

**Devotions – February 28 – March 5, 2016**

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**Sunday, February 28, 2016**

Text: Romans 8:26, 27 NRSV

**“Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but that very Spirit intercedes with sighs too deep for words. And God, who searches the heart, knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.”**

I have had many occasions in my life when I was confronted with “sighs too deep for words.” Those times when my heart was so broken that words could not come, even in prayer; the night my mom died, when my daughter had a life threatening injury, when my brother-in-law was diagnosed with cancer. These are the moments that are so overwhelming that our brain cannot find words to express our grief and our hurt. At moments like these we can be assured that God hears our unspoken prayer through the Spirit who knows our every thought. We can be comforted in St. Paul’s words that God does know, that God does care, and that God does love us, and is grieving and hurting with us.

Through Jesus Christ we can see the love of our Father. We can see the compassion and care of God. We see Christ caring for the lowly, curing the afflicted, and weeping for a friend. In our deepest sorrow, God hears our prayers and is our comfort.

Let us pray: *God of compassion, we look to you, oh Lord, in our times of grief and hurt. Keep us always mindful of your presence, and help us to know that through the Spirit, you hear our deepest sorrows. In Jesus name we pray. Amen.*



**Monday, February 29, 2016**

Text: Joshua 1:9 NRSV

**“Be strong and courageous; do not be frightened or dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go.”**

Moses had led God’s people out of slavery and into the wilderness for forty years, being guided by God’s words to him. Now Moses has died without stepping into the land God promised to His people. The leadership of the Israelites falls to Moses’ assistant Joshua, whom Moses has anointed. God speaks to Joshua and tells him to lead the people across the Jordan River into the Promised Land.

What a huge responsibility! And now after all these years of wandering the Israelites are to put down roots. Their lives are about to change drastically. Change is hard for many of us. Change can be scary, it can make us anxious and uncomfortable. For some it can be as challenging as a change of occupation, a move to a new town, a serious diagnosis, or a new baby; for others it may not be quite so life changing.

In all of our changes it is important to pray to God for guidance. Listen to what God is telling us, listen for His voice. God is our comfort in change, knowing that God is with us wherever we go and in whatever we do. Don't turn away from His call just because it's hard or you are afraid of change. God knows what is best for us. Listen to Him. Follow Him.

*Let us pray: Father guide me. Although these changes are frightening, I know that it is by your will that I do this. Help me Lord to be strong and diligent to your calling. In Jesus name. Amen.*



**Tuesday, March 1, 2016**

Text: Matthew 6:25-34.

**25“Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food and the body more than clothing? 26 Look at the birds of the air; they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? 27 And can any of you by worrying add a single hour to your span of life? 28 And why do you worry about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they neither toil nor spin, 29 yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not clothed like one of these. 30 But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you—you of little faith? 31 Therefore do not worry, saying, ‘What will we eat?’ or ‘What will we drink?’ or ‘What will we wear?’ 32 For it is the Gentiles who strive for all these things; and indeed your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. 33But strive first for the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. 34“So do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will bring worries of its own. Today’s trouble is enough for today.**

Many years ago, as a newly hired church secretary for a newly ordained Pastor right out of seminary, I was feeling a lot of stress at my job. My Pastor saw that I was struggling and worrying excessively over very small things. He suggested reading Matthew 6:25-34 to see what God’s Word had to say about worry.

I go back to this passage often, knowing that God knows what I need and that He will provide me with those needs. This goes beyond what I will wear or eat. It goes to the comfort of knowing that He will provide the skills, people, and time for me to get through stressful areas of my life.

If God clothes the grass of the field with the beauty of lilies and feeds the birds of the air who don't sow or reap, will He not much more clothe me, for whom He sent His only Son to die for my sins. So don't worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about its self.

Let us pray: *Heavenly Father, your many blessings are all around us. Help us to put all of our faith in you in our everyday lives, and know that you will provide for us all of our needs. We pray this in your Holy name. Amen.*



**Wednesday, March 2, 2016**

Text: Romans 3: 21-25a NRSV

**“But now, apart from law, the righteousness of God has been disclosed, and is attested by the law and the prophets, the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction, 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, whom God put forward as a sacrifice of atonement by his blood, effective through faith.”**

For there is no distinction, we are all in the same boat. We are all sinners.

