people of the early church at Corinth to build on Jesus as the foundation for their lives. Paul also conjectures that alternate foundations such as wealth, wisdom, the standards of the age, and human leaders are all perishable.

Some 2,000 years later, the standards of the age and measures of wisdom and wealth have changed. Surely, countless faulty human leaders have come and gone, and issues have emerged that would have been unimaginable then, but Christ remains the same. So how are we to wisely discern and wade our way through all of the daily trials of this life. In the previous chapter (v16), Paul says that we have the mind of Christ; and in Matthew, Christ instructs us to be as wise as serpents and harmless as doves. The Old Testament Books of Wisdom tell us that "the fear of God is the beginning of wisdom," and John 1:14 tells us that "...the Word was made flesh and dwelled among us... full of grace and truth." Having Christ, the Living Word, as our foundation is essential, "...all other ground is sinking sand."

Prayer: The scriptures say in 1 Corinthians 3:11: "For no other foundation can anyone lay, then that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ." Jesus, you are our sure foundation. You are the solid rock on which we stand. Forgive us for thinking we could stand on sinking sand. Help us to hold on to you and to stand on you, and you alone. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Tuesday, March 5, 2024

Hebrews 9:11-15 (NKJV)

Rev. Rose Sparrow

“But Christ came as High Priest of the good things to come, with the greater and more perfect tabernacle not made with hands, that is, not of this creation. Not with the blood of goats and calves, but with His own blood He entered the Most Holy Place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption. For if the blood of bulls and goats and the ashes of a heifer, sprinkling the unclean, sanctifies for the purifying of the flesh, how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God? And for this reason He is the Mediator of the new covenant, by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions under the first covenant, that those who are called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance.”

The book of Hebrews clearly states the superiority and preeminence of Jesus over everything that came before Him. He explains how Jesus is superior to the Angels, Moses and The Priesthood. He speaks of the New Covenant’s superiority over the Old Covenant and the superiority of living by faith in Jesus over legalism. Jesus Christ, as our High Priest, became the Mediator of the New Covenant by giving his life for our salvation.

The author of Hebrews explains the Mosaic legislation governing worship, and the proper way to approach a holy God. Moses was instructed how to build the Tabernacle according to the pattern in Heaven. This earthly tabernacle had two sections — The Holy Place and the Most Holy Place in which the provisions for worship were made through rituals and symbols. The priests went daily into the Holy Place to perform their daily sacrifices. However, the high priest entered the Most Holy Place once a year to offer a sacrifice on the Day of Atonement for his sins and for the sins of the people.

(continued)

The Mosaic sacrificial system brought neither sanctification, nor the fullness of God's peace to the worshipper. These symbolic rituals only provided a temporary provision for their issue with sin, for the blood of goats and bulls could not cleanse defiled sinners in their innermost being. However, the blood of Christ accomplished what the blood of animals could not do. According to Hebrews 9:12, Jesus entered the heavenly sanctuary, after which the earthly sanctuary was patterned, by the means of his own blood. Unlike the earthly High Priests that had to enter once each year, Jesus Christ, as our High Priest only had to enter once and paid the price for our salvation. This sacrifice was needed since the fall of man. We praise God that Christ initiated and mediated the New Covenant for us, by voluntarily offering himself as the supreme sacrifice for our sins.

Prayer: Dear God: How can we say thanks for all the things you have done for us? Things so undeserved, yet you give to prove your love for us. The voices of a million angels cannot express our gratitude. All that we are or ever hope to be, we owe it all to you. To you be all glory and honor and praise Almighty God, Our Savior, Healer, Deliver and Soon Coming King. Please help us to always be mindful of the love you have shown us. May you be glorified in our lives as we strive to live in the light of your love. Amen.

Wednesday, March 6, 2024

Matthew 4:17

Rev. James MacDonald

Repent is such an Old Testament word, right? We picture grizzled prophets, screeching at guilty sinners. That couldn't be the heart of our sweet Jesus, could it? Actually, repentance was of vital importance to Jesus. Over and over He calls to those who will hear, Repent. Repent. Repent! So, repentance — this recognition of sin for what it is, followed by a heartfelt sorrow culminating in a change of behavior — sounds very much like the heart of our Jesus. And it's not just a central message of the Bible; it's the message of the Word Himself, coming to you today, urging and inviting you to repent. Perhaps you sit in church, week after week, delighting in the salvation of lost people who are turning from their sin and receiving God's forgiveness and redemption. You watch God move. Yet it's hard to truly rejoice in an amazing grace that you don't really think you need anymore. It's hard to experience the reality of being forgiven for all eternity when you're not keeping yourself cleansed and refreshed through the sacrifice of a repentant heart.

The windows of heaven are bursting with the grace and mercy that God showers upon the repentant. Heaven is leaning over the railing at this moment, wanting you to come to a fresh place of true and total honesty before God. The very thing you tend to push off and hold off — not wanting to deal with your sin, whether from being resistant to forsaking it or simply resigned to being defeated by it — is what heaven is longing to see and celebrate. Listen, believer: The awareness of personal sin, laid before Him in repentance, is what keeps the gospel glorious in your life.

Repentance is not a place to visit when you get saved. Repentance is where you're supposed to live as a believer, returning again and again to the sanctifying power of Jesus Christ — the only power that can overpower the sin that even now seeks to control you. Jesus' heart is still very much about calling you to repentance — and through it, to freedom. (continued)

Prayer: Lord, I repent. I don't want to delay any longer. I admit my stubborn, willful heart. I'm sorry for my secret sins. I'm sorry for being unkind and unforgiving toward others. I still need changing, and I still need You. Thank You for making humility and repentance the only gateways to spiritual victory. Thank You for hearing my prayer. Amen.

