

Devotions – August 12-18, 2018

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Sunday, August 12, 2018

Text: Ephesians 4:25-5:2

25 So then, putting away falsehood, let all of us speak the truth to our neighbors, for we are members of one another. ²⁶Be angry but do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, ²⁷and do not make room for the devil. ²⁸Thieves must give up stealing; rather let them labor and work honestly with their own hands, so as to have something to share with the needy. ²⁹Let no evil talk come out of your mouths, but only what is useful for building up, as there is need, so that your words may give grace to those who hear. ³⁰And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with which you were marked with a seal for the day of redemption. ³¹Put away from you all bitterness and wrath and anger and wrangling and slander, together with all malice, ³²and be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ has forgiven you. ⁵¹Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children, ²and live in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.

We are truly one Body. We belong to one another in a way that we cannot yet understand. I believe, this is more than a matter of cooperation. Our oneness is revealed in the forgiveness we extend to one another, a reflection of the complete forgiveness we have received in Jesus. When we ask to be able to forgive a sister, our lives become a fragrant sacrifice to God. What more could we want than to be God's grace to a sister or brother?

Let us pray: *Gracious God, your blessed Son came down from heaven to be the true bread that gives life to the world. Give us this bread always, that He may live in us and we in Him, and that, strengthened by this food, we may live as His body in the world, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen.*



Monday, August 13, 2018

Text: 1 Kings 17:1-6

Now Elijah the Tishbite, of Tishbe in Gilead, said to Ahab, ‘As the LORD the God of Israel lives, before whom I stand, there shall be neither dew nor rain these years, except by my word.’ ²The word of the LORD came to him, saying, ³‘Go from here and turn eastwards, and hide yourself by the Wadi Cherith, which is east of the Jordan. ⁴You shall drink from the wadi, and I have commanded the ravens to feed you there.’ ⁵So he went and did according to the word of the LORD; he went and lived by the Wadi Cherith, which is east of

the Jordan. ⁶The ravens brought him bread and meat in the morning, and bread and meat in the evening; and he drank from the wadi.

YHWH commands Elijah to go to Zarephath to find a widow whom God has appointed to minister to Elijah through a drought and famine. When Elijah finds the widow, she has no idea who Elijah is, she has no food and she plans to return home to die with her son. The widow had not heard a word from YHWH. God's call does not come through visions and voices. The widow's heart, somehow, trusted in the words of Elijah. The faith that is in our hearts is our response to the Father's call. Our faith is a gift of the Spirit that draws us toward the Father through the life of His Son Jesus Christ.

Let us pray: *Creator of all, create in us each day a yearning spirit that longs to hear your word, seek your guidance, and receive your good gifts. May we never give you any concern about our stubborn hearts and meandering ways. In Jesus's name we pray. Amen.*



Tuesday, August 14, 2018

Text: Ephesians 4:25-5:2

25 So then, putting away falsehood, let all of us speak the truth to our neighbors, for we are members of one another. ²⁶Be angry but do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, ²⁷and do not make room for the devil. ²⁸Thieves must give up stealing; rather let them labor and work honestly with their own hands, so as to have something to share with the needy. ²⁹Let no evil talk come out of your mouths, but only what is useful for building up, as there is need, so that your words may give grace to those who hear. ³⁰And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with which you were marked with a seal for the day of redemption. ³¹Put away from you all bitterness and wrath and anger and wrangling and slander, together with all malice, ³²and be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ has forgiven you. ⁵¹Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children, ²and live in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.

Putting away anger is an impossible task. Betraying the violence of my heart eats at me and my mind demands justice from the people who offend me. We cannot put away anger on our own. It will come back as self-righteousness or pride or some other perversion of the heart. Putting away anger as a matter of law fails, but we have died to the law. The Spirit will remove our hurt. In my own life, I take a little oil mixed with frankincense and myrrh, mark myself with a cross and hold up my enemy in prayer. The oil becomes the touch of our Father's grace. There is nothing I can do with my anger but turn to God in prayer. The healing of Jesus begins to work in me and the Spirit turns my anger into a prayer of compassion.

