

Devotions – November 5-11, 2017

By Pastor Terry Frankenstein
Zion Lutheran Church, Manistique, MI

Sunday, November 5, 2017

Text: Matthew 23:1-12, NRSV

¹ Then Jesus said to the crowds and to his disciples, ²“The scribes and the Pharisees sit on Moses’ seat; ³therefore, do whatever they teach you and follow it; but do not do as they do, for they do not practice what they teach. ⁴They tie up heavy burdens, hard to bear, and lay them on the shoulders of others; but they themselves are unwilling to lift a finger to move them. ⁵They do all their deeds to be seen by others; for they make their phylacteries broad and their fringes long. ⁶They love to have the place of honor at banquets and the best seats in the synagogues, ⁷and to be greeted with respect in the marketplaces, and to have people call them rabbi. ⁸But you are not to be called rabbi, for you have one teacher, and you are all students. ⁹And call no one your father on earth, for you have one Father—the one in heaven. ¹⁰Nor are you to be called instructors, for you have one instructor, the Messiah. ¹¹The greatest among you will be your servant. ¹²All who exalt themselves will be humbled, and all who humble themselves will be exalted.

Reflection: The scribes and the Pharisees do a good job of teaching, but Jesus explains that they don’t bother practicing what they preach. They’re too busy doing things for show and placing themselves on pedestals to care about the needs of others. As disciples of Christ, we are asked to set aside our all-too-human vanity and pride in order to lift up the least among us.

Let us pray: *Gracious God, continue to teach us your ways, and strengthen us to humbly care for others. Amen.*



Monday, November 6, 2017

Text: Psalm 5, NRSV

¹Give ear to my words, O Lord; give heed to my sighing.
²Listen to the sound of my cry, my King and my God, for to you I pray.
³O Lord, in the morning you hear my voice; in the morning I plead my case to you, and watch.
⁴For you are not a God who delights in wickedness; evil will not sojourn with you.
⁵The boastful will not stand before your eyes; you hate all evildoers.
⁶You destroy those who speak lies; the Lord abhors the bloodthirsty and deceitful.
⁷But I, through the abundance of your steadfast love, will enter your house, I will bow down toward your holy temple in awe of you.

⁸Lead me, O Lord, in your righteousness because of my enemies; make your way straight before me.

⁹For there is no truth in their mouths; their hearts are destruction; their throats are open graves; they flatter with their tongues.

¹⁰Make them bear their guilt, O God; let them fall by their own counsels; because of their many transgressions cast them out, for they have rebelled against you.

¹¹But let all who take refuge in you rejoice; let them ever sing for joy. Spread your protection over them, so that those who love your name may exult in you.

¹²For you bless the righteous, O Lord; you cover them with favor as with a shield.

Reflection: Psalm 5 is a Psalm of David, a prayer requesting God's help in defeating enemies, especially those who tell lies and use flattery to deceive. The psalmist is asking God to protect and bless those who seek refuge in the Lord.

Let us pray: Hear our prayers, dear Lord, when we call on you, and help us to feel your abundant love. Amen.



Tuesday, November 7, 2017

Text: Lamentations 2:13-17, NRSV

¹³What can I say for you, to what compare you, O daughter Jerusalem? To what can I liken you, that I may comfort you, O virgin daughter Zion? For vast as the sea is your ruin; who can heal you? ¹⁴Your prophets have seen for you false and deceptive visions; they have not exposed your iniquity to restore your fortunes, but have seen oracles for you that are false and misleading. ¹⁵All who pass along the way clap their hands at you; they hiss and wag their heads at daughter Jerusalem; "Is this the city that was called the perfection of beauty, the joy of all the earth?" ¹⁶All your enemies open their mouths against you; they hiss, they gnash their teeth, they cry: "We have devoured her! Ah, this is the day we longed for; at last we have seen it!" ¹⁷The Lord has done what he purposed, he has carried out his threat; as he ordained long ago, he has demolished without pity; he has made the enemy rejoice over you, and exalted the might of your foes.

Reflection: The book of Lamentations mourns the destruction of Jerusalem by the Babylonians in 587 BCE. God's people had been warned in advance of the devastation to come, but the people had ignored God's prophets and instead had listened to false prophets.

Let us pray: On this Election Day, may we be blessed with leaders who guide us in your ways, O Lord. Amen.



Wednesday, November 8, 2017

Text: Proverbs 16:21-33, NRSV

- ²¹The wise of heart is called perceptive,
and pleasant speech increases persuasiveness.**
- ²²Wisdom is a fountain of life to one who has it,
but folly is the punishment of fools.**
- ²³The mind of the wise makes their speech judicious,
and adds persuasiveness to their lips.**
- ²⁴Pleasant words are like a honeycomb,
sweetness to the soul and health to the body.**
- ²⁵Sometimes there is a way that seems to be right,
but in the end it is the way to death.**
- ²⁶The appetite of workers works for them;
their hunger urges them on.**
- ²⁷Scoundrels concoct evil,
and their speech is like a scorching fire.**
- ²⁸A perverse person spreads strife,
and a whisperer separates close friends.**
- ²⁹The violent entice their neighbors,
and lead them in a way that is not good.**
- ³⁰One who winks the eyes plans perverse things;
one who compresses the lips brings evil to pass.**
- ³¹Gray hair is a crown of glory;
it is gained in a righteous life.**
- ³²One who is slow to anger is better than the mighty,
and one whose temper is controlled than one who captures a city.**
- ³³The lot is cast into the lap,
but the decision is the Lord's alone.**

Reflection: The wisdom sayings in Proverbs offer us instruction for successful living, and today's reading gives us plenty to consider: from the benefits of pleasant and judicious speech to the damage caused by scoundrels and whisperers to the value of controlling our anger and temper.

