

..... **Daily Devotions**

Devotions – October 22-28, 2017

By Pastor Bill Jacobson

PSALM Shared Ministry:

Sharon Lutheran Church, Bessemer, MI

All Saints Lutheran Church, Wakefield, MI

The readings for this week have been taken from the Daily Readings portion of Taking Faith Home bulletin insert © Copyright 2016 Milestones Ministry, LLC. All rights reserved.

Sunday, October 22

Read: Matthew 22:15-22

“Then the Pharisees went and plotted to entrap him in what he said.” Matthew 22:15

What about all of those times that we try to get Jesus to say those things that we want him to say rather than those things that make us uncomfortable and challenge us in our lives of faith? How often do we in our own mind know exactly what Jesus should say about something so we can be justified and right in our own thoughts and actions?

Too often the words and actions of Jesus make us uncomfortable because Jesus calls us out of our shell and into the world in public actions to serve others. Too often the words and actions of Jesus challenge us to change our thinking or to act differently than we might if left to our devices. The Pharisees were tired of Jesus teaching that challenged their way of living life to the point where they joined together with the Herodians, people with who they had little in common with other than their wealth and position in society. They joined together in order to trick Jesus into offending the people in order to minimize his influence. Yet Jesus responded to their question with an ancient truth. In spite of how we think, all things have been created by God and belong to God. Returning to God that which God has created is simply returning to the owner those things have been entrusted into our care.

Let us pray: *Gracious God, you are the maker and the owner of all things. Thank you for entrusting to us a part of your creation, encourage us in the way that we care for and manage them, and empower us to return a portion to you with glad and generous hearts. Amen*



Monday, October 23

Read: 1 Thessalonians 1:1-10

“...you became imitators of us and of the Lord” 1 Thessalonians 1:6a

Do our deeds reveal who we are as followers of Jesus? Is our faith obvious and explicit enough that “we do not need to speak about it?” As Christians that follow Jesus, do we know Jesus well enough that we can copy his actions and ministry acting out who Jesus is to us in our own daily lives?

People see us in the world every day making judgments about us and about the things that they associate with us based upon our behaviors and actions. So being imitators of Christ we witness to who Jesus is in our lives and who Jesus can be in their lives. Words can be so difficult to find sometimes. Yet when people see us copying Jesus and living lives that reflect and point to who Jesus is then “we have no need to speak about it” (v 8).

There is an old cliché that says, “You may be the only Bible (Jesus) that someone ever sees.” I think that summarizes what Paul is saying to the Thessalonians. The Jesus that we know is reflected in our lives. Many people who have no religious or church connection find their understanding of the faith in what they see in your life and your actions I give thanks to God for your faith and witness to the world that you encounter.

Let us pray: *Holy God, make our lives and our actions a mirror that reflects your generous love and gracious presence to the world around us. Amen*



Tuesday, October 24

Read: Jeremiah 29:1-7

But seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the LORD on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare. Jeremiah 29:7

God invites us to “bloom where we are planted”. Situations change, the world around us changes, we may not find ourselves in the places or circumstances that we prefer and yet like the exiles of Jerusalem God encourages us to bloom where we are planted.

Often times in our congregations and our communities we look around and nothing resembles the familiar memories of our past. Without the familiarity of those memories it can be difficult to look to the future and the ways in which our congregations and our communities can once again flourish.

The prophet Jeremiah reminds us that God remains in the midst of all circumstances. Even when we feel out of control or out of place, God is present with us and for us. In every place or situation that we might find ourselves the prophet invites us to make the good that is possible in the current situation our concern. To pray to God for that situation trusting that God will bring wellness and in that wellness we will be made well too.

Let us pray: *God of all place, comfort us in our struggles and our memories of the past. Encourage us in our lives that we might bring about your desire in the present. Encourage us to live into the future with boldness and hope trusting in your promises. Amen*



Wednesday, October 25

Read: Daniel 1:3-21

Now God allowed Daniel to receive favor and compassion from the palace master. Daniel 1:9

I find that it is easy to trust God when things are going well and when I feel secure. It is those challenging times when I am feeling unsure about my situation and the future that it becomes more difficult to trust God's goodness and providence in my life.