Let us pray: *Source of all wisdom, help us to grow in grace and peace. Despite the troubles of this world and everything which we do not understand and cannot accept, turn our attention to your glory and love revealed in Jesus Christ. In His most holy name we pray. Amen.*



Wednesday, August 15, 2018

Text: John 6:35-40

35 Jesus said to them, ‘I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty. ³⁶But I said to you that you have seen me and yet do not believe. ³⁷Everything that the Father gives me will come to me, and anyone who comes to me I will never drive away; ³⁸for I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will, but the will of him who sent me. ³⁹And this is the will of him who sent me, that I should lose nothing of all that he has given me, but raise it up on the last day. ⁴⁰This is indeed the will of my Father, that all who see the Son and believe in him may have eternal life; and I will raise them up on the last day.’

The Father has given all of us, every sister and brother, to the Son, and Jesus promises that we will not be lost. We cannot be lost, for nothing can defeat the will of God. In Jesus, we have a sure and certain hope. The promise we hear from our Savior carries us in our daily life by revealing to us the share we have in the life of our God, Father and Son and Holy Spirit. We will be, and are now in ways we do not understand, participants in the eternal love that is what God is. The faith and love in your heart is the life of God.

Let us pray: *Almighty God, grant us grace to receive the life of your Word in humility, and so to be made one with your Son, Jesus Christ our Savior, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.*



Thursday, August 16, 2018

Text: Job 11:1-20

Then Zophar the Naamathite answered:

² ‘Should a multitude of words go unanswered,
and should one full of talk be vindicated?

³ Should your babble put others to silence,
and when you mock, shall no one shame you?

**4 For you say, “My conduct is pure,
and I am clean in God’s sight.”
5 But O that God would speak,
and open his lips to you,
6 and that he would tell you the secrets of wisdom!
For wisdom is many-sided.
Know then that God exacts of you less than your guilt deserves.**

**7 ‘Can you find out the deep things of God?
Can you find out the limit of the Almighty?
8 It is higher than heaven—what can you do?
Deeper than Sheol—what can you know?
9 Its measure is longer than the earth,
and broader than the sea.
10 If he passes through, and imprisons,
and assembles for judgement, who can hinder him?
11 For he knows those who are worthless;
when he sees iniquity, will he not consider it?
12 But a stupid person will get understanding,
when a wild ass is born human.**

**13 ‘If you direct your heart rightly,
you will stretch out your hands towards him.
14 If iniquity is in your hand, put it far away,
and do not let wickedness reside in your tents.
15 Surely then you will lift up your face without blemish;
you will be secure, and will not fear.
16 You will forget your misery;
you will remember it as waters that have passed away.
17 And your life will be brighter than the noonday;
its darkness will be like the morning.
18 And you will have confidence, because there is hope;
you will be protected and take your rest in safety.
19 You will lie down, and no one will make you afraid;
many will entreat your favor.
20 But the eyes of the wicked will fail;
all way of escape will be lost to them,
and their hope is to breathe their last.’**

It is strange that this reading is given without some comment in the Daily Revised Common Lectionary. Zophar’s words here are later rejected by God: “My wrath is kindled against you and against your two friends; for you have not spoken of me what is right, as my servant Job has” (Job 42:7). God does not pass sentence on us. We do not suffer because of our sins. Sin and suffering are mysteries we cannot fathom. The revealed judgment of the Father is the judgment of Jesus Christ for the woman accused of adultery: “Jesus straightened up and said to

her, ‘Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?’ She said, ‘No one, sir.’ And Jesus said, ‘Neither do I condemn you’” (John 8:10-11).

Let us pray: *God of hope, do not lose hope in us. Teach us to do good, seek peace, and pursue it. Open our hearts to listen to your teachings, shape our lives so we covet your guidance, and use our own voices to sing of your shalom. In the name of Jesus we pray. Amen.*



Friday, August 17, 2018

Text: Job 12:1-25

12 Then Job answered:

- ² ‘No doubt you are the people,
and wisdom will die with you.**
- ³ But I have understanding as well as you;
I am not inferior to you.
Who does not know such things as these?**
- ⁴ I am a laughing-stock to my friends;
I, who called upon God and he answered me,
a just and blameless man, I am a laughing-stock.**
- ⁵ Those at ease have contempt for misfortune,
but it is ready for those whose feet are unstable.**
- ⁶ The tents of robbers are at peace,
and those who provoke God are secure,
who bring their god in their hands.**
- ⁷ ‘But ask the animals, and they will teach you;
the birds of the air, and they will tell you;**
- ⁸ ask the plants of the earth, and they will teach you;
and the fish of the sea will declare to you.**
- ⁹ Who among all these does not know
that the hand of the LORD has done this?**
- ¹⁰ In his hand is the life of every living thing
and the breath of every human being.**
- ¹¹ Does not the ear test words
as the palate tastes food?**
- ¹² Is wisdom with the aged,
and understanding in length of days?**
- ¹³ ‘With God are wisdom and strength;
he has counsel and understanding.**
- ¹⁴ If he tears down, no one can rebuild;**