Thursday, March 7, 2024

Ephesians 1:3-6

Deacon Julie Havel

Praise the Lord, we are blessed! God, in his infinite wisdom, has blessed us with every spiritual blessing possible.

Now, don't get too excited. YOU didn't get every spiritual blessing, neither did your neighbor, your cousin or I. We, collectively as a people, have been blessed. We, as the body of Christ, have been gifted with every spiritual blessing so that we can work together in faith to do good works to praise and honor him. These gifts are not for personal honor or pride, like a badge to wear. God gives us spiritual gifts to serve the church with humility, not to build up ourselves.

Some of us are fortunate to know and be familiar with our spiritual gift(s), but others of us may be uncertain and wonder how to determine what our spiritual gifts are. If you are wondering, try this: look for a need in the church, and fill it. Do not expect others to see the same needs as you do.

Let us give thanks: to God for choosing to endow us with these blessings, to those who touch our lives by sharing their spiritual gifts, and especially to those in our ministries who work to be the hands and feet of Christ, to perform services of love while using their spiritual gifts!

Prayer: Lord, thank you for equipping us as a collective people with every spiritual blessing. Together, with you, we can do all things. Help us to hear the calling and see the need, and walk with us as we employ our gifts in service to you and the church. Let me be your hands and feet today. Amen.

Friday, March 8, 2024

Ephesians 1:7-14

Elder Jeanne Cunningham

Today's devotion comes from Paul's letter to the Ephesians. This letter stands out among some of Paul's other letters to his missionary cities, in that it is more general and does not directly address the people of that town and their churches. Some reliable ancient manuscripts omit the word "Ephesus" in 1:1, indicating that this letter was written more generally to the whole church rather than to the specific city. (Lutheran Study Bible).

In today's passage, Paul describes the benefits of life in Christ, starting with redemption and freedom. I think the easiest way to begin to understand this passage is through the language from "The Message" translation.

Verses 7-10: "Because of the sacrifice of the Messiah, his blood poured out on the altar of the Cross, we're a free people — free of penalties and punishments chalked up by all our misdeeds. And not just barely free, either. Abundantly free! He thought of everything, provided for everything we could possibly need, letting us in on the plans he took such delight in making. He set it all out before us in Christ, a long-range plan in which everything would be brought together and summed up in him, everything in deepest heaven, everything on planet earth.

Verses 11-12: It's in Christ that we find out who we are and what we are living for. Long before we first heard of Christ and got our hopes up, he had his eye on us, had designs on us for glorious living, part of the overall purpose he is working out in everything and everyone.

Verses 13-14: It's in Christ that you, once you heard the truth and believed it (this Message of your salvation), found yourselves home free — signed, sealed, and delivered by the Holy Spirit. (continued)

This down payment from God is the first installment on what's coming, a reminder that we'll get everything God has planned for us, a praising and glorious life."

These are deeply meaningful verses that consolidate almost the entire New Testament Message into a small reading. We did not earn the freedom from sin that God extends to us through the sacrifice of Jesus.

God does not rescue us for our own sake, but instead for his own glory. Our redemption was not an afterthought or "plan B" but was part of the story God had written from the beginning of time. We cannot earn our freedom, or pay the price on our own will. That price was paid through the blood of Jesus. This is "bring you to your knees" humbling news.

This is an Easter message that needs to be remembered every day of the year.

Prayer: Dear God, I thank you for your unconditional love, and for the reminders you have given us in these passages, that there is nothing that I can do that is good enough to earn my salvation. You so freely, and so graciously extended that redemption from sin, through a relationship with your son, Jesus. Please help me remember this on the days when I feel like trying to take control of the story. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

Saturday, March 9, 2024

Genesis 9: 8-17

Deacon Julie Havel

Signs are important. They help us in many ways, to do the right things, get to the right places and stay safe. Signs can serve to keep us from harm (“DANGER”), or can convey an important message free of language barriers. The best signs are found in the right place, at the time when you need them, and convey a message that is easily understood.

In today’s scripture God establishes a covenant — a promise — to all living things, and then he sets out a sign to serve as a reminder of this covenant.

“I set my rainbow in the cloud, and it will be for a sign of the covenant between me and the earth... and I will remember my covenant...”.

As we are new in 2024, I presume many of us have recently made some promises, to ourselves and/or to God, that we aim to ‘do better.’ Do we have enough signs in our lives that help us remember our promises to God? Do you have something that helps you to remember ‘I don’t want to make that mistake (again), so I am going to set out this visual reminder to help me remember what I promise to do better in a future moment of weakness? Is your sign a piece of art in your home, a digital bible verse sent to you each day, or maybe a piece of jewelry you wear?

Prayer: Lord, help me to get the big picture. Help me to get out of my moment of weakness to see your light, feel your love, and to fulfill my promise to you. I pray that I can see the signs to help me get out of my own way, and that my faith is strong enough to rely upon you for my path and strength, rather than seeking my own plans and will. Amen.

Monday, March 11, 2024

Psalm 107: 1-16; Exodus 15: 22-27; Hebrews 3:1-6
Deacon Pam Orr

These passages tell us and then remind us of God's people traveling through the desert. The Psalms give us the big picture, Exodus the story, and Hebrews ties the story and lesson to Jesus. The people were thirsty from traveling in the desert for three days. When they arrived to a source of water, it was not drinkable. The water was known to be bitter. Moses turned to God, who showed him a piece of wood and commanded him to throw it into the water.

What an unexpected and unconventional solution! But Moses again listened to God, and the people were able to drink the water. Moses was faithful; Jesus is faithful. They followed God even when it did not seem to make sense. Moses looked over and took care of the people. Jesus looks over us even more so. We are called to listen, to obey, to trust and to hope, and to enjoy the beauty God provides.

Are you thirsty and looking at a pool of bitter water? Are you weary from traveling and praying for a home for your soul to rest? Are you willing to look at unconventional solutions and to listen to God?