Let us pray: *Gracious God, may we be ever mindful of how our words affect others, that we might be kind and good-humored and patient in the many situations which may encounter his day. Amen.*



Thursday, November 9, 2017

Text: Psalm 70, NRSV

To the leader. Of David, for the memorial offering.

¹ Be pleased, O God, to deliver me.

O Lord, make haste to help me!

**² Let those be put to shame and confusion
who seek my life.**

**Let those be turned back and brought to dishonor
who desire to hurt me.**

**³ Let those who say, ‘Aha, Aha!’
turn back because of their shame.**

**⁴ Let all who seek you
rejoice and be glad in you.**

**Let those who love your salvation
say evermore, ‘God is great!’**

**⁵ But I am poor and needy;
hasten to me, O God!**

**You are my help and my deliverer;
O Lord, do not delay!**

Reflection: With a sense of urgency, this prayer asks God for deliverance and justice. The petitioner feels that his/her enemies want to shame and humiliate him/her. The speaker believes that God will respond and trusts that there will be deliverance from pain. It is God who brings newness of life.

Let us pray: Living God, you hear our urgent prayers today as in days of old. When we are in need, we know that you are listening and prepared to deliver us from our pain. Amen.



Friday, November 10, 2017

Text: Amos 3:1-12, NRSV

¹ Hear this word that the Lord has spoken against you, O people of Israel, against the whole family that I brought up out of the land of Egypt:

**² You only have I known
of all the families of the earth;**

**therefore I will punish you
for all your iniquities.**

**³ Do two walk together
unless they have made an appointment?**

**⁴ Does a lion roar in the forest,
when it has no prey?**

**Does a young lion cry out from its den,
if it has caught nothing?**

⁵ Does a bird fall into a snare on the earth,
when there is no trap for it?
Does a snare spring up from the ground,
when it has taken nothing?
⁶ Is a trumpet blown in a city,
and the people are not afraid?
Does disaster befall a city,
unless the Lord has done it?
⁷ Surely the Lord God does nothing,
without revealing his secret
to his servants the prophets.
⁸ The lion has roared;
who will not fear?
The Lord God has spoken;
who can but prophesy?
⁹ Proclaim to the strongholds in Ashdod,
and to the strongholds in the land of Egypt,
and say, ‘Assemble yourselves on Mount Samaria,
and see what great tumults are within it,
and what oppressions are in its midst.’
¹⁰ They do not know how to do right, says the Lord,
those who store up violence and robbery in their strongholds.
¹¹ Therefore, thus says the Lord God:
An adversary shall surround the land,
and strip you of your defense;
and your strongholds shall be plundered.
¹² Thus says the Lord: As the shepherd rescues from the mouth of the lion two legs, or a
piece of an ear, so shall the people of Israel who live in Samaria be rescued, with the corner
of a couch and part of a bed.

Reflection: God speaks to the people through prophets, and prophets can be those least expected to know and share the concerns of God. Amos was a farmer who raised sheep and tended his fig trees, yet God used him to challenge God’s people who were apathetic about the welfare of their neighbors.

Let us pray: *Remind us, O Lord, of your will through the words of present day prophets. Open our hearts to your teachings, helping us to follow your ways of justice. Amen.*



Saturday, November 11, 2017

Text: Matthew 24:1-14

As Jesus came out of the temple and was going away, his disciples came to point out to him the buildings of the temple. ²Then he asked them, ‘You see all these, do you not? Truly I tell you, not one stone will be left here upon another; all will be thrown down.’

3 When he was sitting on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to him privately, saying, ‘Tell us, when will this be, and what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?’ ⁴Jesus answered them, ‘Beware that no one leads you astray. ⁵For many will come in my name, saying, “I am the Messiah! and they will lead many astray. ⁶And you will hear of wars and rumors of wars; see that you are not alarmed; for this must take place, but the end is not yet. ⁷For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, and there will be famines and earthquakes in various places: ⁸all this is but the beginning of the birth pangs.

9 ‘Then they will hand you over to be tortured and will put you to death, and you will be hated by all nations because of my name. ¹⁰Then many will fall away, and they will betray one another and hate one another. ¹¹And many false prophets will arise and lead many astray. ¹²And because of the increase of lawlessness, the love of many will grow cold. ¹³But anyone who endures to the end will be saved. ¹⁴And this good news of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the world, as a testimony to all the nations; and then the end will come.

Reflection: We are reminded in this passage that what may seem enduring, like the Jerusalem Temple, may very well pass away one day. As the world changes in ways that are difficult to understand, false prophets will arise to offer a sense of security and means of escape. We are to understand that in spite of all the complexity and struggles in this life, we are promised that the Good News will prevail over the false prophets.

Let us pray: *Gracious God, when the world around us is filled with anxiety and uncertainty, help us to recognize when we are being led astray by false messages. Help us to stay strong in faith, to love and serve you and our neighbors. Amen.*

