

Devotions – April 19-25, 2020

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Sunday, April 19, 2020

The Fruit of the Spirit

Text: Galatians 5:22-23

By contrast, the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. There is no law against such things.

I have been thinking a lot about choice. In almost every situation we find ourselves, we have choice. Sometimes there are many choices, such as when we go to a restaurant for a meal and peruse the menu. Other times, the choices are limited, such as when we try to order a very popular item on Amazon during Christmas shopping season and we've waited until the last minute. Yes, indeed, choice, the freedom to choose, is a privilege. For this week's devotions, I choose to focus on the fruit of the Spirit.

For today, I will talk about **love**. I choose to love rather than to hate. Jesus tells us that the greatest commandment is to love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength. The second is to love your neighbor as yourself. He says that no other commandment is greater than these. (Mark 12:30-31)

To love isn't always the easiest thing to do, but if we choose to do everything in love, we can be fairly certain that it will be the right thing to do, especially when we focus on God and our neighbor. By contrast, hate is often fueled by anger, fear, and self-righteous thinking. Rarely is hatred focused on concern for other. It is primarily focused on self. Love is self-less. Hate is selfish.

Please choose love.

Let's pray: *Gracious God, we love because you loved us first. Help us to remember the greatest commandments and guide us to reveal your love through our words and deeds. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.*



Monday, April 20, 2020

Joy and Peace

Text: Romans 15:13

May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Today I choose joy and peace in contrast to sadness and chaos. We have been living in the throes of a global pandemic for over a month. Life as we knew it before the news headlines focused only on the devastation of COVID-19 virus seems like a very distant memory. What we often took for granted is now yearned for with anticipation. Yet, there is joy and peace all around us, though we have to be intentional in choosing to look for and find them. There is joy and peace in the beauty of the sunrise that greets us in the morning. There is joy and peace in the glorious sunset at the end of a long day as we prepare for rest. There is joy and peace in music and the chirping of the birds that have come out again this spring. There is joy and peace in the resurrection of Jesus Christ on Easter morning after a long and unusual Lenten season. There is joy and peace when we trust in our God of hope through the power of the Holy Spirit.

Please choose peace and joy.

Let's pray: *Generous God, please fill our hearts with your joy and peace as we continue this journey through uncertain times. Help us to choose joy and peace in the midst of sadness and chaos. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.*



Tuesday, April 21, 2020

Patience

Text: Colossians 1:11-12

May you be made strong with all the strength that comes from his glorious power, and may you be prepared to endure everything with patience, while joyfully giving thanks to the Father, who has enabled you to share in the inheritance of the saints in the light.

Today I choose to be patient rather than impatient. Believe me, that is not easy for me. It is something that I have to work at very hard. My tendency is to want immediate results. I get really frustrated when I am struggling to write a sermon and the page remains empty for a long

time. I have learned to get up and walk away for a while or maybe even put it away and try again in the morning.

Patience is a virtue that makes life much easier to bear. Psalm 37:7 says, “Be still before the Lord and wait patiently for him to act.” We are encouraged by the psalmist to sit still and wait for God’s will to be done. Perhaps prayer might help as you try to be still.

Please choose patience.

Let’s pray: *Compassionate God, you know how hard it is for us to be patient and yet it is what you command. Help us to learn the virtue of patience so that our lives will be filled with your peace. In Jesus’ name we pray. Amen.*



Wednesday, April 22, 2020

Kindness

Text: Micah 6:8

He has told you, O mortal, what is good; and what does the LORD require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?

Today, let’s talk about kindness in contrast to meanness. Even in the most difficult situations, we can choose to be kind rather than being mean. Micah 6:8 is one of my favorite Bible verses because it tells us what the Lord requires of us – to fight for justice, in loving kindness, with humility. When we intentionally protect the vulnerable with loving kindness and humility, we show the world the love of God for all of God’s people.