He will show you the wood to throw into the water to disrupt and change its bitter nature. Jesus has a home for you with him. Sit with him, invite him into your everyday life. He wants to provide for you and to meet your every need.

Prayer: Dear Lord, I confess that at times I feel lost and feel as if I am wandering aimlessly in a desert filled with doubt, fear and unbelief. I recognize that when I am found in these places, it is because I took my eyes off of you. I recognize that those are the times I neglected to pray and to read my Word. Please forgive me and restore my soul. I desire to walk in your green pastures and be refreshed by your still waters. Thank you for hearing my prayers. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Tuesday, March 12, 2024

Psalm 107: 1-16

Elder Susan Kassab

“From Slavery to Freedom”

Opening Prayer: Heavenly Father, we come before you with gratitude for your boundless grace and mercy. As we delve into the words of Psalm 107:1-16, open our hearts and minds to the transformative power of your love. May this devotional guide us on a journey from slavery to freedom, reminding us of the redemption offered through our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

In Psalm 107:1-16, we witness a poignant portrayal of God’s people suffering imprisonment and enslavement due to their rebellion against Him.

Yet, even in the depths of their sin, there is a glimmer of hope — a hope that transcends circumstances and points towards the liberating power of God’s grace. The psalm draws parallels between the ancient Israelites, forced into slavery, and our own voluntary enslavement to sin. We, too, have chosen to rebel against God, living by our own rules and desires.

However, the emptiness of such a life becomes apparent as the glitter of this world fails to compare with the promises of God’s kingdom. Before knowing Jesus, we dwelled in darkness, slaves to sin, devoid of hope and without God in the world. Yet, the narrative takes a beautiful turn as we encounter the life-altering grace of God through the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

The sacrifice of Christ becomes the beacon of hope, offering us a new life to love, serve, and worship Him.

God, in His mercy, grants us the gift of repentance, enabling us to turn away from our old life and embrace Jesus for salvation. Through faith in Christ, the chains of our sin are shattered, and we are ushered into the kingdom of light and truth. (continued)

If you find yourself lost, wandering without knowing God, remember that Jesus is offering to satisfy your needs. His forgiveness, hope, and love are the way out of the wilderness and into His glorious light.

Embrace the transformative power of His grace and experience the joy of true freedom in Christ.

Prayer: Lord, we surrender our lives to you, acknowledging our need for your forgiveness and grace. Break the chains of our sin, lead us out of the darkness, and make us members of your kingdom of light. We turn away from our rebellious ways and fix our gaze on Jesus, the source of our salvation. Thank you for your unending love and the freedom found in Christ. Amen.

Wednesday, March 13, 2024

John 8:12-30

Deacon Andria Kaskey

There is no greater darkness than not recognizing who Jesus is: Messiah. Christ. Savior. When Jesus speaks to the people, as recorded in John 8:12-30, he explains exactly who he is: “I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life” (John 8:12).

The Pharisees continued in their darkness, refusing to believe Jesus’ true claims regarding his identity and his mission. They stumbled around, asking for more witnesses than God himself and Jesus His Son. In their spiritual blindness, they continued to judge by human standards (8:15), refusing to see with the eyes of faith. Here, they thought they were devoting their lives to honoring Jehovah, and instead Jesus tells them the truth: “You do not know me or my Father. If you knew me, you would know my Father also... If you do not believe that I am he, you will indeed die in your sins” (John 8:19, 24).

The Greek word translated as “sin” in these verses is hamartia, and it means more literally, “missing the mark.” In literary terms, it refers to a fatal flaw leading to the downfall of a tragic hero or heroine. The story of the Pharisees is a tragedy, in that they truly believe they are doing their duty to serve God and obey the Law, yet cannot recognize the very Messiah their scriptures prophesy. They are so preoccupied with binding the people up in unyielding laws that they have no space in their hearts for the freedom Jesus offers.

Are you willing to accept that Jesus is who he says he is? Are you willing to tell God that you cannot turn aside from your sin without His help? Are you ready to set aside the burden of your failings and your guilt? Then you are ready to step out of darkness and to walk in Jesus’ light! (continued)

Prayer: Father in Heaven, thank You for sending Your Son to earth to bring Your Kingdom and to lay the foundation for Your Church. May we walk in the light of Your saving grace, leaving the darkness of sin, guilt, and regret far, far behind. Give us Your mighty power to reflect that light to others, we ask, in Jesus' name. Amen.

Thursday, March 14, 2024

Isaiah 60:15-22

Deacon Andria Kaskey

In this passage, Zion represents the city of Jerusalem, and by extension, the people of Israel. Jerusalem has been a forsaken city, its people forced into exile in Babylon. When the Hebrew people are returned to their homeland, Isaiah prophesies abundance in their future. Everything good will be replaced with something even better — gold for bronze, silver for iron, bronze for wood, and iron for stones (Isaiah 60:17). Peace will replace violence, ruin, and destruction. They will be ruled by Righteousness and encircled by Salvation and Praise. They won't even need the sun anymore, because God Himself will be their light (Isaiah 60:17-20).

While this prophecy is specific to the Hebrew people and the city of Jerusalem, it can still bring us hope for our own current-day faith community. In the face of the world's crises and calamities, the power of God is still at work, building and restoring His Kingdom. He is "Savior... Redeemer... the Mighty One" (Isaiah 60:16).

No matter how dark the circumstances around us may seem, "the Lord will be your everlasting light" (Isaiah 60:19). God's glory can always bring light to difficult situations, redeeming them for His purposes. God demonstrates again and again that He is willing and able to restore hope to those who turn to Him in faith.

Prayer: Father in Heaven, we pray that we would be governed by peace and ruled by righteousness (Isaiah 60:17). We give You control of our lives and our church. You will be our Everlasting Light. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.

