

Devotions – November 20-26, 2016

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Sunday, November 20, 2016

Text: 1Timothy 4:4-5

For everything created by God is good, and nothing is to be rejected, provided it is received with thanksgiving; for it is sanctified by God’s word and by prayer.

There was a retired pastor in my synod that I occasionally ran into and I would ask, in the way we do when we meet an acquaintance, “How are you?”

And without exception he would always answer, “Grateful, thank you.”

To everyone he met along the way his answer was always the same, “Grateful, thank you.”

I have often thought of that answer as one I hoped I could grow into as a Christian. Imagine having on the tip of your tongue gratitude every single day with every single person you met. What might that say about you and your witness to the goodness of God in spite of daily aches and pains, disappointments and discouragement? In this week of Thanksgiving in our nation, we usually are willing to share our gratefulness around a turkey with friends and family. But how good it would be if every time, in every place and circumstance, we could greet one another in the spirit of gratitude.

Let us pray: *Praise to you, God, for all the ways you bless this nation and its people. Let this be a time when we freely share our gratitude with others and witness to your goodness and kindness. Let us turn from our fears and complaints and troubles to give thanks to you. AMEN*



Monday, November 21, 2016

Text: Psalm 147:1-6

Praise the Lord! How good it is to sing praises to our God; for he is gracious, and a song of praise is fitting. The Lord builds up Jerusalem; he gathers the outcasts of Israel. He heals the brokenhearted, and binds up their wounds. He determines the number of the stars; he gives to all of them their names. Great is our Lord, and abundant in power; his understanding is beyond measure. The Lord lifts up the downtrodden; he casts the wicked to the ground.

One of my very favorite hymns is “Praise to the Lord, the Almighty” (858 in the ELW). There is a familiar arrangement of that hymn that St Olaf choirs often sing and it never fails but brings tears to my eyes. Perhaps it is because it is one of those hymns that have survived all the hymnals I have used over the years, or perhaps because the melody is so singable and uplifting. But mostly it is because I cannot sing the verses without getting caught up in the words of praise that rise to God out the voices of the congregation. As many of us look toward our celebrations of Thanksgivings on Thursday, may our prayers of praise rise up to our Creator God with joy and adoration.

Let us pray: Hear our prayers of praise, O God. Give us grateful hearts for your bountiful goodness and the majesty of your creation. Preserve and keep us and all things in your care; through Jesus Christ. AMEN



Tuesday, November 22, 2016

Text: Philippians 4:4-7

Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice. Let your gentleness be known to everyone. The Lord is near. Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

As we find ourselves in the middle of the “holiday season” that seems to begin with Halloween and end with the Super Bowl, we often get a bit overwhelmed. Our nervous systems go on high alert and we sometimes fret about everything from making the perfect turkey dinner to giving our kids the perfect Christmas. And we worry about things out of our control and that can keep us from getting the rest we need. Then perhaps this week is the perfect time to remember to take our cares and concerns in prayer to God. To let the healing mercy of our Lord accompany our busy and complicated days. It is often hard to rejoice in the middle of problems but rejoicing and gratitude is something we can choose to do every day in prayer.

Let us pray: O gracious and merciful God, bring peace into our lives, especially the peace that we can't find without you. We are so grateful that we can turn to you for our solace and comfort in stressful times and troubled times. We humbly thank you for the constant love you send to us through pastors and friends and neighbors and especially your Holy Spirit. In Christ we pray, AMEN



Wednesday, November 23, 2016

Text: Psalm 100

Make a joyful noise to the Lord, all the earth. Worship the Lord with gladness; come into his presence with singing. Know that the Lord is God. It is he that made us, and we are his; we are the people and the sheep of his pasture. Enter his gates with thanksgiving and into his courts with praise. Give thanks to him, bless his name. For the Lord is good; his steadfast love endures forever, and his faithfulness to all generations.

“Over the river and through the woods to grandmother’s house we go.”