For this past Lenten season, several congregations in Conference 6 did a series on kindness. One of the things they did was leave little cards that stated, “Choose to wear kindness” with a beautiful rainbow amidst dark clouds wherever they went. These cards were showing up all over Delta County reminding everyone to be kind. This message is so important for society to hear, especially during this time of uncertainty and fear. An act of kindness can and will bring a smile to a worried face. Using manners and taking the time to show appreciation makes everyone feel better.

Please choose kindness.

Let's pray: *Merciful God, help us to choose kindness so that we can be a channel of your peace. Bless us as we bring blessings to everyone we meet. Guide our words and deeds so that your love shines. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.*



Thursday, April 23, 2020

Generosity

Text: Proverbs 11:24-25

It is possible to give freely and become more wealthy, but those who are stingy will lose everything. The generous prosper and are satisfied; those who refresh others will themselves be refreshed.

The book of Proverbs contains practical instruction for successful living. It teaches that there is special wisdom revealed by God as well as innate wisdom, or common sense, and both must play a part in daily life. This book is a collection of practical wisdom from many centuries. During a recent funeral luncheon, I spoke with someone who told me that he has been reading the book of Proverbs for over 40 years. I asked him why he chose that book. He told me that there are 31 chapters, so he figured it was a good book to read – a chapter a day. There is much wisdom in the book of Proverbs. Chapter 11 aptly addresses generosity.

We can choose to have a mentality of abundance or a mentality of scarcity. The choice is ours and the way we live will be affected greatly by our decision. A mentality of abundance provides for acts of generosity because of the belief that there is plenty of everything in the world from resources, love, relationships, wealth, and opportunities. A mentality of scarcity causes us to be stingy with our resources out of fear of running out.

Proverbs is clear on the consequences of our choices.

Please choose generosity.

Let's pray: *Abundant God, you generously share your love with all of your people and you teach us with your Word. Help us to choose wisely and encourage us to give generously of our time, talent and resources. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.*



Friday, April 24, 2020

Faithfulness

Text: 2 Timothy 4:6-8

For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure has come. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith; in the future there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day; and not only to me, but also to all who have loved his appearing.

Throughout scripture, we hear of God's faithfulness to us. In both of Paul's letters to his associate Timothy, he writes about God's faithfulness in leading him throughout his whole life. Paul's second letter to Timothy was probably the last one Paul wrote. In it, he shares his deepest feelings and the assurance that though his earthly life might end, God had eternal life waiting for him. Paul wrote also to encourage him so that he would not become weary in his Christian life and would instead live wholeheartedly with God's bigger picture in mind.

Today, we too have the assurance of God's faithfulness to God's people. In response, we are called to be faithful to God and willing to profess this truth for all to hear.

Our presiding Bishop Elizabeth Eaton wrote in her COVID-19 letter on March 27, 2020, that she is proud to say that even during challenging times, we continue our service in living out the mission of the church. She concluded the letter by stating, *"Together in Jesus Christ we are freed by grace to live faithfully, witness boldly and serve joyfully."*

Please choose faithfulness.

Let's pray: *Faithful God, we thank you for your faithfulness. Help us to remain faithful to you and encourage us to trust in your mercy and love. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.*



Saturday, April 25, 2020

Gentleness and Self-Control

Text: Ephesians 4:1-3

I therefore, the prisoner in the Lord, beg you to lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, making every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

Paul wrote his letter to the new Christian believers in Ephesus while he was imprisoned in Rome. He wanted to bring comfort and encouragement to them during a very difficult time of oppression. In our current time of uncertainty, we too can receive comfort and encouragement to continue our faith journey and treat others with gentleness, patience and self-control.

Rather than giving in to the temptation to be harsh and critical when in stressful situations, choose to be kind and gentle, practicing self-control. You will be glad you did and so will the people with whom you are dealing. Plus, you will save yourself from the later feelings of guilt. It's a win-win situation.

Please choose gentleness and self-control.

Let's pray: *Compassionate and understanding God, forgive us when we lose our tempers and react unkindly with others. Help us to control our tongues and treat others with gentleness. We all need to be on our best behavior during these times of confinement. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.*