Friday, March 15, 2024

Hebrews 4:14-5:4

Elder Steve Buxton

“Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin. Therefore let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need. For every high priest taken from among men is appointed on behalf of men in things pertaining to God, in order to offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins; he can deal gently with the ignorant and misguided, since he himself also is beset with weakness; and because of it he is obligated to offer sacrifices for sins, as for the people, so also for himself. And no one takes the honor to himself, but receives it when he is called by God, even as Aaron was.”

During the earthly ministry of Jesus Christ, the only people we see any indication that He got angry with were the religious leaders. The men who had been “appointed” to represent God to the people had done so with pride, arrogance, and judgment — rather than mercy, sympathy, and forgiveness. As God in the flesh, this angered Jesus. The fact is, Jesus came in the flesh to show us the heart of God. He lived the life of a human being to reveal how much God understands our temptations, sympathizes with our struggles, and loves us immensely. Jesus is a prophet, priest and king all at the same time. In this instance, Jesus represented us to God as well as representing God to us.

As our High Priest, He represented us to God. The ultimate way He did this was to pay the entire penalty for our sin on the cross. You and I deserved to be on the cross, not the sinless Son of God. So, Jesus represented all of us, and took the pain, shame and punishment due to us for our sin. (continued)

As God's High Priest, Jesus represented God to us. Jesus demonstrated God's heart of compassion, sympathy, forgiveness, and holiness. He showed us that God is quick to forgive and slow to judge. That being said, it is evident that He wants us to follow Him, to obey Him, to listen to Him (by reading His word), to come to Him (prayer), and finally to trust Him.

God is our Judge, but He wants desperately to be in a reconciled relationship with us. He has done everything He can for His part. He has gone to the extent of coming in the flesh and paying the price for the sin we are judged for! The only thing our Judge and High Priest asks is to recognize what He has done for us, embrace what He has done for us, and live a life worthy of our calling as a child of the King!

Prayer: Oh Lord Jesus, As we come to you today, we come with thanksgiving in our hearts to you for your great sacrifice. Thank you for coming in the flesh, to live, to die, and to pay the price for our redemption. Thank you for becoming our Great High Priest and the Mediator of the New Covenant. We now embrace what you have done for us and ask you for the strength to live a life worthy of your calling. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Saturday, March 16, 2024

Habakkuk 1:2-17

Deacon Elaine Fetterman

The book of Habakkuk opens with the prophet praying very intensely to God because of the sins of the people of Judah. He asked God, why He was showing him what was going on, but not doing anything about it. His questions and doubts arose from his jealousy for the holiness and justice of God. It appeared that God was giving the people permission to continue to do what they were doing and not have their transgressions judged.

Then God answered the prophet and told him how he was going to raise up the Chaldeans, to bring judgment upon his people, Judah: (Habakkuk 1:5-7)

*“Look among the nations and watch — Be utterly astounded!
For I will work a work in your days which you would not believe,
though it were told you. For indeed I am raising up the Chaldeans,
a bitter and hasty nation Which marches through the breadth
of the earth, To possess dwelling places that are not theirs.
They are terrible and dreadful; Their judgment and their dignity
proceed from themselves.”*

Habakkuk then understood that God was about to discipline the people of Judah, but could not understand how God was going to use a nation that was worse than his people for judgement.

The prophet knew that the people of Judah needed to be disciplined because of their disobedience. They needed to learn a hard lesson and there was no way for them to escape the judgment of God.

God disciplines us in many ways. Sometimes the discipline is barely noticeable and seems doable. Then, at other times it seems very harsh and hard to accept. Looking back on the past, I have come to realize that God knew exactly what type of discipline I needed each time I received it. (continued)

I am the person that I am today, because of each time he had to correct me. I have asked for his forgiveness for not always accepting his discipline with grace and I thank Him for his patience and love for me.

Prayer: God, we are thankful that you love us enough to discipline us when we go astray. We may not always recognize or accept your dealings with us; but we understand that if we take the time to discuss our issues with you, we will learn how to correct our errors. Please continue to watch over us, protect us and correct us. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Monday, March 18, 2024

2 Corinthians 3:4-11 NIV
Elder Paul Tutton

“Such confidence we have through Christ before God. Not that we are competent in ourselves to claim anything for ourselves, but our competence comes from God. He has made us competent as ministers of a new covenant---not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life. Now if the ministry that brought death, which was engraved in letters on stone, came with glory, so that the Israelites could not look steadily at the face of Moses because of its glory, transitory though it was, will not the ministry of the Spirit be even more glorious? If the ministry that brought condemnation was glorious, how much more glorious is the ministry that brings righteousness! For what was glorious has no glory now in comparison with the surpassing glory. And if what was transitory came with glory, how much greater is the glory of that which lasts!”

I recently saw a comical meme comparing “The Heaviest Objects in the Universe.” The cartoon depicted the sun and black holes and neutron stars, and concluded that the heaviest thing in the universe was “the crushing weight of being the only person on the whole Internet with correct theology.” I would counter with the lightness of “Such confidence we have through Christ...” and not being overly concerned with the perfection of our theology.

In the verses immediately preceding our reading, the Apostle Paul tells the Corinthian Christians that “You yourselves are our letter, written on our hearts, known, and read by everyone. You show that you are a letter from Christ, the result of our ministry, written not with ink but with the spirit of the Living God not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts.” (3;2,3)

In our reading, the words, “... for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life,” (v3:6) jump off the page. (continued)

Years ago, we took a leisurely drive from London north to Edinburgh, wandering for two weeks through the heart of England, all while driving on the left side of the road. A visceral memory from that trip was the ever-present evidence of hundreds of years of violence and bloodshed which were literally over finer points of Christian doctrine; wars fought, churches and monasteries destroyed, church leaders burned at the stake, monarchs being overthrown, exiled, and executed.

