

**Devotions – June 7-13, 2020**

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In July and August of 2019, I preached a sermon series titled, “Summer Song – A Celebration of selected Psalms.” The following devotions are based on that series.

**Sunday, June 7, 2020 – “Praise of the Creator” Psalm 8**

Text: Psalm 8:1

***“You have set your glory above the heavens.”***

Psalm 8 is a beautiful and poetic reminder to us of the importance and responsibility that we have to care for this earth and all that is in it, which includes to be present and attentive to even this very moment. We may not know everyone whom we encounter each and every day, but when we do, we are sharing in the same experiences as they are. Our God beyond knowing, our world and heaven(s) which we know to some degree, and our intimate knowing of ourselves are all connected. And not only are we all connected, but it’s an intentional connection.

When David first sang these words, he was singing about our interconnectedness, the relationship that we share. It was a relationship that existed when God’s creative hands first stretched over everything. It was a relationship that existed 3000 years ago when David was still trying to find his place in God’s grand design. It’s a relationship that exists today still.

Let us pray: *Creator God, thank you for all that you provide, and do so graciously. Empower us as your servants to find joy in the relationships that we have with you, with our world, and with one another. Amen.*



**Monday, June 8, 2020 – “The Lord as Shepherd-king and Host” Psalm 23**

Text: Psalm 23:1

***“The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not be in want.”***

The familiar words of this Psalm remind us about the beauties of living life in the here and now, even amid the darkness that often accompanies our day-to-day lives, the pain of sin that exists in our world. The Psalm begins the joyful song with a faithful and hopeful claim, “The LORD is my shepherd, I shall not be in want.”

There’s contentment here. There is a certain knowledge that God provides for all that I need, and not only provides for it, but is there in it, with me, through it all, thick and thin, good and bad. That’s the heartbeat of this Psalm. It’s the message of the Gospel. When the LORD is

your shepherd, that's enough, and it sets the stage for how we respond to every other event in our lives.

Psalm 23 reminds us that God sustains, provides, and cares for his flock, not once, but time and time again – whether it's Israelites fleeing from Egypt, the scattered remnant returning from Exile, or you and I as we journey yet today. The Psalm reminds us that goodness can pursue us as well as trials; but, most importantly, as a reminder for us to live – in the face of danger and misfortune, in the shadows of darkness that surrounds us, and to know that in living we'll be sustained forever.

Let us pray: *Faithful God who grants life, thank you for the air we breathe and the lungs that receive it. Be present in the lives that you have given us and teach us to breathe your Spirit into our world through our words and our actions, in your Son's name, Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.*



## **Tuesday, June 9, 2020 – “Thirst for the Living God” Psalm 42**

Text: Psalm 42:1-2

***“As the deer longs for streams of water, so I long for you, O God. I thirst for God, the living God.”***

The writer of the 42<sup>nd</sup> Psalm is spiritually thirsty and is feeling the effects of that thirst. He knows that the only way to replenish his soul is to be filled with the water of life, the water that we know today to be Jesus Christ. In the fourth chapter of St. John, Jesus has an interaction with a Samaritan woman who came to the well to draw water. Jesus tells her that, “Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, but those who drink of the water that I give them will never be thirsty.”

Nurturing our faith with this water is the only way that we can truly and properly replenish ourselves. Turning to God in times of joy and trouble and everything in between, and then being open and honest with ourselves during those times, is the only way that we are truly tended to. If we choose to tell ourselves lies and fill ourselves with false hope, all we are doing is building a wall and denying the desire and work of the Spirit to come into us and to work through us and to make us whole again. In essence, what we do when we're not being truthful with ourselves is that we're turning to the sugary, flavored drink to quench our thirst, leaving us thirsty again and again, over and over.

But we don't have to because there is Good News, and that Good News is the water that we need, and it is plentiful, and it is available for all.

Let us pray: *Satisfying God, remind us to come to you in thanksgiving for all of our joys, trials, and even the mundane. Continue to fill us with the water of life, your Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.*



### Wednesday, June 10, 2020 – “Prayer for Forgiveness” Psalm 51

Text: Psalm 51:10

***“Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me.”***

Psalm 51 is written by King David, expressing a great deal of regret. He has essentially raped Bathsheba – scripture does not say that their time together was consensual – and then he took great lengths to get rid of her husband. He thought that he had all of his bases covered to save himself from judgment.

Then Nathan the prophet came to visit the king, and it wasn't a social call. He shared with David a metaphorical story about rich and poor men, about selfishness and deception, and got David to convict himself for what he had done. David is crushed under the weight of the law. He composes this psalm with the persistent pain of knowing that he has caused harm and grief and suffering, against others and against God. David has regrets.

