

..... **Daily Devotions**
Devotions – November 26 – December 2, 2017

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Sunday, November 26, 2017

Text: Psalm 68:24-26

Your solemn processions are seen, O God, the processions of my God, my King, into the sanctuary--the singers in front, the musicians last, between them girls playing tambourines: “Bless God in the great congregation, the Lord, O you who are of Israel’s fountain!”

This Sunday is sometimes celebrated as Christ the King Sunday.

We don’t have many kings today and their kingdoms are not the same as in the days of the Israelite kings. The Israelites begged God for a king to lead them and the followers of Jesus longed for him to show himself as king with powerful and majestic processions. I like not having a king, someone else ruling over my days, controlling my life.

But that’s really the point isn’t it. God’s kingdom is a kingdom of choice, not forced subjectivity. God chooses us as his children and we choose to be part of his heavenly kingdom. We choose to have Christ rule in our hearts and welcome the opportunity to work for his kingdom. I love that part of the baptismal service where we, the congregation of believers, welcome the newly baptized as a worker with us in the kingdom of God.

Martin Luther adds this explanation:

We cannot say “My God and my King” unless we regard God with the eyes of faith, not only as a God, not only as a King, but as our God and our King, as the God and King of our salvation. Neither is it possible to recognize the ways and works of God in the absence of that faith. Faith renders Him my God and my King, and brings me to a realization that all my works are, after all, not mine but God’s.

Daily Readings from Luther’s Writings (p 333).

Let us pray: *Teach me Lord to be a joyful worker in your kingdom. Ride on King Jesus and may your kingdom come, soon. Amen.*



Monday, November 27, 2017

Text: John 6:11

Then Jesus took the loaves, and when he had given thanks, he distributed them to those who were seated; so also the fish, as much as they wanted.

I love having leftovers. Thanksgiving is one of those times I get to enjoy leftovers from a family celebration meal for days. Linger in Thanksgiving, not only the favorite dishes prepared and shared, but also the time spent purposefully bringing to mind all of my blessings and being grateful to God for them.

Familiar readings from all the gospels describe Jesus giving thanks and there seems to be a pattern. Jesus receives blessings – he is open to recognize and receive what is given to him. In this reading, he takes the loaves, gathers the fish, breaks the bread and gives thanks. Acknowledging the source of all gifts and blessings is the practice of thanks-giving. And each time this happens, Jesus continues with sharing these blessings – giving the gifts away. Receive, give thanks and share. Not just the seasonal turkey and trimmings, but the cup of blessings that each of us has, because this cup is full and running over.

Let us pray: *Gracious God, help me to linger in the thanks-giving of this season. Help me recognize you, the very source of every good gift and then show me how to share these gifts for the good of all your children. Amen.*



Tuesday, November 28, 2017

Text: Romans 1:1, 7-8

¹Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God...⁷To all God's beloved in Rome, who are called to be saints: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. ⁸First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for all of you, because your faith is proclaimed throughout the world.

“When I grow up I want to be just like _____.” Have you ever said or thought something like that? Although I’ve been considered grown up for many years, I still hope to grow up more. Today, I’m longing for an attitude of gratitude, perhaps more like the apostle Paul.

Many of Paul’s letters to early Christians begin with a similar greeting that includes words of thanksgiving to God for the work, lives, teachings and offerings of these believers. An attitude of gratitude takes practice and just a little bit of time to pause and reflect.

Some people take the time to keep a daily journal that includes intentional recognition of the blessings in their lives and prayers of thanks to God for them. In this way, thanksgiving can become a daily practice, not just the focus of one day set apart between hunting season and holiday celebrations. God blesses us each day in many ways and growing an attitude of gratitude begins as we open our eyes to recognize these gifts and give thanks.

Let us pray: *Today, heavenly Father I am thankful for the rain. It refreshes the earth and sustains life. Your love washes over me like rain and refreshes my heart with peace. Amen.*



Wednesday, November 29, 2017

Text: Mark 10:17-22

As he (Jesus) was setting out on a journey, a man ran up and knelt before him, and asked him, “Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?” Jesus said to him, “Why do you call me good? No one is good but God alone. You know the commandments: ‘You shall not murder; You shall not commit adultery; You shall not steal; You shall not bear false witness; You shall not defraud; Honor your father and mother.’” He said to him, “Teacher. I have kept all these since my youth.” Jesus, looking at him, loved him and said, “You lack one thing; go sell what you own, and give the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; then come, follow me.” When he heard this, he was shocked and went away grieving, for he had many possessions.

