

June 18-24, 2017

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Sunday, June 18, 2017

Text: Proverbs 4:10-27

Earlier this year our Sunday School class spent some time in study and discussion on Proverbs, the book some have called the wisdom of Solomon. Often, passages begin like verse 10, admonishing a child to listen as his father speaks.

v. 10: *Hear, my child, and accept my words, that the years of your life may be many.*

v.20: *My child, be attentive to my words; incline your ear to my sayings.* (NRSV)

How important is this tradition of passing on words of wisdom from one generation to another? It is more than sharing knowledge or teaching facts. It is sharing that good judgement based on experience. Today, as we reflect on Father's Day, we remember those father figures in our lives that were willing to share their knowledge and good judgement, learned from their experiences. And we give thanks to God for these men.

Let us pray: *In gratitude we look to you, Heavenly Father, the God of all wisdom. Lead us along paths that are straight and footholds that are resting securely in you. Amen*



Monday, June 19, 2017

Text: Genesis 18:1-15

There are not many familiar Bible stories that we remember because the characters laughed. This may be one. Abraham has three “heavenly” visitors who tell him that he and Sarah will have a son when the visitors return the next year. Now Abraham and Sarah were very old and when Sarah overhears this she laughs, perhaps a cynical, unbelieving laugh. In the time of Abraham, bearing children, especially sons, was a woman’s duty and gave her status in the community. Sarah had probably waited and hoped for a child many years and faced repeated disappointment. Her laughter was probably not from overwhelming joy as she eavesdropped on her husband’s conversation with the visitors, and she is then left with challenging words, “Is anything too hard for the Lord?”

Several chapters later in Genesis, we learn that indeed Sarah gives birth to a son, even in her and Abraham’s old age. Abraham then names the boy Isaac, which means, “he laughs”. I’m guessing this may have been an inside joke, but Sarah seems to take it all in stride as she recognizes it was God who brought laughter, real overflowing with joy laughter, in her life,

Let us pray: *All knowing, powerful God, forgive us when we limit your power and willingness to answer our prayers. Help us to trust your timing that our hearts may overflow with joy and laughter as we experience all you have planned for our lives. Amen*



Tuesday, June 20, 2017

Text: Exodus 19:2-8a

Have you ever had a “treasured possession”? Something that was difficult to come by, rare perhaps? I remember collecting pennies when I was little. Family gatherings often included checking out my uncles’ pockets for old and rare pennies, keeping only the oldest or rarest, probably an ‘S’, for my collection. That was my treasure. I kept this collection of pennies hidden and safe. But here in Exodus, God tells the Israelites that they have been chosen, and rescued from Egypt to be his treasured possessions. If only they will obey God fully and keep his covenant, they will be his treasured possessions.

Treasures are protected, hidden and kept safe. Who wouldn’t want to be treasured! But the people of Israel have shown themselves to be a fickle lot. When times are tough they turn to God for deliverance and when things go well they forget the source of their blessings. Pretty much like us today. Could God choose me to be his treasured possession? Would he? Hasn’t he already? This brings to my mind the words of a song by Hawk Nelson, called Diamonds.

*Oh the joy of the Lord
It will be my strength
When the pressure is on
He’s making diamonds.*

*He’s making diamonds, diamonds
Making diamonds out of dust
He is refining
And in His timing
He’s making diamonds out of us.*

Let us pray: *Creator God, thank you for choosing me to be your treasured possession. Help me to see each person as a priceless treasure to you and then do all that I can to keep your treasures protected and safe. Amen.*



Wednesday, June 21, 2017

Text: Joshua 1:8-9

Political leaders are now and have always been newsworthy folk. Perhaps the news headline after the death of Moses could have read:

YOUNG CADET CHOSEN BY GOD TO LEAD ISRAELITE INVASION

That’s right, no year-long campaign, with promises, fundraising, questionable ballots and hanging “chads”. This leader, Joshua, was chosen by God to lead his people in taking possession of the

promised land. Probably a lot tougher than what is on my to-do list today and I wonder if Joshua was a bit anxious about the tasks ahead. Maybe even shaking in his sandals! But God said to Joshua:

(NIV) v 8-9: *Do not let this Book of the Law depart from your mouth; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful. Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be terrified, do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go.*

But God...I am often reminded of these words when I face situations that require more strength and courage than I have.