- if he shuts someone in, no one can open up.
- ¹⁵ **If he withholds the waters, they dry up;
if he sends them out, they overwhelm the land.**
- ¹⁶ **With him are strength and wisdom;
the deceived and the deceiver are his.**
- ¹⁷ **He leads counsellors away stripped,
and makes fools of judges.**
- ¹⁸ **He looses the sash of kings,
and binds a waistcloth on their loins.**
- ¹⁹ **He leads priests away stripped,
and overthrows the mighty.**
- ²⁰ **He deprives of speech those who are trusted,
and takes away the discernment of the elders.**
- ²¹ **He pours contempt on princes,
and looses the belt of the strong.**
- ²² **He uncovers the deeps out of darkness,
and brings deep darkness to light.**
- ²³ **He makes nations great, then destroys them;
he enlarges nations, then leads them away.**
- ²⁴ **He strips understanding from the leaders of the earth,
and makes them wander in a pathless waste.**
- ²⁵ **They grope in the dark without light;
he makes them stagger like a drunkard.**

The world and all of history are in the hands of our God. What that means for us is hard to see. As Job explains in his poetic way, God's logic is not the logic of the world. Those we take to be powerful and those we believe are righteous will not be exalted in God's time. Our understanding is darkness. The only light we have is the light of faith. In faith, we find that every life and every breath of every human being are noted by God. Somehow, with a logic we can only accept through the trust of faith, God molds history with a love we cannot comprehend.

Let us pray: *Eternal One, keep us alert to you and the love of Christ. Awaken our desire to please you and empower us to serve with joy. In Jesus's name we pray. Amen.*



Saturday, August 18, 2018

Text: Job 13:1-19

- ¹³ **Look, my eye has seen all this,
my ear has heard and understood it.**
- ² **What you know, I also know;
I am not inferior to you.**

- ³ But I would speak to the Almighty,
and I desire to argue my case with God.**
- ⁴ As for you, you whitewash with lies;
all of you are worthless physicians.**
- ⁵ If you would only keep silent,
that would be your wisdom!**
- ⁶ Hear now my reasoning,
and listen to the pleadings of my lips.**
- ⁷ Will you speak falsely for God,
and speak deceitfully for him?**
- ⁸ Will you show partiality towards him,
will you plead the case for God?**
- ⁹ Will it be well with you when he searches you out?
Or can you deceive him, as one person deceives another?**
- ¹⁰ He will surely rebuke you
if in secret you show partiality.**
- ¹¹ Will not his majesty terrify you,
and the dread of him fall upon you?**
- ¹² Your maxims are proverbs of ashes,
your defenses are defenses of clay.**
- ¹³ ‘Let me have silence, and I will speak,
and let come on me what may.**
- ¹⁴ I will take my flesh in my teeth,
and put my life in my hand.**
- ¹⁵ See, he will kill me; I have no hope;
but I will defend my ways to his face.**
- ¹⁶ This will be my salvation,
that the godless shall not come before him.**
- ¹⁷ Listen carefully to my words,
and let my declaration be in your ears.**
- ¹⁸ I have indeed prepared my case;
I know that I shall be vindicated.**
- ¹⁹ Who is there that will contend with me?
For then I would be silent and die.**

Job suffered terribly and wants to make a case before God against the unjust suffering Job endured. At the end of the Book of Job, God assures us that Job has spoken rightly about God rather than the ignorant defenders of God’s justice. Just and loving people are hurt by this world. The proper response to tragedy is not explanations and justifications of God, but humble silence and the offer of a listening ear. Our way is simply to love. God’s justice and love will be revealed on God’s time and in God’s way.

Let us pray: *Great wellspring, each of us cries out for the water that only you can give. We too are thirsty, seeking to quench our parched spirits. We too want to drink from your eternal water and be refreshed. In the holy name of Jesus we pray. Amen.*

Daily prayers are adapted from Bread for the Day: Daily Bible Readings and Prayers 2018 from Augsburg Fortress Press.