Today, there are many loud voices advocating violent positions over fine points of scripture. We are constantly reminded that "...the letter kills...". The written tradition of the PC(USA) acknowledges this apparent conflict of "letter versus spirit" in the Confession of 1967 which states in part "...that He will continue to speak through the Scriptures in a changing world and in every form of human culture."

In counterbalance, "... the Spirit gives life." As faithful followers of Jesus, the Word (John 1:14), we have the confidence that we, having "... the spirit of the Living God not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts" are charged with being the Spirit that gives life and that we are the witnesses "...to the glory of that which lasts...".

Prayer of St. Francis of Assisi (Prayer for Peace):

Lord, make me an instrument of your peace: where there is hatred, let me sow love; where there is injury, pardon; where there is doubt, faith; where there is despair, hope; where there is darkness, light; where there is sadness, joy. O divine Master, grant that I may not so much seek to be consoled as to console, to be understood as to understand, to be loved as to love. For it is in giving that we receive, it is in pardoning that we are pardoned, and it is in dying that we are born to eternal life. Amen.

Tuesday, March 19, 2024

Matthew 26:36-46
Elder Kate Meehan

Have you ever awoken in the wee hours of the morning and had some trouble falling back to sleep?

How about frequently waking up at about the same early hour?

If you don't do so already, may I suggest you take the opportunity to pray. Perhaps God uses these times, when He has our full attention, in the dark, with no noise or distractions, to prompt a conversation with Him.

Imagine if all of us, even for the briefest moment, in our separate spaces united in prayer at that time?

In today's scripture, Jesus and the disciples are in the Garden of Gethsemane just before his arrest.

He asks the disciples to stand watch while he prays. But of course, they are tired and fall asleep repeatedly.

Three times Jesus returns to them and catches them sleeping and asks them to pray. God has a purpose for us, which may sometimes be as simple as praying in the middle of the night.

While I'm not suggesting you stay up all night to pray, when you do wake up, pray for whatever or whoever God has put on your mind.

Prayer: Dear God, please use me and prompt me to pray when I wake. Help me to hear you, and bring on the prayer needs! Amen.

Wednesday, March 20, 2024

John 12:44-45 (NIV)
Elder Joe Hare

“Then Jesus cried out, “Whoever believes in me does not believe in me only, but in the one who sent me. The one who looks at me is seeing the one who sent me.” John 12:44-45

Make no mistake about it, when we reject Jesus, we reject God. There is an entire unity between Jesus and the Father — there is a complete and mysterious Oneness. In our verses for today, Jesus boldly and earnestly declares this Truth, desiring that all might take notice of it. To trust in the Son — the sent Savior of sinners — is to also trust in the Father — the One who sent Him to save. Though distinct Persons of the Trinity, they cannot be divided. The unity of Jesus and the Father are so complete that to honor God is to honor the Son as well, and conversely, to dishonor One is to dishonor the Other.

“Moreover, the Father judges no one, but has entrusted all judgment to the Son, that all may honor the Son just as they honor the Father. He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father, who sent him.” John 5:22-23 (NIV)

God makes Himself known through the face of Christ. Jesus is the perfect manifestation of God. Therefore, to believe in Jesus is to believe in God. God’s essential nature is disclosed in our Lord Jesus. Knowing God comes through knowing His Son — reading His Word, paying attention to His teachings. Jesus came to make God known to us.

Prayer: O Lord, give us the wisdom and perseverance to study your Word every day, and to understand your teachings so that we can know the Father. Amen.

Thursday, March 21, 2024

Psalms 118:24

Deacon Belle Patton

Psalm 118:24, reminds us “This is the day the Lord has made. We will rejoice and be glad in it.”

This is a frequently memorized verse and a positive, prayerful reminder that many choose to have posted in their home.

Each day, from sunrise to sunset, is a day given to us by God. And many of you have witnessed many spectacular and colorful sunrises and sunsets that make it easy to rejoice in God’s creation!!

The Bible gives us many reminders of how we are to live and rejoice in each day given to us. In Paul’s letter to the Philippians 2:1-11, we are reminded to imitate Christ’s humility in all we do by helping each other and lifting each other up. Our attitude should give more attention to others, thinking of others as better than ourselves. We are reminded to be ‘working together with one heart, mind, and purpose.’

When you close your eyes at the sunset of each day that the Lord has given you, consider this:

- † Did my life, today, please the Lord?
- † Did I love others well by lifting them up?

Prayer: Lord, thank you for the guidance for our lives that you share with us. Thank you for the sunrise and sunset of each day. We know that you are always with us as we work to live lives pleasing to you. In Jesus’ name, Amen.

Friday, March 22, 2024

Philippians 2:12-18

Elder Jeanne Cunningham

Philippians 2:12-18: “What I’m getting at, friends, is that you should simply keep on doing what you’ve done from the beginning. When I was living among you, you lived in responsive obedience. Now that I’m separated from you, keep it up. Better yet, redouble your efforts. Be energetic in your life of salvation, reverent and sensitive before God. That energy is God’s energy, an energy deep within you, God himself willing and working at what will give him the most pleasure. Do everything readily and cheerfully — no bickering, no second-guessing allowed! Go out into the world uncorrupted, a breath of fresh air in this squalid and polluted society. Provide people with a glimpse of good living and of the living God. Carry the light-giving Message into the night so I’ll have good cause to be proud of you on the day that Christ returns. You’ll be living proof that I didn’t go to all this work for nothing. Even if I am executed here and now, I’ll rejoice in being an element in the offering of your faith that you make on Christ’s altar, a part of your rejoicing. But turnabout’s fair play — you must join me in my rejoicing. Whatever you do, don’t feel sorry for me.”

