

**Devotions – October 23-29, 2016**  
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**Sunday, October 23, 2016**

Text: Romans 4:3-5

**For what does the scripture say? “Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness.” Now to one who works, wages are not reckoned as a gift but as something due. But to one who without works trusts him who justifies the ungodly, such faith is reckoned as righteousness.**

Over the next few days I invite you to consider from a biblical basis what it means to be put into a right relationship with God: to be “justified by faith” as we Lutherans say.

First it is a matter of trust, trust in God. Abraham set off on a great journey, Paul relates, not knowing where he was going and how it was to be accomplished. Without proof He set out on a journey, going only on faith and not certainty. This snippet of the story gives us heart of the relationship: God.

Let us pray: *Help us to trust in your promises, Lord, that each day may be lived in the hope only you can give. In Jesus’ name we pray. Amen.*



**Monday, October 24, 2016**

Text: Romans 3: 19-26

**Now we know that whatever the law says, it speaks to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be silenced, and the whole world may be held accountable to God. For “no human being will be justified in his sight” by deeds prescribed by the law, for through the law comes the knowledge of sin.**

**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. He did this to show his righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over the sins previously committed; it was to prove at the present time that he himself is righteous and that he justifies the one who has faith in Jesus.**

So if there were only some nice simple guidelines to illumine our walk of faith everything would be easy and ok! Try delving into the Ten Commandments and see how simple they are not. And then poke around in the law codes passed on to humanity! The law is like a Finnish Compass; it is a snuff box with a mirror inside the top, it doesn't show you where you are going or where you have bee: it just shows you who's lost! Read this part of the story to learn what your real compass and chart is and indeed who it is!

Let us pray: *Open our eyes and our hearts to follow you, Heavenly Father. Lead us in the way you would have us go; in Jesus' name we pray. Amen.*



**Tuesday, October 25, 2016**

Text: Romans 5:1-10

**Therefore, since we are justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have obtained access to this grace in which we stand; and we boast in our hope of sharing the glory of God. And not only that, but we also boast in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not disappoint us, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us.**

**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.**

It's easy to love somebody who is a good person or at least seems to be a fine upstanding human being. Being an enemy to someone is something we understand all too well, the path of history is littered with the result of that human insight. Enemies are meant to be hated. God according to Paul overturns this understanding of the way it is. We, the enemies of God, sinners, are given a gift of grace. God does the improbable and impossible for those who strive to remain separate from God.

Let us pray: *You have given us the gift of grace, Lord, not because we deserve it but out of your boundless love. Help us to forgive others as we ourselves have been forgiven. Amen.*



**Wednesday, October 26, 2016**

Text: Galatians 3: 23-29

**Now before faith came, we were imprisoned and guarded under the law until faith would be revealed. Therefore the law was our disciplinarian until Christ came, so that we might be justified by faith. But now that faith has come, we are no longer subject to a disciplinarian, for in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith. As many of you as were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus. And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to the promise.**

We love to emphasize our distinctiveness. It's how we create identity. We need to know just who we are especially in regard to everyone around us. The search often turns into a source of conflict with no resolution. Something needs to change. But as we all know this is something we resist and fear. But change comes and along with change, wrought by God, comes identity.

Let us pray: *We are your children, Lord God, created in your image, created in love. Lead us through the changes in our lives with confident hope and trust in the goodness you have promised through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.*



**Thursday, October 27, 2016**

Text: Luke 15

15 Now the tax collectors and sinners were all gathering around to hear Jesus.<sup>2</sup> But the Pharisees and the teachers of the law muttered, "This man welcomes sinners and eats with them."

<sup>3</sup> Then Jesus told them this parable: <sup>4</sup> "Suppose one of you has a hundred sheep and loses one of them. Doesn't he leave the ninety-nine in the open country and go after the lost sheep until he finds it? <sup>5</sup> And when he finds it, he joyfully puts it on his shoulders <sup>6</sup> and goes home. Then he calls his friends and neighbors together and says, 'Rejoice with me; I have found my lost sheep.' <sup>7</sup> I tell you that in the same way there will be more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who do not need to repent.