The gift of God's grace is the most important gift we will ever be given. It is such an amazing gift that many of us either take it for granted, or find it hard to accept. This grace is God's unconditional love. No matter who we are, no matter what we have done or ever will do, God promises to love us, NO MATTER WHAT. Some may think that their sins are far too terrible for God's forgiveness. When we sin and fall short of his glory, we are forgiven; and yes even forgiven when we can't forgive ourselves for what we have done. We are forgiven and the slate is wiped clean.

This grace is not ours because of anything that we have done. Grace is our free gift through the redemption that Jesus Christ's death on the cross won for our sake. We are justified by this grace through our faith in Jesus Christ. Our faith has to be personal but it can never be private. With news as good as this, it must be shared.

Let us pray: *Loving Father, you show us just how much you love us through your one and only Son. I am a sinner and have sinned against you; forgive me by your grace and restore me to a right standing in your sight. Amen.*



**Thursday, March 3, 2016**

Text: Romans 5:6-11

**“For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. Indeed, rarely will anyone die for a righteous person — though perhaps for a good person someone might actually dare to die. But God proves his love for us in that while we still were sinners Christ died for us. Much more surely then, now that we have been justified by his blood, will we be saved through him from the wrath of God. For if while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of his Son, much more surely, having been reconciled, will we be saved by his life. But more than that, we even boast in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.”**

I attended a funeral of a long standing very active member, and wonderful friend of our congregation today. Our Pastor read this text during that funeral. I loved the way he tied in our reconciliation with God, through the life and death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. We are all sinners, but Jesus died for us...sinners. He didn't only die for the righteous, but all of us, the righteous and the unrighteous. And we are made righteous through faith in Christ. And in this knowledge and faith we are comforted that we will be reconciled with God in the everlasting life we have inherited from Him.

*Let us pray: Heavenly Father, we are all sinners, but in your mercy and grace we are all made clean and are reconciled with you through your Son Jesus. We look forward to our eternal lives with you with comfort and reassurance. Amen.*



**Friday, March 4, 2016**

Text: John 15:12-15

**“This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. No one has greater love than this, to lay down one’s life for one’s friends. You are my friends if you do what I command you. I do not call you servants any longer, because the servant does not know what the master is doing; but I have called you friends, because I have made known to you everything that I have heard from my Father.”**

I recently had the pleasure and honor to make a new friend. I was called to visit an elderly man who had medical problems and had come upon some rough times (and who hasn't these days). The call came from an old friend of his that was concerned about this man and lives quite a distance from him now. I knew I was to meet someone special while talking to his friend. He talked about what a kind, giving person he was and told me I would become fast friends with him. I did visit this man and his friend was right. We had a long conversation about family, life, death, and war. He is a remarkable man with a big heart.

Jesus asks us to love one another as I have loved you. We sometimes get so wrapped up in our lives that we don't see the opportunities to make a friend or to extend a helping hand to someone in need. Need is all around us. Take the time in this New Year to get to know what the need is in your community, neighborhood, or church. Remember, God first loved us so that we may love others.

Let us pray: *Father, you gave us your only Son to love us and to fill our every need. Help us to look for the need in our world and find ways to fill that need. Help us to love our neighbor as you love us, endlessly and unconditionally. Amen.*



**Saturday, March 5, 2016**

Text: 1 Peter 3:12

**“For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous and his ears are open to their prayer.”**

I don't ever remember a time when I doubted the power of prayer; still it never amazes me when appeals in prayer are granted by our wondrous God. And all we can say is “Praise the Lord.”

I pray for a lot of different things. I pray for the sick and the lonely, and for my family. I pray for the church and our congregation. But lately I find myself praying a lot about the newest “adventure” God has in store for me, and that it will be something I can handle, with his help of course. Each change in my life comes with anticipation, excitement and fear. And God keeps pulling me through these obstacles, no matter how tough they seem to be. I know that this is because of the power of prayer and an undying faith in our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. And I know that God does this for everyone.

Paul says in 1 Thessalonians “Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.” Prayer needs to be a priority in our lives. Without prayer we have no communication to the one and only source of answer to our daily problems and needs. Without prayer we are disconnected from God. Be connected, pray.

Let us pray: *Heavenly Father, we thank you for the opportunity to talk to you. We thank you for the faith we have to know that you hear our prayers and that you answer them in our time and your way. Help us Lord to be diligent prayers, to pray without ceasing. We ask this in Jesus name. Amen.*