Paul’s letter to the Philippians is written from jail, yet is described by the “Lutheran Study Bible” as one of his most joyful letters. Paul praises the Philippians for their obedience and good and faithful work while he was ministering to them in person, but now writes to remind them of how they should continue without him.

In Philippians, Paul is trying to show us what God and Christ are like because our life’s task is to become like Jesus. God is at work within us to accomplish God’s will. In these verses there is an unmistakable emphasis on “work.” We don’t work for our salvation; that is a free gift of God. We can’t work, serve, or give enough to earn our salvation. (continued)

We work out our salvation through godly living, not to be saved, but because we are saved. Following Christ takes effort and sweat. It's work. And doing work doesn't always fill our heart with joy or leave us cheerful, but Paul's command is that we should remain cheerful always.

Paul encourages the church members to, "shine like stars in the world." He wants them to take the initiative to shed light where the darkness might tempt us to be less than we are called to be in Christ.

It's a huge task, and one that is still so relevant to life today when grumbling and complaining can come so easily. We are tasked with living differently. For, when we live differently, people want to know why we are the way we are. Then, when they ask us why, we can point to our Creator and Savior and say, it is all because of Christ. Living our lives joyfully, takes intention, practice, and most importantly, prayer and obedience.

Prayer: Dear God, we know we fall short in standing apart, like you intended for us. Please help us to see and count the blessings, big and small, and live a joyful life that points others to your love, forgiveness and grace. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

Saturday, March 23, 2024

Hebrews 7:23–25 ESV
Rev. James McDonald

Scripture assures us that Jesus Himself is praying for us this minute. Hebrews 7:25 makes an amazing statement about Jesus' ceaseless task of interceding with His Father on our behalf. He can and will completely save those who trust in Him for salvation. Not only does Jesus save us, but He also lives to intercede for us. He pleaded our case yesterday, is interceding for us today, and represents us tomorrow too. How awesome!

The word intercede includes the sense of pleading — Jesus is continuously and persuasively presenting you before His Father.

Before you ever kneel down to pour out your heart to God, your Savior has already called out to His Father on your behalf. Even before you ask, He knows what you need — because He's with you.

Much of Hebrews focuses on the uniqueness of Christ. Among His special roles is the position of high priest that He carries out as no one else can. Throughout the history of Israel, priests were crucial intercessors between God and His people. But priests were always as human as those they served. Only Christ became the priest who could do perfectly what every other priest could do only in part. One of the indelible pictures of Christ in the Gospels occurs at the end of the Last Supper.

In John 17, when Jesus offered what's known as His High Priestly Prayer, we're given a good idea of how He intercedes for us. Not only did He pray for the disciples who were with Him, but He also prayed for every Christ-follower to come.

Before He returned to His Father and long before we were ever born, Jesus was interceding for us (John 17:20). If you could hear the Lord praying for you nearby, you would not fear a thousand enemies.

(continued)

So right now, think of Jesus at the right hand of the Father, lifting you and your needs to Him. He knows your exact situation. He knows your needs, your weaknesses, your fears, what you're facing, and what's at stake.

Remember Jesus' words before Peter's biggest failure: "Simon, Simon, behold, Satan demanded to have you, that he might sift you like wheat, but I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned again, strengthen your brothers" (Luke 22:31-32).

Jesus doesn't let your inevitable stumbles and falls keep Him from praying for you. So, don't let your failures keep you from Him.

Prayer: Lord God, I am humbled and grateful to learn that, after all Jesus has already done for me, He is still pleading for me before the throne of heaven. Thank You! The fact that Jesus is interceding for me gives me confidence, comfort, and hope. Would you help my prayers to align with His? Thank You that You know my every need and thought, even before I ask. Thank You especially for Jesus, Amen.

Monday, March 25, 2024

Psalm 40:6-8; Hebrews 10:1-14
Rev. Rose Sparrow

Psalm 40:6-8 “Now that you have made me listen, I finally understand — you don’t require burnt offerings or sin offerings. Then I said, “Look, I have come. As is written about me in the Scriptures: I take joy in doing your will, my God, for your instructions are written on my heart.”

Hebrews 10:1-10 “For the law, having a shadow of the good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with these same sacrifices, which they offer continually year by year, make those who approach perfect. For then would they not have ceased to be offered? For the worshipers, once purified, would have had no more consciousness of sins. But in those sacrifices, there is a reminder of sins every year. For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats could take away sins. Therefore, when He came into the world, He said: “Sacrifice and offering You did not desire, But a body You have prepared for Me. In burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin You had no pleasure. Then I said, ‘Behold, I have come — In the volume of the book it is written of Me — To do Your will, O God.’” Previously saying, “Sacrifice and offering, burnt offerings, and offerings for sin You did not desire, nor had pleasure in them” (which are offered according to the law), then He said, “Behold, I have come to do Your will, O God.” He takes away the first that He may establish the second. By that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.”

The Book of Hebrews was written to the Hebrews who were very familiar with the demands and ceremonies and sacrifices of the Jewish temple system. In that system, offerings and sacrifices had to be made over and over again, since the blood of mere animals although commanded by the Lord, could only cover sin and never remove it. How shocked do you think the early church was when they heard these words? Perfected for all Time? Really? No Way! They were fully aware of the sacrifices required to atone for their sins. (continued)

They knew that some animal had to die to cover their sins. And in the midst of all this, all they could do is to hope that their efforts were enough, even though they knew in their hearts it wasn't. Then, for everyone who lived in Jerusalem, there was a continual cloud of smoke over the temple mount because the priests were doing their daily work in the temple, offering sacrifices on behalf of the people.

In the text in Psalms and Hebrews, it is almost as if you can hear Jesus talking to His Father. Jesus understood that His father took no pleasure in the sacrifices and offerings in the original system. His remedy for the human need was in the divine incarnation — a body that was being prepared for Jesus to come to earth to pay the price for our sins. Burnt-offerings and sacrifices for sin were not the object of God's desire. What God needed was complete obedience. So, the Messiah adds, I am come to fulfill the prophetic words in the whole Old Testament that tells of my coming. I am come to consecrate a life of complete obedience to you, O God.

