

Devotions – September 11-17, 2016
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Sunday, September 11, 2016

Text: Luke 16:11

“If you cannot be trusted with worldly riches, then who will trust you with true riches?”

Jack Benny was known as a penny pincher. In one of his television shows he is accosted by a robber who points his gun at him and says, “Your money or your life.” Jack Benny freezes and he says, “I’m thinking...I’m thinking.”

And that’s what Jesus says to us, your money or me, and many of us are saying, “I’m thinking, I’m thinking.” When Jesus asks who will you serve, it is not just our money he is concerned about. It is the giving of ourselves.

When it comes down to who or what are we investing our time in, are we guilty of spiritual embezzlement and taking time away from God? Are we investing in things of the world?

Just as the steward was audited, we too will be audited. Have we made preparations for the future? How have we used what God has entrusted to us for the good of the kingdom? Jesus is not concerned with account balances, but that we have been faithful with what we have been given.

Let us pray: *Heavenly Father, keep us from being so blinded by possessions that we fail to see the true treasures. Amen.*



Monday, September 12, 2016

Text: Matthew 5:44

“Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you.”

There are people who come into our lives that get under our skin. It could be the teller in the bank, or the checkout person at the grocery store...the person next door or maybe even someone in our family. It isn’t always easy to have an admiration for the folks we meet. I have had people that have hurt me or hurt someone I care about. My natural reaction is not always one of love and kindness and it gets in the way of Christ’s love.

That is the way of the world around us. But that is not the world that we should be part of. We have been baptized in the waters of the Holy Spirit and into the life of Christ.

We are called to live differently, to think differently and to do differently. We are called to love the Lord with all our heart and soul and strength and with all our mind and to love our neighbor as our self.

Let us pray: *God of Peace, teach us to be peacemakers. Teach us how to build bridges and not walls. Amen.*



Tuesday, September 13, 2016

Text: John 6:66

“After this many of his followers left him and stopped following him.”

After the crowd leaves, Jesus turns to his disciples and questions them about their faith. He asks them straight out, “Do you believe in me? Or are you also going to go away?” It makes me wonder just how Jesus asked the question...was He angry? Did He raise his voice? Or did He ask in a pleading tone?

We are living in a time when many are walking away from the church. We see it happening all around us. People are looking for a religious experience that provides entertainment and excitement without a commitment.

Imagine Jesus asking you, “Do you wish to go away, or are you willing to walk with me and put your complete faith in me?” This is a hard question to comprehend in the early stages of our Christian journey, because we have the temptation to doubt. It is natural for us to want to be in control of everything that happens in our life. It is when we have to endure struggles that God intervenes and through His grace and patience that we come to believe. It is through our experience of having Christ in our life when we needed him most that keeps us from walking away.

Let us pray: *Good and gracious God, let your light shine in the hearts of people and in society and let the Church be strong. Amen.*



Wednesday, September 14, 2016

Text: Proverbs 17:17

“A friend loves you all the time, and a brother helps in times of trouble.”

As I write this, it would have been my friend’s birthday. She wasn’t just an ordinary friend, she was someone who listened, she was a confidant, we drank a lot of coffee, she provided me with many a meal when I was alone. We belonged to the same faith but members of different churches. I miss our regular Sunday chats about the sermon we heard that morning. We shared

good times and some sad times. I spent minutes or sometimes hours of almost every day with her for 48 years because she was my next door neighbor. I miss her, but I know that God also desires a relationship with me like this.

Let us pray: *Thank you, God, for Shirley's friendship. Amen.*



Thursday, September 15, 2016

Text: Matthew 27:19-20

“Make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.”

When we see someone dressed in Muslim attire we have an immediate insight into their religious heritage, but what physical markings identify us as disciples? At our baptism the invisible cross drawn on our forehead was given as our mark of identity in Christ. We are obligated to live as if the cross of baptism was etched in our forehead for everyone to see. We are to follow the practices of Jesus: that is to pray, study the Word, be a servant, to forgive as we have been forgiven, to seek justice and peace and to honor the Sabbath. Throughout the Gospels, Jesus has left this trail of examples of how we are to carry out the great commission.

Let us pray: *Heavenly Father, grant us grace as we go out into the world to fulfill our calling as disciples. Amen.*



Friday, September 16, 2016

Text: Matthew 11:28

“Come to me and I will give you rest.”

These are words of comfort to those whose hearts are broken and feel rejected. They are words of promise, strength, pardon, grace and peace, and love that knows no end. Christ constantly invites us to leave our burdens on His shoulders. Jesus isn't offering us the kind of rest where we can sit back and put our feet up with a pillow under our head...even if that is what we would like. Instead He offers us a yoke.

When I picture a yoke, I think of something heavy on my shoulders and not something that would ease my burdens. Jesus uses this farm tool as an example because when the animals are yoked together they work more efficiently because they can pool their strength and pull in the same direction. The yoke keeps them on the same path so that they cannot stray away from one another, and they are working toward a common goal.

Jesus yokes himself to us to keep us on the same path, to work for one common goal, to remain faithful especially when we experience conflict. In Jesus' case, He carries the heaviest part of the load and we can trust Him to keep us balanced.

Let us pray: *God, give us a healing heart when we cast our burdens on you. Amen.*



Saturday, September 17, 2016

Text: **Psalm 23** – “The Lord is my Shepherd”

There isn't a passage in the Old or New Testament that sums up the faith that the church was founded on more movingly than the 23rd Psalm. The Lord is my shepherd. How many times do you think that those words have been spoken over the years? It is usually associated with funerals, but this Psalm is really for the living. There are many testimonies by those who have found this simple Psalm to be comforting and to give them strength and assurance that they were going to make it.

The Lord is my shepherd. What a difference that little word “my” makes. It is the difference between joy and sorrow...purpose and meaninglessness...eternal life and eternal death. We have the promise that we will never be separated from the love of God through Jesus Christ. The Good Shepherd prepares a table for us that contains the bread of heaven and the wine of everlasting joy. He anoints our head with oil; our cup is running over.

Let us pray: *Father in heaven, thank you for being our shepherd and leading us to green pastures and still waters. Amen.*