Most of us have too much stuff. Caring for all our possessions takes our time, energy and attention. This conversation between Jesus and a rich man puts the problem of possessions in perspective.

The man is checking off his “to do” list for salvation. He has learned the commandments, kept them from a young age and is now eager to do whatever else it takes to inherit eternal life. Jesus sees this man’s heart and tells him the good news and the bad news. The good news: you can follow Jesus into the kingdom of God with nothing. The bad news: you can follow Jesus into the kingdom of God with nothing. Hands clasped around stuff cannot be open to following Jesus.

Let us pray: *Good and gracious God, all of the things we call our own are gifts from you. Give us wisdom to use our possessions wisely so they may become a blessing through our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.*



Thursday, November 30, 2017

Text: Luke 10:38-42

Now as they went on their way, he (Jesus) entered a certain village, where a woman named Martha welcomed him into her home. She had a sister named Mary, who sat at the Lord’s feet and listened to what he was saying. But Martha was distracted by her many tasks; so she came to him and asked, “Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me to do all the work by myself? Tell her then to help me.” But the Lord answered her, “Martha, Martha,

you are worried and distracted by many things; there is need of only one thing. Mary has chosen the better part, which will not be taken away from her.”

It's easy for me to sympathize with Martha. When we have company, I plan and scurry around for days, making sure we have a place for our guests to sleep, the right foods for them to eat, all the creature comforts they could possibly want. And usually in the midst of these preparations I become so distracted and exhausted that it is really hard to enjoy the wonderful visit we had planned.

We are just around the corner from holiday celebrations with family and friends. It can be so easy to get caught up in the busyness, preparations and activities that we really miss what is important. Perhaps Jesus' words to Martha in this reading, are also for us, "...you are worried and distracted by so many things, there is need of only one thing..."

Let us pray: Precious Savior, we will soon celebrate your coming into our midst. Help us choose the better part, knowing this will not be taken from us. Amen.



Friday, December 1, 2017

Text: Colossians 3:12-15

As God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience. Bear with one another and, if anyone has a complaint against another, forgive each other; just as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in the one body. And be thankful.

Paul's words to the Christians in Colossae could have been written to us today. I don't know what had happened or what Paul had heard about the group of believers in this city, but it prompted him to remind them that as God's chosen ones and followers of Christ, they needed to treat each other differently. If he was writing to a group of children, he may have said, "Go play nice together." But his words are for us. Bear with one another, forgive one another; life works better that way and things get done.

I've been reading a book by Desmond and Mpho Tutu, *The Book of Forgiving*. It begins by encouraging the reader to find a medium size stone that will fit easily in your hand and then carry it in your non-dominant hand for about six hours one morning. There's more to it than that, but you get the idea. Carrying around unforgiven hurts is a burden; just like this stone and it gets in the way of accomplishing the tasks we are called to do.

Paul's words to the Colossians are words to us: forgive as quickly and completely as the Master forgave you. And regardless of what else you put on, wear love.

Let us pray: *All knowing God, I thank you for your Holy Word. It speaks to me with freshness and conviction for this very day. Even when I want it to be intended for someone else, it speaks to me. Amen*



Saturday, December 2, 2017

Text: Romans 8:35-39

Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will hardship, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written,

“For your sake we are being killed all day long; we are accounted as sheep to be slaughtered.”

No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Some of our family members are dealing with difficult issues right now; sickness, suffering and unemployment. As I look around me and listen to my friends, I realize my family is not unique. People are suffering everywhere. One of the worst hurricane seasons on record has left people homeless and suffering still, months after the initial destruction. These troubles may be likened to those experienced by the early church in Rome who heard Paul's words. We can find comfort and strength in them, just as those early Christians did.

Lately, on my way to work in the morning, the radio station has played a song by Zach Williams. The refrain comes back to me throughout the day and I am thankful for the catchy tune and encouraging lyrics. Old Church Choir has verses with words like, “singing in my soul”, “heart overflowing ‘cause it’s been restored”, “sweet salvation and it’s beautiful.” But it is the refrain that sticks with me, “there ain’t nothin’ gonna steal my joy!” It’s not the shallow, sugar coated mask of “happiness” I see in some people I encounter. For me, it is the deep joy that comes in the presence of Jesus, walking through the daily troubles in life with me, and knowing that nothing can steal away the joy that brings.

Let us pray: *Jesus, my strength and my salvation, thank you for giving me joy on this journey of life. There will be trials and troubles for sure, but you will be with me through all things. I rest in your peaceful presence knowing there is nothing that will steal away the joy you give. Amen.*

