



## Mount Olive Devotion

The Last Sunday after Pentecost (November 16– 20, 2020)

### Monday

Psalm 31:19-24

- <sup>19</sup> O how abundant is your goodness that you have laid up for those who fear you, and accomplished for those who take refuge in you, in the sight of everyone!
- <sup>20</sup> In the shelter of your presence you hide them from human plots; you hold them safe under your shelter from contentious tongues.
- <sup>21</sup> Blessed be the LORD, for he has wondrously shown his steadfast love to me when I was beset as a city under siege.
- <sup>22</sup> I had said in my alarm, “I am driven far from your sight.” But you heard my supplications when I cried out to you for help.
- <sup>23</sup> Love the LORD, all you his saints. The LORD preserves the faithful, but abundantly repays the one who acts haughtily. <sup>24</sup> Be strong, and let your heart take courage, all you who wait for the LORD.

The beginning of Psalm 31 is a cry for help and a litany of the troubles the psalmist is experiencing. Here at the end of the psalm, we see the result of the psalmist’s prayers: “You heard my supplications when I cried out to you for help.” How good it is when we know our prayers have been answered. We pray in the Lord’s Prayer, “Thy will be done,” but so many times we wonder what that will mean for us. Our faith falters and we begin to doubt that God’s will will be good for us. Of course this is foolish; God’s will is always good for all creation, yet God’s view of things is so much greater than ours that it is often hard for us to see how what we desire will match with what God desires. The last line is the one that sends us forth with joy: “Be strong, and let your heart take courage, all you who wait for the Lord.” Yes, we are those who wait for the Lord. And we trust that the Lord’s will is good.

### Prayer

We praise you this day, Almighty God, that you have heard our prayers, and that you continue to hear them, whenever we cry out to you. Give us faith to trust you. Give us patience to wait for you. Give us courage to continue to serve and love the world around us. In your holy name we pray.  
AMEN.

## Tuesday

Proverbs 14:27-34

<sup>27</sup> The fear of the LORD is a fountain of life, so that one may avoid the snares of death.

<sup>28</sup> The glory of a king is a multitude of people; without people a prince is ruined.

<sup>29</sup> Whoever is slow to anger has great understanding, but one who has a hasty temper exalts folly.

<sup>30</sup> A tranquil mind gives life to the flesh, but passion makes the bones rot.

<sup>31</sup> Those who oppress the poor insult their Maker, but those who are kind to the needy honor him.

<sup>32</sup> The wicked are overthrown by their evildoing, but the righteous find a refuge in their integrity.

<sup>33</sup> Wisdom is at home in the mind of one who has understanding, but it is not known in the heart of fools. <sup>34</sup> Righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people.

The book of Proverbs is just that, a book of wise sayings. Many of them find their way on to wall hangings, plaques, and graduation cards. They are more than wise sayings, however; they are guides to life. A tranquil mind, for example, is one that is healthy, sound, and composed. A mind full of passion is one that is jealous, obsessed with one's enemies, and consumed with rivalry. We are told that one mindset leads to life and the other leads to destruction. Other ways which lead to life are also lifted up: being kind to the needy, for example. We do not often think that *our* well-being is tied up in how we treat the poor, but the writer here tells us that this is exactly the case. Conversely, when we oppress the poor, we insult God, whose children they are. These sayings also give us hope that justice will finally reign. Verse 32 says that "the wicked are overthrown by their evildoing, but the righteous find a refuge in their integrity." So when we are tempted to believe that simple acts of kindness, friendliness, and generosity do not matter, this reminds us that life comes by virtue of such acts.

## Prayer

God of wisdom and understanding, thank you for guiding us in the ways of wisdom through your word. Thank you for leading us in paths of righteousness, showing us when we have strayed, and giving us so many second chances. By your grace, continue to lead us, and help us to listen to your voice. We pray in your precious name. AMEN.

