

..... Daily Devotions

Devotions – August 9-15, 2015
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Sunday, August 9, 2015

Text: Ephesians 4:22-24

“You were taught to put away your former way of life, your old self, corrupt and deluded by its lusts, and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, and to clothe yourselves with the new self, created according to the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.” (NRSV)

Yes, just like the Ephesians we also were taught to put away our old, earthly selves with all of its earthly ways like lust and anger, stealing and greed, as well as gossiping and lying. And there are probably more items on your list of things not to do. None of us like to hear the law especially from the pastor on a Sunday mornings because we know all too well what we have done during the past week.

It’s easy for Paul to say, we think, “put away you old self,” but not so easy to do. As a matter of fact, we can’t do it, at least not for more than a few minutes it seems. But that’s okay because God knows that. That’s why he sent his Son to die for us, because as long as we live here on earth we are bound to sin, if not by deed at least by thought or word.

So while it may not be easy to hear, the law shows us as in a mirror as Luther said, that we can’t keep his commandments and so we turn to Jesus who died for that very reason, to save us from our sins and make us new and once again in God’s likeness.

Let us pray:

Heavenly Father, we thank you for giving us the law and showing us how we should strive to live our lives. Moreover, we thank you for sending us Jesus to wash us clean of our sins and make us again acceptable as your children. Amen.



Monday, August 10, 2015

Text: Ephesians 4:25-26

“So then, putting away falsehood, let all of us speak the truth to our neighbors, for we are members of one another. Be angry but do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger...” (NRSV)

My mom used to say, "If you don't have anything nice to say, say nothing at all." Sometimes that's the way I feel about talking to someone who is set against what I believe to be truth. I don't want to agree with him, surely, but I don't want to start an argument either so I say nothing at all.

Another thing my mom used to say is, "Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never hurt me." Sometimes words make us angry and feeling angry hurts! Anger can take over our thoughts and soon we feel it turn to venomous feelings about the person who angered us. Be angry but do not sin as Paul tells us may be almost impossible to do.

Knowing that our sins are forgiven makes it easier to admit to ourselves when anger gets out of hand and turns our hearts away from love for our neighbor. Then asking God to forgive us our transgression can allow us to rest easy and not let the sun go down while we are still angry.

Let us pray:

Merciful Father, we thank you for your never-ending capacity for forgiveness. We thank you for the peace that fills us knowing that we are washed clean by the blood of your son. Amen.



Tuesday, August 11, 2015

Text: Ephesians 4:27-28

"...and do not make room for the devil. Thieves must give up stealing; rather let them labor and work honestly with their own hands, so as to have something to share with the needy." (NRSV)

It seems to me like the devil makes his own room. When I was younger I used to pray, "...lead me not into temptation, but deliver me from evil when I find temptation by myself." When I was younger my temptations were of a different nature, but now they are just as present, only perhaps more dark. Instead of temptations that are more of a party-going nature, now I am tempted to be judgmental and high-minded.

The good news is that I always am quick to share and not a thief. And the even better news is that something (I'm pretty sure it's the Holy Spirit) keeps me from my judgment of others after only a few minutes and turns me to kinder thoughts.

Let us pray:

Gracious Father, we thank you for giving us generous hearts and keeping us from the temptation of thinking we are better than our neighbors. Amen.



Wednesday, August 12, 2015

Text: Ephesians 4:29

“Let no evil talk come out of your mouths, but only what is useful for building up, as there is need, so that your words may give grace to those who hear.” (NRSV)

News travels fast, especially bad news, it seems. And it's usually word of mouth. Someone's marriage is breaking up, someone else committed a crime, affairs and deceit abound and we all seem to want to hear it. And it doesn't matter that it's true...the truer, the better! Perhaps it makes us feel better about ourselves that we are not in those predicaments. Perhaps it makes us feel important to be “in the know.”

These rumors so seldom include a note of grace in them, no regrets or prayers for the subjects. In fact they are savored, like a succulent fruit, the juicier, the better. Such is the evil talk that lurks in the hearts and mouths of men and women.

The next time you speak or hear something bad about a neighbor, try to think of the best thing you can say about them, and then say it. “We should pray for them, maybe there is something we can do to help, may God be with them...”

Let us pray:

Loving Father, help us to speak kindness and grace of others and to say nothing that will cause them pain. Amen.



Thursday, August 13, 2015

Text: Ephesians 4:30-31

“And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with which you were marked with a seal for the day of redemption. Put away from you all bitterness and wrath and anger and wrangling and slander, together with all malice,” (NRSV)

Of course none of us want to grieve the Holy Spirit of God. I think most of us can recall stories from the Old Testament and understand that God gets really angry. But we are not the object of God's wrath. It is the sinfulness of this world of which we are a part that causes God to grieve and be angry.

As much as we are able, we try to stay away from anger and bitterness; from speaking ill of our neighbor and from feeling of hatred. Sometimes I get mad at hearing too much law. I get mad at hearing, “just stop having bad thoughts and actions.” We know we cannot stop sinning so quit beating us up about it!

I think the point is not that we can stop sinning, but rather that we should be aware that temptations that cause us to sin are all around us and this is what grieves God. I think God is just as eager as we are to see a world where we all can live without sin.

Let us pray:

Merciful Father, thank you for knowing that we are in bondage to sin and cannot free ourselves. Bring us swiftly to the day when we can dwell with you in your kingdom. Amen.



Friday, August 14, 2015

Text: Ephesians 4:32

“and be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ has forgiven you.” (NRSV)

How many times a day do we interact with people without being kind and tender-hearted to them? If you are like me, many times. It’s not that I’m nasty to people, but do I go out of my way to say a kind word? Usually not. Some days the best I do is say, “and you, too” when the clerk in the checkout line tells me to have a nice day.

I think if someone did a really bad thing to me or to one of my friends or family members, I might have to struggle to forgive them, but luckily, that hasn’t happened to me. Everyday slights are forgiven and forgotten as soon as they happen, but I do know that some people store up grievances to stew over long after they occur.

How much better this world might be if everyone (me included) could just smile and say a kind, sincere word to each person they meet every day!

Let us pray:

Benevolent Father, remind us at the dawn of each new day that we have a chance to spread love, kindness, and forgiveness in your name to each person we meet. Amen



Saturday, August 15, 2015

Text: Ephesians 5:1-2

“Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children, and live in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.” (NRSV)

We are God's children and he loves us; we want to, and try to imitate him, but never come close enough. We know we are sinners and do things that are hurtful to our neighbors and to God. Perhaps we should try to stop ourselves every time we do something hurtful and ask ourselves if this is the way that Jesus showed his love to all whom he encountered. Maybe we can try to share some of the love God shows to us in our thoughts, in our faces, in our words, and in our actions.

Let us pray:

Beloved Father, help us to be more loving to our neighbors and to share the love that you showed us by giving up your only Son to save us. Amen.

