

**Devotions – October 25-31, 2015**

**By Rev. Allan Johnson**

**Retired Pastor**

**Sunday, October 25, 2015**

**Reformation Sunday**

BY GOD’S GIFT

Text: Romans 3:19-28

*... since all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God; they are now justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus*

Well, we aren’t going to “be good” and earn God’s favor. That’s beyond us. We find ourselves trapped in our own hearts, concerned about ourselves most of all. Theologians call it “incurvatus in se”; curved in on ourselves, “what’s in it for me” – whereas “good” would mean loving other people and trusting God.

Our own actions or decisions can’t get us out of this trap. God, however, comes to us in mercy. For the sake of Jesus, crucified, who holds you in his care – you *are* a child of God.

Let’s pray: *God, our Father, give us your saving peace. When our trust in you is shaken, defend us. When hope is hard to find, renew us. And in our times of thankfulness and joy, be with us; in Jesus’ name. Amen.*



**Monday, October 26, 2015**

THE TRUTH WILL MAKE YOU FREE

Text: John 8:31-36

*... you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free.*

We were camping out under the stars, with no tent, in the North Dakota Badlands; and then came lightning and thunder and four inches of rain. We decided to walk to our car – half a mile away. But in the darkness and the flooded ground, we couldn’t find the trail. Half an hour later we found tracks. Our own tracks. We were walking in circles.

We'd come out with no compass... We sat down in the mud to wait. At last came a glimmer of light on the eastern horizon. With our true direction known, we walked out in five minutes. Some truths just get us to the car. The truth that all our hope is in Christ, crucified and risen – *that* gets us home to God.

Let's pray: *Lord, keep us steadfast in your Word – your promises which call us, your Son who is your Word made flesh and sets us free. He is your truth. Help us to trust him. Amen.*



**Tuesday, October 27, 2015**

I WILL PUT MY LAW WITHIN THEM

Text: Jeremiah 31:31-34

*I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.*

St. Augustine once wrote, “Love – then do what you want.” Which seems terrifically rash; except that if we truly were to love God with our whole heart, and our neighbor as ourselves, we would not find it *possible* to want anything hurtful or unfaithful.

We're not there yet. Far from it. But that's where our Lord Jesus intends to lead us. He calls us to transformation; new hearts, new minds; to care for each other, and trust God. To learn to think and feel this way, so that all our actions come from faith and love without having to puzzle over it – that's what it would mean to have God's law written on our hearts.

Let's pray: *Write your will upon our hearts, and minds, dear Father. Teach us to trust you and care for other people. Then our lives will be made new, and we need that. You made us; you redeemed us. Only you can transform us; in Jesus' name. Amen.*



**Wednesday, October 28, 2015**

GOD IS OUR REFUGE

Text: Psalm 46

*God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear, though the earth should change*

We were canoeing in Boundary Waters, on the Canadian border, and the wind was against us. One of our canoes went over; nobody was harmed but it had to be pulled to shore. Change can seem like stormy wind.

Sometimes change is delightful, sometimes it's terrifying. The earth on which I live is very different from the world I grew up in. We had no running water, and our first telephone was a party line. Further out, there was always the chance of a nuclear war with the Soviet Union. Remember them? Some changes, I give thanks for.

On the other hand, there's places in the world where cruelty runs rampant, with evils we had thought were gone. What will the future bring?

One thing we know: whatever the future looks like, God will be there, and Jesus, crucified and risen, will still be Lord. And we are in his hands.

Let's pray: *Lord, be our refuge, and our help in trouble. In all the changes of this life, turn our attention to your love and power, which do not change. Amen.*



**Thursday, October 29, 2015**

**GOD GATHERS WHAT REMAINS**

Text: Jeremiah 31:7-9

*"Save, O LORD, your people, the remnant of Israel."*

Out on the point, an eagle perches high on a tall red pine. One branch below, this year's young eagle watches. There was a time not long ago eagles were scarce. Their eggs had become too fragile to survive. They were a remnant. Now they're coming back.

There was a time God's people Israel looked like a remnant, too fragile to survive. God had other plans. God brought his people home.

Now you and I are held within God's plans. Which means there is more hope than we would dare imagine. What seems broken, worn out, God can make new. Including the church. Including us.

Let's pray: *Save, O Lord, your people. Renew your church. Pour out your Spirit on us. Protect and comfort us in time of trial, and keep us steadfast in your Word, through Jesus Christ. Amen.*



**Friday, October 30, 2015**

HIGH PRIEST

Text: Hebrews 7:23-28

*... he is able for all time to save those who approach God through him, since he always lives to make intercession for them.*

So, we were up on the border canoeing, and we met another party, coming toward us on the portage trail, loaded down. “Where are you going?” we ask. “Lake Ogishkemuncie,” they replied. “But that’s behind you...”

We walked on, carrying our packs. Behind us was muttering and much consultation of maps. Then they passed us, going back the way they’d come from.

Seeking God is a good thing. *Finding* would be better. And help on the way would be the best of all. It’s way too easy to get lost.

Jesus is our way back home to God. “He is able ... to save those who approach God through him.” And he pleads for us, today, before the throne of God.

Let’s pray: *Jesus, light of God, shine in our hearts. Compassion of God, have mercy on us. Help us to seek your face – and find you. Amen.*



**Saturday, October 31, 2015**

NOW I SEE

Text: Mark 10:46-52

*“... let me see again.”*

There’s more than one way to be unable to see. We often don’t *see* what we don’t know how to look for. After I moved away from the farm where I grew up, I got interested in birds. I got a bird book. Learned their names. And next time I went home – why, there were many more birds around than I ever remembered! They were there all the time. I didn’t look. I didn’t see them. God’s mercy and love and forgiveness and transforming power are also all around us. All the time. And mostly, I don’t see them. Too busy fretting. And yet, God’s love is there.

Let's pray: *Turn me to seek your face, Lord. Open the eyes of my heart. Show me your love, and let me see again. Amen.*