Then into this bloody, earthly, repetitive system of religion and death came these words:

“And every priest stands ministering daily and offering repeatedly the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. But this Man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down at the right hand of God, from that time waiting till His enemies are made His footstool. For by one offering He has perfected forever those who are being sanctified.” (Hebrews 10:11-14).

So, we see clearly that Christ's Death Perfects the Sanctified. Jesus Christ, the ultimate High Priest, accomplished what no other High Priest could ever do. On the cross, His blood was spilled to appease the wrath of God. It was sufficient to atone for and bring perfection to all who would believe in it. Just one sacrifice was all that it took to perfect you and me for all time. Thanks be to God!

(continued)

Prayer: What can wash away my sins? Nothing but the blood of Jesus. What can make me whole again? Nothing but the blood of Jesus. Oh, precious is the flow, that makes me white as snow. No other fount I know; Nothing but the blood of Jesus. Thank you, Lord, for your Precious Blood, that is available to all who will come to accept your invitation to be washed whiter than snow. Amen.

Tuesday, March 26, 2024

1 Corinthians 1:18-31
Elder Jo Snead

1 Corinthians 1:18-31 describes the foolishness of the gospel in the world's eyes. "For the word of the cross is foolishness to those who are dying, but to us who are saved it is the power of God" (v. 18).

Paul writes to the church in Corinth to address several disturbing issues including divisions within the church and converts who struggled with reverting to their past beliefs. The Jews, who were looking for a powerful Messiah, saw the cross as a sign of weakness.

The Greeks (Gentiles) placed high value on human wisdom and viewed Christ crucified as foolish. Paul contrasts the wisdom of God with the wisdom of the world. The crucified Christ may look weak and foolish, but Paul says, this is the power and wisdom of God.

"God's foolishness is wiser than human wisdom and God's weakness is stronger than human strength." (v.25) Paul reminds us that we were ordinary people when we heard the gospel — perhaps not rich and powerful.

God called the nobodies of this world, those willing to admit their need and willingness to accept the gift of salvation.

This is the plan that shames the wise and humiliates the proud into seeing that their own strength will never be good enough. It is only through Christ, united by him in faith, that we are redeemed. We should not boast about anything we have done. For what he did for us, Christ deserves the credit and the praise.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, help us to forsake the wisdom of the world and accept our weakness and frailty. Be with us as we navigate worldly temptations to follow our own path. Let us never forget that it is only through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and his sacrifice that we receive salvation and life everlasting. Amen.

Wednesday, March 27, 2024

Hebrews 12:1-3

Deacon Jean Furey

This passage uses the metaphor of comparing our lives of faith to an athletic race. It reminds us we are not running this race alone, but are accompanied by a “great cloud of witnesses.” When considering this, I immediately thought of Eric Liddell whose biography the women’s book club read recently. Liddell was an Olympic runner who became a missionary in China. His life is an exemplar of endurance in running the race of faith. I also thought of my personal faith heroes, my grandmothers, my mother, and my Uncle Lo who sometimes finishes his annual Christmas letter with the words “Look up.”

Additionally, I thought of those church members, past and present, who have been examples to me in running the race of faith. Who helps carry you along in your journey?

The passage also encourages us to throw off any sins that entangle us and interfere with our race of faith. Just as runners do not burden themselves with excess baggage, we should carry perseverance and endurance with us, not crippling sin. What’s holding you back today?

Finally, we are reminded to keep our eyes on Jesus, the “pioneer and perfecter of faith.” He kept His eyes on the Glory before Him in the face of great suffering. Keeping our focus on Him will give us strength to complete the race with a strong finish. Wouldn’t it be incredible to approach those pearly gates with the words of 2 Timothy 4:7? “I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith.”

Prayer: O Lord, as we run this race of life, help us keep our feet running in the right direction. Help us keep our focus on the finish line of Your Glory. Remind us to “Look up!” Amen.

Thursday, March 28, 2024

1 Corinthians 11:23-29
Rev. Dr. David Cagle

“Discerning the Body”

“For all who eat and drink without discerning the body, eat and drink judgement against themselves.” (v. 29)

The key to good decision making in real estate is location, location, location. One of the keys to good Biblical interpretation is context, context, context.

In the passage just before our devotional reading, Paul presents a major concern in the way communion was served among the congregational body of believers in Corinth. Often in the early church, communion was served within a larger meal, just as the Last Supper was served within the Passover Meal. Each family brought their own food. Wealthy families enjoyed a feast, while economically stretched families ate scraps.

In the chapter after our devotional reading, Paul presents an analogy of an argument among members of the human body. It would be silly for eyes and ears and noses to argue about which member was most important because each has its own essential purpose. Paul’s point is that the same is true for the members of the Body of Christ. Each church member has his or her own essential purpose. So, the context of 1 Corinthians 11:23-29 is a congregational conflict in serving communion and the analogy of the human body to represent the Body of Christ — the church.

Today is the Thursday before Easter. On this day, Jesus shared the Last Supper with his disciples before his arrest and crucifixion. In our devotional reading, Paul reminds the Body of Christ in Corinth what Jesus said at that Last Supper. “Do this in remembrance of me.”

(continued)

Certainly, we are to remember his blood poured out for us and his body broken for us, but I believe we are also called to remember all that Jesus taught us with his words and actions, as well as his just and righteous relationships.

In verse 28, Paul exhorts us, “Examine yourselves and only then eat of the bread and drink the cup.”

