

..... Daily Devotions

June 24-30, 2018

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Sunday, June 24, 2018

Text: Acts 22:14-18

Then he said, 'The God of our ancestors has chosen you to know his will, to see the Righteous One and to hear his own voice; for you will be his witness to all the world of what you have seen and heard. And now why do you delay? Get up, be baptized, and have your sins washed away, calling on his name.'

The Affirmation of Baptism, used for confirmations, new member receptions, and other occasions that focus on baptism's call to discipleship, poses the question, "Do you intend to continue in the covenant God made with you in holy baptism?" This is followed by five intentions we are asked to assent to: *to live among God's faithful people, to hear the word of God and share in the Lord's supper, to proclaim the good news of God in Christ through word and deed, to serve all people, following the example of Jesus, and to strive for justice and peace in all the earth?*

Notice that these five intentions are marked by five verbs. We are asked to LIVE, HEAR, PROCLAIM, SERVE and STRIVE. In other words, baptism isn't just about what we are to BE, but what we are to DO. Baptism's call to discipleship is about living out our baptism in active doing. Baptism offers us cleansing and renewal that sets us right with God, but also grants us the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit who empowers us to live out our baptism in faithfulness to God.

In this week's devotional messages, I will be focusing on one of the intentions mentioned above, namely, "To PROCLAIM the good news of God in Christ through word and deed." For today, meditate on the proclamation you heard in worship and how you might witness to it as your worship moves you out into the world this week.

Let us pray: *Lord, help us to be faithful to baptism's call to discipleship. Show us how we can translate the good news of Christ we have heard this day into witness that might touch the lives of others this week. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.*



Monday, June 25, 2018

"To proclaim the good news of God in Christ through word and deed."

Text: 2 Timothy 1:5

I am reminded of your sincere faith, a faith that lived first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice and now, I am sure, lives in you.

In this week's devotional messages, I will be suggesting some ways we can "proclaim the good news of God in Christ" in our daily lives. I would suggest that our proclamation begin in the home.

Over the years I have heard it said by a number of parents, primarily those not connected to a church, that they didn't want to impose a particular belief or religion on their children. They wanted to let them choose for themselves when they grew up. In reality, the greatest joy in my life is knowing that I am a child of God; that my heavenly Father loves me so much that he sent his own dear Son to earth to be my Savior, to die on a cross so that God can exercise grace-filled love to me and not hold my sins against me; that God has given me his Spirit to be my friend and guide through life and give me faith by which I can live as a redeemed child of God in this life and in heaven to come. If I had not had parents who chose to pass the faith on to me, who brought me to the baptismal font and made good on their baptismal promises to bring me to services of worship, provide for my Christian education, place in my hands the Holy Scriptures, and make it possible for me to live in communion with the church, I would probably not be a person of faith writing these devotions. Going to church every Sunday was not an option, it was a habit. They saw to it that I went regularly to Sunday School, confirmation and church youth activities. At home, we said grace at every meal and bedtime prayers. They modeled active participation in church programs and ministries, and faithful stewardship. I thank God that I had faithful Christian parents who, by word and deed, proclaimed the good news to me in the home.

Let us pray: *Heavenly Father, thank you for faithful parents who choose to bring up their children in the faith, that the good news of your love for us in Christ your Son is passed down from generation to generation. Bless parents in their Christian witness. Amen.*



Tuesday, June 26, 2018

"To proclaim the good news of God in Christ through word and deed."

Text: Acts 2:38-42

Peter said to them, "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ so that your sins may be forgiven; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is for you, for your children, and for all who are far away, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to him." And he testified with many other arguments and exhorted them, saying, "Save yourselves from this corrupt generation." So those who welcomed his message were baptized,

and that day about three thousand persons were added. They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.

Our proclamation that begins in the home is strengthened in the church.

Earlier this year I worshiped at a church in a suburb of Milwaukee. The pastor announced the death of a man named Ken who with his wife, Wilma, were the last living charter members of that congregation. In making the announcement the pastor shared the following story: It was Ash Wednesday at the 6:00 service. She was standing in the center aisle administering the imposition of ashes to the congregants. Next in line was Wilma who was there without Ken. Since they always sat in the last pew on the left, the pastor asked, "Where is Ken. Is he in the back?" Wilma replied, "No, he's gone." Seeing the confused look on the pastor's face, Wilma clarified, "Ken died." In fact, Wilma had just come from the hospital. The pastor said Wilma had three things she needed to do upon her husband's death: go to church and tell her pastor, receive Communion and have the sign of the cross placed on her forehead with ashes. This was the natural expression of faith of one who has heard the word of God proclaimed to her in church throughout her life and who, in so many ways, proclaimed the word herself in words and actions.

It is so important for us to remain connected to our church family where we hear the good news proclaimed so we can be better equipped to proclaim it elsewhere.

Let us pray: *Lord, help us to value our relationship with the church where we hear your word proclaimed in hymns and liturgy, in sermons, and in the faith-sharing of our fellow members. Let this be the springboard of our witnessing to others. Amen.*



Wednesday, June 27, 2018

"To proclaim the good news of God in Christ through word and deed."

Text: Psalm 145:4-7

***One generation shall laud your works to another,
and shall declare your mighty acts.***

***On the glorious splendor of your majesty,
and on your wondrous works, I will meditate.***

***The might of your awesome deeds shall be proclaimed,
and I will declare your greatness.***

***They shall celebrate the fame of your abundant goodness,
and shall sing aloud of your righteousness.***

Our proclamation can take place in the workplace.

