

Devotions – February 9-15, 2020

By Christine Ebert

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Sunday, February 9, 2020

Light for Our Darkness: The Epiphany Season

Text: Jeremiah 29:11 and 30:22

I know the plans I have for you, declared the Lord. They are plans for good and not for evil to give you hope and a future.

So you will be my people and I will be your God.

Blaise Pascal [1623-1662], French mathematician, physicist and theologian wrote, “There is a God-shaped vacuum in the heart of every person and it can never be filled with any created thing. It can only be filled by God, made known through Jesus Christ.” Indeed, we do seek God wherever we can, trusting that we truly are his people and our lives are in his keeping.

We pray: *Accept, O Lord, our praise and thanksgiving for your creation, your love, and your care for us. In all things, you are our hope and salvation for the church and the world. Amen*



Monday, February 10, 2020

Text: Isaiah 59:9-10,14-15

So justice is far from us and righteousness does not reach us. We look for light, but all is darkness; for brightness, but we walk in deep shadows. Like the blind, we grope along the wall, feeling our way like men without eyes. At midday, we stumble as if it were twilight; among the strong, we are like the dead. ... So justice is driven back and righteousness stands at a distance; truth has stumbled in the streets, honesty cannot enter. Truth is nowhere to be found, and whoever shuns evil becomes a prey.

Despite the gloominess of this passage, I am always inspired by the poetry of Isaiah and how it can speak to both the conditions at the time it was written as well as those in contemporary times. This passage could describe many moments in human history – countless wars, slavery and many examples of our inhumanity as well as the darkness of grief, loss, addiction, poverty, hopelessness, broken relationships, loneliness, discrimination, persecution, etc. Some may find it relevant at this point in our time.

Interestingly, Helen Keller wrote, “Unless we form the habit to going to the Bible in bright moments as well as in trouble, we cannot fully respond to its consolations because we lack the

equilibrium between light and darkness.” And thus, in contrast we also have this promise, “Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness but will have the light of life.” Jesus is the “light from God” – a beacon in a dark world that lights our way and shows us how to live in God’s light.

We pray: *Most Gracious and loving God, be with us in these dark and troubled times when truth and justice seem far away and hard to find. Enable us to discern your will and strengthen our resolve to seek and live out your truth and justice. Console us Lord, so that even in the darkness we may perceive your light and serve as messengers of love and hope to all in need. Amen*



Tuesday, February 11, 2020

Text: Romans 3:21-24

But now a righteousness from God, apart from law, has been made known to which the Law and the Prophets testify. This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus.

This passage continues to reiterate the central theme of Romans - that although no one is righteous (all are sinners) or can become righteous by observing the law, God will declare everyone who puts his/her trust in Jesus as righteous (not guilty). Through his death on the cross, Christ paid the penalty for our sins and lived a life of perfect righteousness. Thus, we are freely justified by God’s grace, i.e. given a gift we did nothing to deserve. The question for our lives is how do we use this amazing gift?

We pray: *Good and gracious God, we offer our thanks for all our many blessings but especially for the gift of your Son, Jesus, our Lord and Savior who paid the price for our sins. May the Holy Spirit guide us to live lives of grace and generosity to all. Amen*



Wednesday, February 12, 2020

Text: Romans 5: 1-5

Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God. Not only so, but we also rejoice in

our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; and perseverance, character; and character, hope. And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us.

In this sequence, Paul describes our new relationship with God, which has only been made possible by Jesus who serves as our ambassador to God. We rejoice in this new relationship – the curtain in the temple has been removed and our “hope of the glory of God” provides assurance that the purpose to which we were created may be realized. In the second part of the sequence we find the implications that facing adversity produces the ability to persevere, and perseverance produces character, and ultimately, character produces hope. And finally, our hope is not unfounded optimism but revealed to us through the Holy Spirit and objectively demonstrated by Christ’s death and resurrection.

We pray: *Heavenly Father, we thank you for sending your Son into the world to be with us, to teach us, to lead us to understanding and by his example to demonstrate perseverance, patience and forgiveness. May we be ever mindful of Jesus’ teachings and strive to follow his example in our lives. Amen.*



Thursday, February 13, 2020

Text: Lindisfarne Gospel via the Anglican Digest

We are not citizens of this world trying to make our way to heaven; we are citizens of heaven trying to make our way in this world...We are not to live so as to earn God’s love, inherit heaven and purchase our salvation. All those are given to us as gifts; gifts bought by Jesus on the cross and handed over to us. We are to live as God’s redeemed, as heirs of heaven, and as citizens of another land: the Kingdom of God. ...

We live as those who are on a journey home, a home we know will have the lights on and the door open and our Father waiting for us when we arrive. That means in all adversity, our worship of God is joyful, our life is hopeful, our future is secure. There is nothing we can lose on earth that can rob us of the treasures God has given us.

The *Lindisfarne Gospels* were written and illuminated in the north-east of England at the very end of the 7th century by St. Cuthbert and Eadfrith, both of whom were bishops of Lindisfarne. Lindisfarne, called Holy Island, lies just off the coast of Northumberland, a few miles south of the modern Scottish border. The manuscript contains the texts of the four gospels in the Latin version revised in the 4th century by St. Jerome. Clearly this passage via the Anglican digest is a much more contemporary interpretation. However, the message provides both the magnitude of God’s love and gift to us – something we could never earn, can never replay, and hopefully never lose - as well as the comforting image of our Father waiting to welcome us to our heavenly home.

We pray: *Heavenly Father, may we always be mindful of your love and the gift of your Son, Jesus Christ, whose teachings serve as a beacon to guide us in our life and light our way home.*



Friday, February 14, 2020

Text: Romans 13: 8-10

Let no debt remain outstanding, except the continuing debt to love one another, for he who loves his fellowman has fulfilled the law. The commandments, “Do not commit adultery,” “Do not murder,” “Do not steal,” “Do not covet,” and whatever other commandments there may be are summed up in this one rule: “Love your neighbor as yourself.” Love does no harm to its neighbor. Therefore love is the fulfillment of the law.

On this one day, when the whole world is focused on expressing love, may we focus on the most spectacular expression of love – God sending his Son to suffer and die on the cross for our sins. Mother Teresa also wrote about love in a way that captures our society today. “Never has the world had a greater need for love than in our day. People are hungry for love. We don’t even have time to stop and smile at each other. We are all in such a hurry. Pray! Ask for the necessary grace. Pray to be able to understand how much Jesus loved us, so that you can love others.”

We pray: *Yes Lord, we thank you for the greatest gift of Love, your Son, Jesus Christ who inspires us to love one another in all things – and especially to love our neighbors as you have loved us. And let us truly take the time to smile at everyone we meet and share God’s love. Amen*



Saturday, February 15, 2020

Text: Matthew 25:34-40

Then the King will say to those on his right, “Come you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.’ “Then the righteous will answer him, ‘Lord when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?’ “The King will reply, ‘I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me.’

In her book, *Holy Envy*, Barbara Brown Taylor references this passage from Matthew. In the separating of the sheep from the goats (she would hope metaphorically), she suggests that neither group recognized the king in his various disguises and thus could not treat him as their king. She writes, “The sheep were as surprised to learn they had done something right as the goats to learn they had done something wrong. The only thing that set them apart in the end was that half of them had made a habit of treating everyone they met with kindness and respect – even the ungrateful ones, even the ones that scared them and that made all the difference.”

We pray: *Through your Holy Spirit, enable us to care for the sick, feed and clothe those in need, give comfort to those in prison, stand with those who are persecuted, and speak Your truth each day. Amen*