Reading verse 28 in isolation of verses 27 and 29, we might assume Paul is calling us each to “examine” our individual life, but Paul is actually calling us to examine “ourselves [in community],” our relationships within the Body of Christ. This point is made clear in verse 29 quoted above. We are called to discern “the body,” the church, the Body of Christ.

In our relationships within the church, are we “remembering Christ” in the way we treat each other, talk about each other, and interact with each other?

Are the fruits of the Spirit visible in our relationships? (Galatians 5:22-26) Or are we eating the bread and drinking the cup in an “unworthy manner?” (27)

The wealthy Corinthians stuffing their bellies in front of those who had little were eating and drinking in an unworthy manner (vv. 17-22). The judgement they brought upon themselves was that they didn’t “remember.”

My friends, each time we gather for communion, may we each examine our relationships within the Body of Christ, this church, our congregation. Are my relationships within this church loving, fair, compassionate? When called to hold a member accountable, do I do so with love? Am I forgiving, as I have been forgiven? If not, then we are “answerable for the body and blood of the Lord,” for that is what he died for.

Prayer: Inspire us to examine our relationships within our church, your body, and empower us to “remember you” in our love, concern, and treatment of each member. Amen.

Friday, March 29, 2024

Psalm 12

Elder Eric MacDonald

“There is no longer anyone who is godly, the faithful have disappeared.”

Reading Psalm 12 is almost like reading an article out of *The Atlantic* or *The Philadelphia Inquirer*. King David could be looking at the world we live in today. We see headlines about the decline of Christianity in the United States and the West.

Fewer people are attending church.

“They utter lies to each other; with flattering lips and a deceitful heart they speak.”

Politicians, leaders, so-called “influencers,” and even some pastors spread misinformation, and many of us fall for these falsehoods and accept them as facts. Technology is making discerning the truth in the world more difficult. Consider the applications of artificial intelligence for creating deepfakes. But God, through His word, the Bible, reveals His truth to us and the world, if we will only study and listen. (Let’s coin the word “Deep Truth”!)

“You, O Lord, will protect us; you will guard us from this generation forever.”

But David reminds us that God will protect us; he will keep us safe. On this Good Friday, we are reminded of the great sacrifice God made for our protection and salvation through Jesus’ death on the cross for our sins.

As Pastor David reminded us during Advent, as Christians we are called to rejoice, even in difficult circumstances. Why? Because God is ever faithful, and we have an inheritance in God’s kingdom, both in heaven and on earth. (continued)

We have the hope that comes from a personal relationship with God the Father, through Jesus, and we are strengthened through the Holy Spirit. Truly, God will protect us, and we can bear witness to God's loving protection in a world in need.

Prayer: O God of unchangeable power and eternal light; Look favorably on your whole Church, that wonderful and sacred mystery; by the effectual working of your providence, carry out in tranquility the plan of salvation; let the world not be fooled by deepfakes and untruths, but rather see and know your "Deep Truth:" that things which were cast down are being raised up, and things which had grown old are being made new, and that all things are being brought to their perfection by him through whom all things were made, your Son Jesus Christ our Lord; who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

Saturday, March 30, 2024

1 Peter 4:1-8

Elder Jim Gatch

Living for God

“Therefore, since Christ suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves also with the same mind, for he who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin, that he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh for the lusts of men, but for the will of God. For we have spent enough of our past lifetime in doing the will of the Gentiles — when we walked in lewdness, lusts, drunkenness, revelries, drinking parties, and abominable idolatries. In regard to these, they think it strange that you do not run with them in the same flood of dissipation, speaking evil of you. They will give an account to Him who is ready to judge the living and the dead. For this reason the gospel was preached also to those who are dead, that they might be judged according to men in the flesh, but live according to God in the spirit. But the end of all things is at hand; therefore, be serious and watchful in your prayers. And above all things have fervent love for one another, for “love will cover a multitude of sins.”

Breaking it Down

#1 “Above all,”

Love is the greatest commandment.

Faith and hope will not be necessary in our eternal glory in heaven, but love will remain forever because “God is love” (1 John 4:7). Love exists “above all,” because God is “above all.”

#2 “love each other deeply,”

To love each other deeply is easily misunderstood as an emotion. Emotion can be a part of it, but this love is an action; even more, it is an attitude about life, God, and our fellow man. It is a deep and abiding state of being that gives the Christian perfect peace and aligned him or her with God himself, who is love. (continued)

“This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers and sisters” (1 John 3:16).

#3 “because love covers over a multitude of sins.”

Truly, what sins can be committed when one is in a conscious state of loving God and each other with deep love? Can you hate while you love? No.

Can you strike your brother? Can you lie, cheat, or steal when you believe in God and love him? No.

We must suspend love and even belief in order to sin against God. To believe in him is to love him. To love him is to obey him out of joy and peace.

Church family, is this not what was meant by Christ when he said the greatest commandment is to love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your mind, and all your strength, and to love your neighbor as yourself (Matthew 22:37-38)?

In fact, he said that the whole law is summed up in these two. If one truly loves God and people, it is difficult to sin against God or people. We can only sin when we suspend our love for God and people. Peter is speaking of the impending “end of all things” (1 Peter 4:7).

He is giving instruction for the Church to stay focused on the coming of Christ. Though he has told them to be alert, sober, prayerful, hospitable, generous, and faithful in stewardship, it is love above all that will keep them until the great day of the Lord when he returns to judge the earth.

The love that Peter, and Jesus before him, had in mind was the agape that characterizes the love the Father has. It is selfless but also gets something in return because when it is given, it multiplies to the giver.

It is not dependent on feelings. It can be given whether it is accepted or not. And when one loves another with the love of the Father, it is considered by God as love for the Father. (continued)

Prayer: In Song — “Open our eyes, Lord, we want to see Jesus, to reach out and touch him, and say that we love him. Open our ears, Lord, and teach us to listen, open our eyes, Lord, we want to see Jesus.”