And so do we. You and I make plenty of mistakes. We have squandered opportunities. We can look back and declare, “Wow, what an awful thing that was for me to do.”

Yet even our regrets are truly a sign that God loves us and cares for us. The ‘regrets’ we all carry around with us are a sign that God has put his Law into our minds and written it in our hearts, so we can never forget what we are, or, more importantly, whose we are. Like King David, when confronted by Nathan and God's law, when we are convicted of our sins and confess them to God, we can be told that Good News, that “The Lord has taken away your sin and you will not die.”

Let us pray: *Forgiving God, thank you for the promises of baptism and the forgiveness of sin in which you take away the crushing weight of the law that is upon us. Help us to be mindful of our words and our actions, which hurt others and sever our relationship from you. Amen.*



### Thursday, June 11, 2020 – “God's Kingship” Psalm 98

Text: Psalm 98:1

***“Oh sing to the Lord a new song, for He has done marvelous things!”***

Psalm 98 is a song of rejoicing that God has come and has protected his chosen people. It also anticipates the time when he will be accepted as God by the whole earth. The hymn author,

Isaac Watts, was known for writing what he called “New Testament Hymns.” He would take an Old Testament text, something written before Christ was born, and reflect on what it means for those of us living in the New Testament. On July 28<sup>th</sup> of 2019, our congregation sang “Joy to the World,” a Watts tune which turns Psalm 98 into a New Testament song of praise. It exalts the salvation that started with the birth of our Savior and King.

God did everything to ensure our salvation, and it started with the birth of Christ, was played out through his life of perfect obedience, his suffering and dying in your place, and finally, his resurrection as the conqueror of death! God did this through all people, and through the promise of the Holy Spirit, he has made salvation known to all people, so that whoever believes in Jesus will not perish, but will have eternal life.

Let us pray: *Heavenly God, King of all, thank you for your willingness to come to us as one of us for the sole intention of saving us. Though we struggle to admit it, we can't do it on our own. Open our hearts and minds to your work in and through us, through your Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.*



## **Friday, June 12, 2020 – “God the Creator and Sustainer” Psalm 104**

Text: Psalm 104

***“Bless the LORD, O my soul. O LORD my God, you are very great. You are clothed with honor and majesty.”***

When we were created, God did so with the intention of having order for us. Unfortunately, sin gets in the way of that order. Psalm 104 speaks to the creative power of God forming the world as well as its inhabitants. Several years ago, while participating in a Bible study about this Psalm, the question came up that, “If God did indeed create a perfect world, as the Psalmist implies, and if God breathes life into this world through the Spirit, why, then, are the winds at this point in time winds that are hurricane and tornado force, that destroy, instead of give life?”

It’s a fair question and the simple answer is because sin came into the world. But the very same world that has spawned all these ills was first created to be a world that provides for us; and that’s exactly what it does, because God takes all of the chaos that we throw at it, and puts it upon himself to do whatever it takes to provide for his children. In fact, it is often in the midst of that chaos that God shows himself to us. God rests his Spirit upon us and empowers us to go into a broken world that threatens to fall to pieces and to share the message that God has already made preparations for a new heaven and a new earth when he put his Son on the cross and then raised him to new life three days later. In the resurrection, God has provided the order that will rule for all eternity.

Let us pray: *Sustaining God, in our work, in our play, in our contemplation, and in our chaos; be present within us. Grant us clarity to do your will and the necessary tools to navigate through a chaotic world. Amen.*



**Saturday, June 13, 2020 – “Praise of God our Redeemer” Psalm 136**

Text: Psalm 136:26

***“Give thanks to the God of heaven, His love endures forever.”***

For 26 verses, Psalm 136 recounts the mighty acts of God, and then concludes with the same response of, “for His steadfast love endures forever.” This repetition is a pointed and powerful reminder for us that God is constantly at work through us, for us, and around us. It declares with a clear voice all the powerful deeds that God has executed “for us and for our salvation.”

The presence of the Spirit throughout our lives, the repetition of that presence, is absolutely essential to our salvation. The waters of baptism ensure that the Spirit of God will be present with us through those times of trial, even when Christ is not visible to us. The waters of baptism ensure that the Spirit of God will be present with us during times of joy, where we are living in the moment, maybe only in our peripheral, out of sight, but undoubtedly present throughout.

So, give thanks, and do so often, for God is always present to receive it. Give thanks with a joyful and free heart and know that God hears you because God is with you, throughout this life and into our eternal ones. Why? For his steadfast love endures forever.

Let us pray: *Redeeming God, thank you for the presence of your Spirit in our lives each and every day, each and every moment. Make us mindful of your presence to empower us to live lives that give glory to you and celebrate the lives of all our brothers and sisters. Amen.*