.....the company is downsizing, I don't know what I will do to pay the bills, *but God* knows the future.

.....the doctor said it is cancer, *but God* is the great healer.

.....my spouse died. I'm alone for the first time in over 50 years and lonely, *but God* promised to be with me even to the end of the age.

Let us pray: *Wise and all-knowing God, I thank you for the strength and courage to face this day, not alone or timid, but sure in the promise of your presence with me. Amen.*



Thursday, June 22, 2017

Text: Romans 5:1-8

Paul is a man who knows suffering. From this and other letters, we know that he has experienced suffering himself and is able to recognize it in the people around him. So when Paul encourages early Christians to rejoice in their suffering, he is teaching them from experience.

We also have and will continue to experience times of suffering. It seems to be part of the human condition. At times, our bodies fail and we suffer the pain of injury or illness, but we also have times when we suffer pain from broken relationships. And Paul's words to the early Christians in Rome encourage us also. He reminds all listeners that we boast or rejoice in our hope of sharing the glory of God and not only that, but we rejoice in our suffering also. Really? Rejoice in suffering? Endure, maybe. Whine about it, probably. But no, Paul encourages us to rejoice in our suffering because these times produce qualities in us like perseverance, character and hope. God pours out his love into our hearts through the Holy Spirit. We will face times of suffering and the power of God's love in our hearts will carry us through it to the hope that does not disappoint us.

Let us pray: *Come Holy Spirit into my heart. Touch my heart with God's love so that my suffering may be healed. Amen.*



Friday, June 23, 2017

Text: John 1:1-18

For several years now, I have had the privilege of sharing communion with folks from our congregation that are shut-in or unable to gather together with us for worship. This week as I met with Dorothy for communion, I realized not only have we become close friends through this time together, but I could see how much she has become a mentor to me. Her words and attitude clearly show her to be a woman of great faith.

As she shared an old devotional writing of hers with me on this familiar passage in the gospel of John, I was reminded of the important role words have played in her life as a teacher, but specifically how important the word of God has been in her life. She has shown me, by her example, the importance of reading and studying the written word of God. I may be able to one day say with Dorothy, that my favorite author is God and to keep his words in my heart and mind.

This anniversary year of the Reformation, we are often reflecting on the words of Luther's Small Catechism. I was one of those confirmation students in the 1960's that spent Saturday mornings memorizing and reciting many words. It may not have been such a bad thing after all. It is important to remember words; the right words.

In the gospel, John says: *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. In him was life, and that life was the light of men* (NIV).

Let us pray: *Lord Jesus, thank you for folks like Dorothy who continue to learn and share with me your words of eternal life. Amen.*



Saturday, June 24, 2017

Text: Philippians 4:6-9

June is a time to celebrate graduation; a time to recognize the completion of a course of study. As I try to include a few words of wisdom and encouragement in cards for these young people, I'm reminded of how much they have yet to learn and experience about life. Not all of that will be pleasant for them. But even the difficult times can be faced with an attitude of joy. Not the phony smiling emoji we often see attached to emails, or even the colon and parentheses :) people use to complete a challenging request or shared message, but the heartfelt joy we have in knowing the saving love of Jesus.

Paul speaks with this joy as he writes, from prison, to the Christians in Philippi these words of encouragement: *Stand firm in the Lord, rejoice always, be reasonable, do not be anxious about anything, pray in everything and the peace of God will guard your heart and mind in Christ Jesus.*

Congratulations to graduates at every level of learning and to each of us who, at all ages, continue to study the course of life!

Let us pray: *Heavenly Father, fill our hearts and minds with your truth and beauty that our lives may be lived in thankfulness and joy. Amen.*

