

Devotions – September 20-26, 2020

By Christine Ebert

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Sunday, September 20, 2020

Text: Genesis 1:27

So God created man in his own image, in the image of God, he created him: male and female he created them.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer [1906-1945], (from *Life Together* 90) wrote “God does not want me to model others into the image that seems good to me, that is, into my own image. Instead, in their freedom from me, God made other people in God’s own image. That image always takes on a completely new and unique form...Rather this diversity is a reason for rejoicing in one another and serving one another.”

We pray: *May we strive to be the community of Christ in which people stand for each other, pray for each other, and love one another without reservation. In these times, may we understand that we all belong to the Church where we are called to live out God’s word, recognize the image of God’s face in all human beings, and put an end to hatred and division. Amen*



Monday, September 21, 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.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer [1906-1945] (from *A Testament to Freedom*) wrote forcefully about injustice. “It is an evil time when the world lets injustice happen silently, when the oppression of the poor and the wretched cries out to heaven in a loud voice and the judges and rulers of the earth keep silent about it...Are you mute? Oh no, they are not mute, their voice is heard on earth.

But, it is an unmerciful partisan word they speak. It's judgement not by what is right, but by a person's standing."

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, September 22, 2020

Text: Matthew 5:9

Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called the children of God.

In times of division, hatred, envy, mistrust and misinformation, we are called to bear witness to God's love and God's peace – not only by word and thought, but also by our deeds. The wisdom which comes from God is first of all pure, then peace-loving, considerate, filled with mercy, impartial and sincere. We should daily ask ourselves where we can bear witness in all that we do to ensure that love and peace prevail. As James wrote in [3:18] *Peacemakers who sow peace raise a harvest of righteousness.*

We pray: *Christ, our peacemaker, as we seek to establish peace in our hearts, peace in our homes, and peace in our communities, help us to strive for a time when hatred and division give way to love and peace. Help us to honor and protect the lives of all your children, especially those who have been marginalized by racial and ethnic injustice. Amen*



Wednesday, September 23, 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, September 24, 2020

Text: James 3: 9-12

With the tongue we praise our Lord and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in God’s likeness. Out of the same mouth come praise and cursing. My brothers, this should not be.

James uses very practical examples to illustrate the problems with men’s speech which he later refers to as “fire, a world of evil among the parts of the body. It corrupts the whole person, sets the whole course of his life on fire... no man can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison.”

However, this is perhaps a misappropriation of the blame. If an individual poisons his/her heart and mind and soul with hatred, envy and misinformation, it is the mind and soul that are poisoned. However, through speech (via the tongue) one spreads the infection and corrupts others. This is what James means as well as the hypocrisy of praising God and cursing others.

We pray: *Gracious and loving God, in all ways and especially in these times when our speech should be for blessing and uplifting others, may we speak with discretion and civility and most of all, with love. Amen*



Friday, September 25, 2020

Text: John 11: 25-27

Jesus said to her (Martha), “I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies and whoever lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?” “Yes Lord,” she told him, “I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, who was to come into the world.”

This is God’s ultimate promise to us – no words could be more profound or offer more hope for our lives. When Jesus asks Martha if she believes this, her words are equally powerful and profound. “I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, who was to come into the world.” In the final phrase, we again see God’s plan – that his Son had to come into the world to save the world. Martha’s words are also the fifth verse of the hymn, “I Am the Bread of Life.”

In this time, when so many lives have been lost to Covid-19, so many families have suffered, we must remember them and “say their names” just as we say the names of those who have passed on All Saints Sunday and at memorials such as 9-11 and other times when lives have been needlessly lost. We must also appreciate the sacrifices of all the health care and essential workers who have experienced these losses and stood vigil with the dying. We must continue to pray for them and their families.

We pray: *Christ our Lord and Savior, we can only continue to pray, “Yes Lord, I believe.” Be with us as we seek to do your will, serve others as you continue to care for us, and be your light in the world. Amen*



Saturday, September 26, 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. Amen.