During my first summer in seminary I worked at Dayton Department Store's warehouse in Minneapolis. A co-worker was a college student who was a Baptist. On a particular Friday, the day we got our paychecks, I noticed him using a pocket calculator and writing on a notepad during our lunch break. I asked what he was doing. He said he was figuring out how he was going to divide up his paycheck—how much he needed to pay bills, how much he would put in savings, and so on. Then, without even looking up or stopping his figuring, he said, "Of course, the first 10% goes to the Lord."

That made a real impression on me. I understood tithing, but it was the natural way of his making a witness to his belief that God is the source of all that he has and, therefore, God has top priority in all things in his life that impressed me. We, too, can look for opportunities to make a quiet and unpretentious witness to what God has done and is doing in our lives in the work place, or in school, or on the sports field.

Let us pray: *Dear God, let your word so dwell in us—in our hearts and on our lips—that we will be ready to make a spontaneous witness to the central place you occupy in our lives. Amen.*



Thursday, June 28, 2018

"To proclaim the good news of God in Christ through word and deed."

Text: 1 Peter 3:15

"Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect."

Our proclamation can take place in the community.

When I was growing up I often heard it said that there are two things one shouldn't talk about in public: religion and politics. I am convinced that this statement is conditioned by people who, in talking about either religion or politics, do so in an argumentative manner and with the intention of converting others to their way of thinking. I am equally convinced that both religion and politics have a place in public discourse, but in a non-offensive way that simply gives witness to what one believes and has meaning for oneself, while, at the same time, shows respect for what others think or believe. As we read in 1 Peter 3:15, *"Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect."*

I also think it is important that our politics are informed by our faith and not based simply on party allegiance or personal bias. For this to happen we need to be acquainted with the teachings and examples of Jesus. Spend some time reading the Gospels and notice who Jesus reached out to, spent time with and advocated for. Not the elite, the wealthy, the power structure, but the poor, the downtrodden, the disenfranchised, those pushed to the margins of society, those deemed unacceptable and unwelcome.

Read the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5-7. See how Jesus turned social standards and societal attitudes upside down. Read Jesus' inaugural address in Luke 4 where he applies the prophetic words of Isaiah to himself, declaring: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor."

Let us pray: *Lord of all, give us a voice in our social contacts and community involvement that courageously and sensitively reflects your heart of grace, compassion and inclusivity. Amen.*



Friday, June 29, 2018

"To proclaim the good news of God in Christ through word and deed."

Text: 1 Timothy 4:4-6

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. If you put these instructions before the brothers and sisters, you will be a good servant of Christ Jesus, nourished on the words of the faith and of the sound teaching that you have followed.

Opportunities for proclamation of the good news are provided by today's social media.

But with the opportunity comes responsibility. With smart phones and Twitter and other forms of media, everyone's opinions and viewpoints can be put out there for others to read and hear. With that freedom of communication, we get "the good, the bad, and the ugly."

Many of us are on Facebook where we like to tell our stories. We want our friends and acquaintances to know about what's going on in our lives, what makes us happy, what challenges or struggles we face, what successes we've had. Consider how you can use Facebook and other social media resources to "proclaim the good news of God in Christ". For example, on Monday's postings about recreation or entertainment you pursued on the weekend, suppose you include a comment about the worship service you attended, such as a hymn or choir anthem that moved you, or something said in a sermon that inspired you. Sharing photos and

comments about holiday gatherings and activities could include Christmas or Easter worship celebrations and their meaning for you. You could witness to how you experienced God's glory, grace or presence in the beauty of nature on a trip, or recovery from an illness, or forgiveness that reconciled a broken relationship. What wonderful opportunities social media offer for proclaiming good news in a world where we are continually being bombarded with bad news.

Let us pray: *Lord of life, open our hearts and minds to the opportunities social media afford us to proclaim the good news of your love for us, others and the world in Jesus our Lord. Show us how we can use the technologies at our hands in ways that can make a positive witness. Amen*



Saturday, June 30, 2018

“To proclaim the good news of God in Christ through word and deed.”

Text: 1 John 1:1-4

We declare to you what was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we have looked at and touched with our hands, concerning the word of life—this life was revealed, and we have seen it and testify to it, and declare to you the eternal life that was with the Father and was revealed to us-- we declare to you what we have seen and heard so that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ. We are writing these things so that our joy may be complete.

As we bring to a close this week's devotions on the theme of proclamation based on the above directive in the Affirmation of Baptism, we would do well to consider the advice of the Apostle Paul, arguably the greatest Christian witness, the greatest proclaimer of the good news of God in Jesus Christ.

In the book of Acts, Paul tells the story of his dramatic conversion when he met the risen Christ in a blinding light on the road to Damascus. Paul is a key figure in Acts, not just because God used him so effectively to witness to Jesus the Christ, or because of the remarkable things that happened to him in that journey, but primarily because Paul shared his story in writing as well as in preaching and personal witness.

How can we tell and put into action our story, the story of how God has acted in our lives in grace-filled ways? Paul, himself, gives us some helpful suggestions in his letter to the Romans (12:9-13). “Let love be genuine; hate what is evil, hold fast to what is good; love one another with mutual affection; outdo one another in showing honor. Do not lag in zeal, be ardent in spirit, serve the Lord. Rejoice in hope, be patient in suffering, persevere in prayer. Contribute to the needs of the saints; extend hospitality to strangers.”

These are good examples of how we can “PROCLAIM the good news of God in Christ through word and deed.”

Let us pray: *Gracious God, use us to be proclaimers of the good news of God in Christ through word and deed. Show us how we can tell our own stories of how your love for us in Christ Jesus has impacted our lives. Let our words and deeds be good news to others. In Jesus’ name we pray. Amen*

