

Devotions – March 15-21, 2020

By Ken Raisanen

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Sunday, March 15, 2020

Text: Luke 20:21-25

They asked him, “Teacher, we know that you are right in what you say and teach: You are partial to no one but teach the way of God sincerely. Is it lawful for us to pay tribute to Caesar or not?” Well aware of their trickery, he said to them, “Show me a coin. Whose likeness and inscription does it bear?” They said, “Caesar’s.” He said to them, “Then pay to Caesar what belongs to Caesar and to God what belongs to God.”

When Jesus tells them to *pay to God what belongs to God*, I don’t equate this with just money, but also the time and talents that the Lord has given us. This passage always reminds me of a phone call I got when my wife and I had recently returned to town. A fellow member of our church called me and said, “My term on the church council is ending and I think you would be the person to replace me.” I gave him the standard replies many hear when seeking volunteers: “Gee Waino, I have never been on a church council before, my wife is pregnant, I have a full-time job, etc. etc. etc.” Waino listened and then ended our conversation with a simple, “Yes, but I know you will do a good job.” This was in the fall of 1980, and in the forty years since, I have been privileged to serve ten – three-year terms, many as the council president. When God asks us to serve, it is our duty to answer. When we are reluctant, I thank God for people like Waino who don’t take ‘no’ for the final answer.

Let us pray: *God bless all who answer the call to serve his church as volunteers.*



Monday, March 16, 2020

Text: Psalm 4

Answer me when I call, O God of my righteousness! Thou hast given relief when I was in distress; be gracious to me and hear my cry.

Does God answer prayers that aren’t direct to him in so many words? When I find myself seeking a solution to a problem, I tend to mull things over more than pray for guidance. During these internal conversations, I want to think the Lord is answering me whether I ask him for help directly or not. I accept what I have come to call these ‘Holy Spirit moments’ - those thoughts that pop into my mind as I wrestle with things. Unable to find a willing person to act as our parish treasurer, I kept hearing a name in my head. Though she was not a member of our

congregation, I cold called her and asked if she would be interested. She has since become a regular member of our church family. She once asked me why I had called her about the position and all I could tell her was, “I listened to that little voice in my head. You were one of my ‘Holy Spirit’ moments.” I am willing to bet that all of us receive answers to our prayers, even when we aren’t asking him directly for guidance.

Let us pray: *Dear Lord, help us listen more closely to your voice when you offer us Holy Spirit moments.*



Tuesday, March 17, 2020

Text: Matthew 8:26

He said to them, “You of little faith! Why are you afraid?” Then standing up he rebuked the winds and the sea, and there was a great calm.

Everyone is afraid sometimes. It is human nature to experience fear, yet I cannot recall ever seeing my father express fear outwardly. No doubt his years as a State Police trooper had something to do with it. My wife worked many years as a Registered Nurse in ICU and ER units. She faced many situations where she was concerned about patients but didn’t have time to be fearful until the emergency situation was over. She always said that when word of a serious accident came in, she would say a quick prayer and get busy. I never asked my father if he prayed when faced with a dangerous situation or a bad accident, but I am willing to bet he did.

Let us pray: *Lord, help us remember to pray as we face the things that we fear.*



Wednesday, March 18, 2020

Text: Psalm 32:8

I will instruct you and train you in the way you shall go: I will counsel you with my eye on you.

When I first became a member of the church council, I made it a conscious effort to listen more and speak less. I have always been more of a talker than a listener. One sign that I was making progress in that regard came to me when I found myself repeating something my father often said to me: “If you want to show someone how smart you are, stop talking so much.” It took the

younger me a long time to actually make sense of this saying, but when I began repeating it to my Junior High students, I realized how deeply the message had sunk in. My first years as a council member allowed me to observe how church affairs were conducted by those with many years of experience. When it became my turn to lead the council, I wasn't afraid because I took the time to listen and learn. I still follow my dad's advice to this day and try to lead by balancing the time to listen and the time to talk. Whether it is listening to my fellow council members or to his instructions, I am thankful that I have become a better listener.

Let us pray: *Dear Lord, help us all to be better listeners. Help us to listen to each other and to your word.*



Thursday, March 19, 2020

Text: John 16:33

I have talked over these things with you so that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have trouble; but have courage! I have overcome the world.

These are troubled times. It seems like the world has gone crazy as more conflicts erupt both around the world and in our own country. Factions point fingers and deride those who don't share their point of view. Stereotyping humans by their place of origin, religious beliefs, or cultural traits isn't a new thing as human history has seen this happen time and time again. In these troubled times, we need to lean on God for guidance as we work to restore peace and civility.

Let us pray: *Lord, we are all creatures of your creation. We pray that your healing words will help remove the fences that separate us and restore the world to more peaceful times.*



Friday, March 20, 2020

Text: John 14:1-4

Let not your hearts be troubled; believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many dwelling places. If this were not so I would have told you. For I am going away to prepare a place for you. And when I have gone and prepared a place for you, I will come again and take you to myself so that where I am, you also will be. And where I am going, you know the way."

Peace. The word itself seems to defy the daily news broadcasts. Wars. Unrest. Natural disasters. Violence. Hatred. The list of things that disturb the peace in the world seems endless, yet there is always hope - hope that God will empower us to make the world a better, more peaceful place for all.

Let us pray: *May the Peace of God be with us all.*



Saturday, March 21, 2020

Text: Matthew 5:4

Blessed are they who mourn, for they shall be comforted.

Today is my mother's birthday. Though she died peacefully in her sleep in mid-July of 2019, we will still celebrate what would have been her 96th birthday. We miss her on a daily basis and at times still catch ourselves thinking we should write her a note or find a book that we think might interest her. Her life and health changed slowly in her last few years. Living at an assisted care facility, her energy to do crafts and outings waned, but she still had spunk to the end. We know we shall see her again and look forward to hearing her voice in her new choir.

Let us pray: *Dear Lord, thank you for the peace and comfort you bring to all who have lost loved ones.*

