

Devotions – September 1-7, 2019

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September 1, 2019

Text: Jeremiah 2:4-13

“ for my people have committed two evils; they have forsaken me, the fountain of living water, and have dug out cisterns for themselves, cracked cisterns that can hold no water.”

(Verse 13)

Depending upon where you live most of us receive our water in one of two ways, that is either by a municipal water system or by a well that is drilled or hammered. Growing in popularity is the use of a cistern to capture rainwater and store it for use when needed to help alleviate the stress placed upon our other systems due to drought. Wells go dry, the materials used in making storage tanks may crack or decay allowing them to drain. Our city water systems become antiquated posing health hazards that need to be tended to so disaster might be averted. We place great trust in our technologies, working hard to keep a fresh supply of water for our consumption.

Israel has broken the covenant. It chases after the gods of Canaan, throwing out the saving acts that God has done for them. They fail to recognize who the author of life is and seek the advice and security they feel they can find in idols. By forsaking God, trouble is going to follow them. The idols they worship will not be able to save them.

*We pray, God of our salvation, keep us steadfast in your love and strengthen us in following you alone trusting all that you have given us to be sufficient. Refresh us in your life-giving waters.
Amen*



September 2 2019

Text: 2 Chronicles 12:1-12

“Nevertheless they shall be his servants, so that they may know the difference between serving me and serving the kingdoms of other lands.” (Verse 8)

I had been given lengthy instructions as to the proper procedure for making what seemed like a fairly straight forward, easy repair to a motor. I looked at the piece that needed replacement and could see that it appeared to be right out in the open. The instructor had said that many pieces of plastic cowling and other parts would have to be removed first; that seemed to be a lot of unnecessary work. After struggling for hours, I finally relented, removing the pieces that I had been told to do and within no time the object part was removed, replaced and everything reassembled. The instructor watched with patience and kindness never saying a word.

I suspect that the lesson was better learned through my own failure and recognition, that the struggle was for my benefit.

King Rehoboam and all of Israel have abandoned the law of the Lord. Because of their unfaithfulness the king in Egypt is attacking them and winning handily. Just as Rehoboam is about to fall Shemaiah the prophet reminds him and his officers of their offense. They recognize that the Lord is correct and they humble, that is repent, themselves. God recognizes their humility and with mercy and compassion spares them for slaughter by the opposing army. Rehoboam learned where his life, his salvation comes from. When we turn to the Lord, we meet mercy face to face.

We pray, Most merciful God, when we stray from your tender care may we recognize that and humble ourselves before you, that turning toward you we find rest, peace, mercy and restoration. Amen



September 3, 2019

Text: Isaiah 2:12-17

“For the Lord of hosts has a day against all that is proud and lofty...” (Verse 12)

Meriam Webster offers up this definition for the word pride: delight or elation arising from some act, possession, or relationship; a reasonable or justifiable self-respect. Why then would God be angry with the proud found in Israel? By this definition I cannot see anything that would be damaging. If we pry a little deeper into Webster, we find another definition for pride: inordinate self-esteem such as conceit; disdainful behavior; ostentatious display. Now I see more clearly.

Gods’ people continue to rely on their own cunning. They turn from the Lord seeking advice from soothsayers and diviners. They display their riches with plentiful war machines, idols cast about everywhere. Once again, we turn to worshiping the works of our own hands. As before though people will be humbled, and the name of the Lord will be most high.

We pray, Almighty God, may our pride be in the saving grace of your almighty hand. Let our lives focus on you and your great works. Give us hearts full of joy in serving you and your creation for your sake. Amen.



September 4, 2019

Text: Psalm 119:65-72

“Before I was humbled I went astray, but now I keep your word.”

A few decades ago, a performer named Mac Davis had a hit song. Its' title and first line of the chorus was; "Oh Lord, it's hard to be humble when you're perfect in every way." This tune has been covered by other artists as well and I'm not quite sure why it is so popular. It sings of conceit; how great one looks. It sings the glory of being a loner as it makes you stand out above others, and concludes that "he is doing the best that I can." Being in a relationship with oneself must be tiring and unsatisfying. Surely, we can do better.