The Parable of the Lost Coin

<sup>8</sup> "Or suppose a woman has ten silver coins<sup>[a]</sup> and loses one. Doesn't she light a lamp, sweep the house and search carefully until she finds it? <sup>9</sup> And when she finds it, she calls her friends and neighbors together and says, 'Rejoice with me; I have found my lost coin.' <sup>10</sup> In the same way, I tell you, there is rejoicing in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents."

The Parable of the Lost Son

<sup>11</sup> Jesus continued: "There was a man who had two sons. <sup>12</sup> The younger one said to his father, 'Father, give me my share of the estate.' So he divided his property between them.

<sup>13</sup> "Not long after that, the younger son got together all he had, set off for a distant country and there squandered his wealth in wild living. <sup>14</sup> After he had spent everything, there was a severe famine in that whole country, and he began to be in need. <sup>15</sup> So he went and hired himself out to a citizen of that country, who sent him to his fields to feed pigs. <sup>16</sup> He longed to fill his stomach with the pods that the pigs were eating, but no one gave him anything.

<sup>17</sup> "When he came to his senses, he said, 'How many of my father's hired servants have food to spare, and here I am starving to death! <sup>18</sup> I will set out and go back to my father and say to him: Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. <sup>19</sup> I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me like one of your hired servants.' <sup>20</sup> So he got up and went to his father.

"But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him.

<sup>21</sup> "The son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.'

<sup>22</sup> "But the father said to his servants, 'Quick! Bring the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. <sup>23</sup> Bring the fattened calf and kill it. Let's have a feast and celebrate. <sup>24</sup> For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.' So they began to celebrate.

<sup>25</sup> "Meanwhile, the older son was in the field. When he came near the house, he heard music and dancing. <sup>26</sup> So he called one of the servants and asked him what was going on. <sup>27</sup> 'Your brother has come,' he replied, 'and your father has killed the fattened calf because he has him back safe and sound.'

<sup>28</sup> "The older brother became angry and refused to go in. So his father went out and pleaded with him. <sup>29</sup> But he answered his father, 'Look! All these years I've been slaving for you and never disobeyed your orders. Yet you never gave me even a young goat so I could celebrate with my friends. <sup>30</sup> But when this son of yours who has squandered your property with prostitutes comes home, you kill the fattened calf for him!'

<sup>31</sup> "'My son,' the father said, 'you are always with me, and everything I have is yours. <sup>32</sup> But we had to celebrate and be glad, because this brother of yours was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.'"

Footnotes:

[Luke 15:8](#) Greek *ten drachmas*, each worth about a day's wages

What does Grace and Justification look like in ordinary life? It looks like the parable of the Prodigal Son! We all can find ourselves in this story. All of the scriptural passages you have been reading this week are summed up in this chapter of Luke. People seek to live without regard for the important relationships of our existence, both of family and of God. Love seeks us out without regard to our worthiness or true motives.

Let us pray: *Help us to love as you love, Lord, without regard to worthiness or cost. Amen.*



**Friday, October 28, 2016**

Text: John 1:12-14

**But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God, who were born, not of blood or of the will of the flesh or of the will of man, but of God. And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth.**

We all like power when you come right down to it. There is, however, only one proper use of power according to God: to become children of God. This it seems is the final result of grace and God's work of reconciliation: To transform us into what we were always intended to be. But as the infomercials say: Wait...there's more! See the reading for tomorrow for the final word!

Let us pray: *Heavenly Father, mold us, shape us to be the people you would have us be. Thank you for your goodness to us. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.*



**Saturday, October 29, 2016**

Text: Ephesians 2:8-10

**For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God – not the result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are what he has made us, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared before hand to be our way of life.**

Purpose: we all need to find our purpose. We strive for it and search diligently to do it once we have found it! The final word on justification is freedom and purpose. Our striving after God becomes a way of living with our neighbors near and far. Grace comes and works follow.

Let us pray: *As we walk through each day, Lord, may we be sustained by your strength, follow your will, and carry out your purpose for us. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.*