I don’t know how many millions of Americans are in the air or on the road today but I’m one of them. We are gathering the family this year in Georgia and I can’t wait to share a turkey dinner with my children and grandchildren. We like many across our nation will “gather together to ask the Lord’s blessing” as the old hymn goes. May the Lord bless your day and those with whom you gather. If this is a lonely Thanksgiving this year, may the Lord fill the empty spaces in your heart. If this is a troubled Thanksgiving this year, may the peace of the Lord bring you comfort. If this is a painful Thanksgiving this year, may the healing power of the Lord strengthen you and give you courage. But be assured, wherever you gather on this day, it will be with the love and presence of the Lord.

Let us pray: *Almighty God, we gather to give you thanks today for all your goodness to us. For our families, friends and neighbors we are grateful. But most of all we thank you that you sent us Jesus who will never leave us, but accompany us in all places and time. In his holy and precious name, AMEN*



Thursday, November 24, 2016

Text: Psalm 145:15-16

The eyes of all look to you, and you give them their food in due season. You open your hand, satisfying the desire of every living thing.

What will be your Thanksgiving prayer today? When I was little the normal, daily prayer was “Thank you for the world so sweet, thank you for the food we eat, thank you for the birds that sing, thank you God for everything.” My favorite table blessing has always been “Be present at our table Lord” because Lutherans sing that so well!

On Thanksgiving Day many families have a tradition of going around the table and having each person state something that they are grateful for that year. Instead of the usual “God is great, God is good” sort of blessing, someone often gives heartfelt thanks

for much more than the food on the table, but for the people sitting around the table as well. What will be your Thanksgiving prayer today? May God fill your heart and mind with gratitude for more than the food.

Let us pray: *Lord God, we give thanks with a grateful heart for our church, our bishop, our pastors, our neighbors, and our family. Bless and unite our country and give us compassionate hearts so that no one goes hungry and all share in the abundance of our gracious God. In Christ, AMEN*



Friday, November 25, 2016

Text:

Jesus said, “Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.”

After a time of celebration and feasting we all want a period of rest and recuperation. Perhaps you ate too much turkey and mashed potatoes. Or perhaps you got carried away on the pumpkin pie. Or maybe you just stayed up too late catching up with a family member you don't see every day. And then there are those who got up in the middle of the night to get a bargain at Wal-Mart on Black Friday.

When our bodies get tired we need rest and should carve out time to get that healing rest. Our nation needs rest, too. Rest from all the mean and ugly words. Rest from all the emotion of winning and losing an election. Rest from all the bitterness and harshness that we direct at one another. This day after Thanksgiving Day, after we have gathered to give thanks across our country, would be a good day to find rest in Jesus and to learn from him how to be gently and humble in heart.

Let us pray: *God of healing and compassion, we thank you that you hear us when we pray and that in you we find the rest our soul craves. Be with our country in this time of discord and bring us together in peace and safety, for the sake of Jesus. AMEN*



Saturday, November 26, 2016

Text: Colossians 1:10-12

Lead lives worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him, as you bear fruit in every good work and as you grow in the knowledge of God. May you be made strong with all the strength that comes from his glorious power, and may you be prepared to endure everything with patience, while joyfully giving thanks to the Father, who has enable you to share in the inheritance of the saints in the light.

Tomorrow we turn toward Advent and a time of waiting for Christ to come again. But, today many of us are on our way home. Many are digging through the Thanksgiving dinner leftovers. Some are even wondering if it would be a good day to put the Christmas lights on the front porch before it gets snowy.

But before you move ahead to a busy December and Advent, first spend just a moment or two to give thanks for this past week and the ways God was part of your days. Think back on this week and remember the times when you saw God in your grandchild, or your great Aunt, or heard God speak in the simple prayers of a child, or the well-seasoned prayer of a grandfather. Give thanks for the laughter and hugs that were shared.

Let us pray: *Holy Lord, we ask for you guidance and strength in these coming days. Guide our church, our nation, our family and fill us with the hope of the coming Savior into our lives. In Christ Jesus, AMEN*