The psalmist reassures us that it is much better to trust in the Lord than to focus on self. When we establish our relationship with the Lord, we are able to hang onto the Word. We begin to embrace God's precepts. Knowledge of God's commandments, God's vision, lead to a better understanding of our relationship with all of creation and call us to return to the Lord with our whole heart. All of this is better than the riches the world has to offer and the foolishness of our pride.

We pray, Loving creator God, you fill our hearts with your law and unending love that we might fully appreciate the salvation that you give to us. Keep us free from deceit and conceit, that growing in your love and word we find harmony with all that surrounds us. May our focus remain on you and service to others for Jesus' sake. Amen.



September 5, 2019

Text: Genesis 39:1-23

"But the Lord was with Joseph and showed him steadfast love; he gave him favor in the sight of the chief jailer." (Verse 21)

Events like these could certainly make you question your life. Sold into slavery by his brothers, Joseph found favor with his master. Eventually the master gave control of the household over to him. Life is good, right? Well not so fast. The master's wife decided she wanted Joseph but he would not give in to her requests. In turn then she falsely accused him of having his way with her, infuriating her husband who then throws Joseph into jail. What is a good guy to do? Seems like when he does the right things trouble finds him.

At times it might seem like the whole world is against us. We try to do the right thing always, yet disaster can pop up at any moment. We can feel that we are not loved or cared for and that life is just not fair. It is easy in these moments to lose hope, giving in to the deceptions that can surround us. Joseph never lost his faith in God or God's faithfulness to him and us. He remained focused on God and the vision that God had for the world. Indeed, God uses us in strange ways.

We pray, God of power and might, your steadfast love and faithfulness endure from age to age. Keep us mindful that you will remain with us always, keeping us in your gentle embrace. May we remain steadfast in our love for you, trusting that you will guide us in all things. Amen



September 6, 2019

Text: Deuteronomy 8:11-18

“Do not say to yourself, “My power and the might of my own hand have gotten me this wealth.” (Verse 17)

A common theme about life in these United States is that we merely need to pick ourselves up by our bootstraps and go out and make something of ourselves. Somehow by our own individual efforts we can become wealthy and successful. This is the stuff that drives people to immigrate to this country. Some come to flee from danger and oppressive governments, yet an underlying factor is the economic opportunity that awaits them. Hard work and stick-to-it-ness will bring success. I do not doubt that hard work does indeed pay off. I also understand the value of an education, the prep work that helps us to become skilled in whatever task we choose to follow. The bottom line is that we need not forget where our skills come from. The creator who loves us beyond our understanding has gifted each and every one of us with a special talent and it is his good pleasure that we all succeed.

We pray, God of all creation; we give you our thanks and praise for the life that you have given us in Jesus Christ our Lord. In all that we do may we reflect your saving grace and your glory. Let our witness be to the salvation that you granted us and acknowledge that our strength comes through you, through Christ our Lord. Amen



September 7, 2019

Text: Matthew 10:32-42

“Everyone therefore who acknowledges me before others, I also will acknowledge before my Father in heaven.”

This section of Matthew reminds us that there is no middle ground when it comes to following Jesus. The call to follow will be dangerous, both politically and socially. Jesus came to turn things around or upside down, depending on your point of view, that the status quo is no longer acceptable. Making a decision for or against Jesus is a decision for life or death before God. So we need to examine ourselves as to what might keep us from acknowledging Jesus before others. Is it that our politics might not line up perfectly with Jesus' teachings, are we afraid that it might be offensive to someone at work? Do we find that it places too much stress on family relationships, or does it interfere with our leisure time? Perhaps it is our own pride or boastfulness that get in the way. Remember though that when we humble ourselves, turn to God

seeking his goodness and mercy that we discover that our sins, whatever they might be, are forgiven, that we might have a right relationship with God through our Savior Jesus the Christ.

We pray, Almighty and merciful God; you formed us out of the dust of this earth and breathed life into us. You walked among us that we might see the love that you have for all of creation. In your goodness and mercy, you do not abandon us when we carelessly take credit for all that you do or when we chase after other idols. You grant us forgiveness that we might have a right relationship with you and creation. May our voices remain strong as we proclaim your holy name throughout all the lands. We look for your almighty hand in all that we do in Jesus' name. Amen