Daniel found himself in precarious circumstances as he was called into the palace. Many things were changing and he no doubt felt powerless in the midst of those changing circumstances. He recognized compromises of his faith in the midst of the new circumstances. Yet he was willing to trust God and to follow God's leading in this new and strange environment of the King's court. In trusting God, Daniel developed a boldness that allowed him to gain trust of the palace master. As Daniel and his friends were able to practice their faith they were able to develop the wellness and health that God had already provided for them.

As we practice our faith, always improving and building on those things that we have already learned, we become models and witnesses to what God can do in the world. As we continue to practice our faith we can become bolder in our witness to what it is that God is able to do in the world.

Let us pray: *Gracious God, as we live our lives of faith grant us the confidence to live and to share boldly as people trusting in your protection and in your ways of living life. Fill us with confidence that your ways will produce the fruits that you desire. Amen*



Thursday, October 26

Read: Romans 13:1-7

Let every person be subject to the governing authorities; for there is no authority except from God, and those authorities that exist have been instituted by God. Romans 1:1

Politics and religion do not always mix well. Sometimes our political ideologies inform our religious understanding and sometimes our religious understanding informs our politics. No matter where you stand on a subject it seems that you will find another person of faith with a

different conflicting idea. Today's society seems to be even more polarized when it comes to ideas of politics or religion than it has in the past.

Paul points out that the role of civil authority is to maintain good order, that the authority that they have is given by God to maintain good order. To equate that authority with specific persons may be a stretch. Government in action is itself a human institution that is subject to human sin and error, yet the God who has instituted the authority is able to use that authority for God's purposes.

In each cycle of politics we are called to trust God in spite of the sinfulness that we see in the institution, living our daily lives responsibly to God's glory.

Let us pray: *Holy God, shape us in ways that in the midst of the noise of the world around us that we hear and respond to your authority. Empower leaders of government to use that authority wisely and for the good of all. Amen*



Friday, October 27

Read: Isaiah 45:1-7

For the sake of my servant Jacob, and Israel my chosen, I call you by your name, I surname you, though you do not know me. Isaiah 45:4

God uses strange and unlikely servants to accomplish God's ends. In Cyrus, King of Persia, God restores the people of the promise to their homeland, to Jerusalem. God uses earthly situations to bring about God's intended results. The instruments of God's work may or may not know fully who God is but that certainly does not limit God's action in the world. The results of God's activity in the world tend to rely on human responses and human actions concerning God's plan. God is all powerful, yet uses that power to allow mere mortals to bring about God's intended goals. The story of Cyrus, God and God's people is a reminder to us that even when we cannot see God's endgame that God is not actively working in the world.

God is actively working in our lives through the Holy Spirit to make a difference for the Kingdom of Heaven. If God is able to use Cyrus, who does not know or follow God, to restore people and to change the world, what is God doing through us who know God and seek God in our daily lives?

Let us pray: Gracious God, you sometimes use the most unlikely instruments to accomplish your ends. Open our hearts to recognize your will and your presence that we might support those things that work towards your ends and make us instruments of your will and your plan. Amen



Saturday, October 28

Read: Psalm 96

Worship the LORD in holy splendor; tremble before him, all the earth. Psalm 96:9

At the end of the day, when all is said and done, God is still God. There is great joy in recognizing and claiming the works of the Lord that are real in our lives. As a result of God's works we sing a new song, we worship and give thanks for God's abundance in our lives. For trusting us with a part of God's creation to manage and to provide for our needs we give thanks and offer a part of that provision to God as an offering.

In reading, reflecting on and acting on these devotions in the midst of daily activity we find ourselves in the midst of daily worship and responding to God's generous nature. In the weekend we prepare to join others in worship in the assembly to again hear the Word and respond to God with offering and praise.

God's presence in our lives of faith calls us deeper into worship and praise as well as outward in public expression of what that faith means in our lives. It is in our expressions of worship, the new songs that we sing that God is made known to all people in ways that they can see God more clearly. May your praise point to God and be the light in someone's life today.

Let us pray: *Lord, help us to always recognize your magnificence in the world and in our lives. Give us hearts of praise and worship to you. Amen*

