

**Devotions – October 16-22, 2016**

By Pastor Kurt Kovanen  
Christ Parish, Ironwood

**Sunday, October 16 — Listen! God is Calling.**

Text: Luke 18:5

*“...yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will grant her justice, so that she may not wear me out by continually coming.”*

This parable of the widow and the unjust judge is encouragement to those who pray, and pray, and pray yet again; yes...“Do not lose heart.”

The beauty and challenge of parables is that they can be seen from different angles. Try this: picture God in the widow’s persistence, and see God as the one who bothers us. Ask: *are we listening?* Listen, and hear the tender and tenacious God calling us, compelling us, to be a partner in God’s mission of mending brokenness, setting the captive free and bringing justice to those oppressed.

It may seem to be a reversal of sorts, but the next time you hear/read/pray the “intercessions” during worship...focus on the specific prayer(s) as coming to you *from* God to you. Know that the One who hears your prayer responds (in ways we often cannot see or understand) and lovingly calls out to you and to all to share God’s blessings.

*Pray that you may love what God loves.*



**Monday, October 17 — Surrender**

Text: Jeremiah 38:17

*Then Jeremiah said to King Zedekiah, “Thus says the Lord, the God of hosts, the God of Israel, If you will only surrender to the officials of the king of Babylon, then your life shall be spared, and this city shall not be destroyed with fire, and you and your house shall live.”*

This is a snippet of a longer passage detailing the conversation between the prophet Jeremiah and King Zedekiah. In essence, the word of the Lord is...if you do *not* surrender...all is lost and many will suffer horribly. But if you do surrender (*if you obey God*), your life, and more importantly the life of the nation, will be spared.

Now-a-days, nobody likes the word “surrender”...we need to be tough, to strive to win at all costs. The word “surrender” sounds like giving in or giving up or not even trying.

Yet, the prophet's words beg the question: *are there times when our fighting spirit ends up damaging ourselves and others?*

Parker Palmer once wrote: "The only limit on self-interest is other-interest." The call of the prophet is to temper our hopes and dreams and desires—those things we fight for—by considering what God's desire is. May we echo the prayer of Jesus: "...not what I want but what you want." (Matthew 26:39) For it has to be true, God's will is the best thing that could happen for us and our world.

*Pray that God's will be done on earth as it is in heaven.*



## **Tuesday, October 18 – Patience**

Text: James 5:7

*"Be patient, therefore, beloved, until the coming of the Lord. The farmer waits for the precious crop from the earth, being patient with it until it receives the early and the late rains."*

It is wise to connect patience with farming. For it takes much trust to grow things from the ground up. We are often impatient—we want things now, and when struggles occur—we want a "quick fix." Yet, try to imagine an "impatient farmer"...one who digs up the seeds to see if they are growing, or who daily floods the fields with water, or who dumps more and more fertilizer on the ground. For sure, an impatient farmer would ruin the "precious" crop.

Faith is precious. God's love which has redeemed us is precious. The tiny seeds of the promised reign of God are precious. My friends, breathe, allow the Spirit of God to pray the prayer you do not know the words for...allow sighs "too deep for words" to fill you and keep you. Trust that God is within you to enable you to work and will for God's good pleasure. Wait. All is well.

*Pray that God grant you "strength for today and bright hope for tomorrow...Great is thy faithfulness."*



## **Wednesday, October 19 – Teach us to Pray**

Text: Luke 22:46

*"Why are you sleeping? Get up and pray that you may not come into the time of trial."*

There are many ways to pray. Folks have said that prayer doesn't "change God" as much as it "changes us" for prayer keeps us involved with God's loving purpose...if we "sleep" we may be unaware of what God is up to. Consider following the example of Jesus at the Mount of Olives (Luke 22:41-42). The prayer of Jesus had three steps:

- (1) He acknowledged that with God all things are possible.
- (2) He prayed for that which he most needed.
- (3) He trusted in God's loving will.

Jesus walked out of the garden able to face his most difficult challenge...and the only thing that took place was prayer.

*You are invited to pray always in a similar manner.*



### **Thursday, October 20 – Providence**

Text: Psalm 65:11

*"You crown the year with your bounty; your wagon tracks overflow with richness."*

A wise professor at seminary was known to say: "God has already provided everything that we need...we just haven't discovered it yet" (Loren Halverson). May we all live with such faith. The word "providence" is one worthy of our reflection. For it is true: "every good gift comes from above." Once we realize we are simply guests who "get to" live on this earth...we may begin to walk more gently and share what we have received more freely...may we honor the author and giver of all life. Allow the abundance of God's love and life to "spill over" into our lives and our homes and our families.

*Pray a prayer of thanks for your daily bread.*



### **Friday, October 21 – Way of the Cross**

Text: 2 Timothy 3:12

*"Indeed, all who want to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted."*

The journey of faith always goes through the cross:

We are blessed...now *be* a blessing.

We are gifted with life and grace...now *give* it away.

We are forgiven...now we must forgive *others*.

Like Peter, we say “no way!” And like Peter, Jesus tells us to “get behind” him and follow. Jesus tells us to love our neighbor as much as ourselves, to walk an extra mile, turn the other cheek, and give to those who ask. Before we toss in the towel and say “This is not for me...,” believe that Jesus knows what we know. Yes, Jesus came to live life as we live it, to know the joy and pain of life, as we know it. Jesus did not come to help angels (Hebrews 2:16) but the people of God. We need not live or labor in vain...for “it is no longer I who live, but it is Christ Jesus, who lives in me...who loved me and gave himself for me” (Galatians 2:19-20).

*Pray for God’s Holy Spirit to call, gather, enlighten and make holy the whole church and keep us with Christ Jesus in the one true faith.*



### **Saturday, October 22 – Our God is Good**

Text: Joel 2:13

*“...return to the Lord, your God, for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love...”*

My friends...smell the roses. Ponder the deep blue sky. Savor a blueberry pie. Listen to a child laugh. Run like the wind. Hold a hand. Smile at yourself and others. Hear the purr of a cat, see how the dog’s tail wags. Like the elder son coming in from the fields...hear the sound of music coming from home. My friends, know that God is steadfast in love...persistent in being with you and with others so that all may know joy and celebrate life forever and ever. As the chorus of Handel’s Messiah sings: Hallelujah, hallelujah, hallelujah, hallelujah, hallelujah...and when your life comes to an end, may you fall asleep peacefully in Christ and wake in his likeness.

*Pray that the whole world may rest in the steadfast love of God.*