## **Wednesday**

John 17:11-17

<sup>11</sup> And now I am no longer in the world, but they are in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, protect them in your name that you have given me, so that they may be one, as we are one. <sup>12</sup> While I was with them, I protected them in your name that you have given me. I guarded them, and not one of them was lost except the one destined to be lost, so that the scripture might be fulfilled. <sup>13</sup> But now I am coming to you, and I speak these things in the world so that they may have my joy made complete in themselves. <sup>14</sup> I have given them your word, and the world has hated them because they do not belong to the world, just as I do not belong to the world. <sup>15</sup> I am not asking you to take them out of the world, but I ask you to protect them from the evil one. <sup>16</sup> They do not belong to the world, just as I do not belong to the world. <sup>17</sup> Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth.

This passage is near the end of what is known as The High Priestly Prayer of Jesus. In this prayer Jesus is praying for his disciples, as well as all who would follow them, even down to the present day. You notice that there is lots of talk about protection. “Holy Father, protect them,” says Jesus. “I am not asking you to take them out of the world, but I ask you to protect them from the evil one.” Jesus is recognizing and naming something here that we often forget: there are evil realities at work in the world. There are forces that push against all that God is doing. As Lutherans we call these things “the flesh, the world, and the devil.” We need to pray against these things every day. The flesh are those things within us that draw us away from God: our appetites, our bad habits, our mean-spiritedness. The world are those things outside of us that lead us away from God. They can be television, social media, advertisements, or false reports. Finally, there is the devil. This is what we call those forces that tempt us to destroy ourselves, our neighbors, or the world around us. We pray mightily against these voices every day. Amidst it all, Jesus reminds us, God is protecting us.

## **Prayer**

Thank you, Heavenly Father, for being our Protector. Thank you for fighting alongside us against the flesh, the world, and the devil. Thank you that your power is greater than all, and no one can snatch us away from you. Take away our fear. Fill us with a robust courage, so that in all things, we will be found true to you. In your powerful name, we pray. AMEN.

## Thursday

Colossians 1:9-14

<sup>9</sup> For this reason, since the day we heard it, we have not ceased praying for you and asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of God's will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, <sup>10</sup> so that you may lead lives worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him, as you bear fruit in every good work and as you grow in the knowledge of God. <sup>11</sup> 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 <sup>12</sup> giving thanks to the Father, who has enabled you to share in the inheritance of the saints in the light. <sup>13</sup> He has rescued us from the power of darkness and transferred us into the kingdom of his beloved Son, <sup>14</sup> in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

What great promises there are in this passage! The Apostle Paul is writing to his beloved congregation in Colossae where he reminds them that God "has rescued [them] from the power of darkness and transferred [them] into the kingdom of his beloved Son." It is a done deal! They are no longer enslaved to ignorance and evil, but are now citizens of the kingdom of God. This is exactly the promise we receive at baptism. We are rescued from one realm and transferred into another realm, the realm of God. Also, Paul reminds us that we have a share of "the inheritance of the saints in light." What that means we can't precisely say, but we all know that whenever your name is on the last will and testament of someone, gifts will follow. We have no doubt that those who receive a share in this inheritance will not be disappointed. We have so many reasons to give thanks. Yes, life is trying at times, but we are assured of our identity as children of God, and from that abundance we live in hope.

## Prayer

We thank and praise you, Gracious God, for all your abundant mercy. You have rescued us from the power of the evil one and transferred us to the kingdom of your beloved Son. You have forgiven us all of our sins. You have filled us with your Holy Spirit, and clothed us with the armor of faith and love, so that we might continue to live in you. Grant us grace each day, O God, to walk in the light, and in joy. In Jesus' name, we pray. AMEN.

## Friday

II Peter 1:3-9

<sup>3</sup> His divine power has given us everything needed for life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness. <sup>4</sup> Thus he has given us, through these things, his precious and very great promises, so that through them you may escape from the corruption that is in the world because of lust, and may become participants of the divine nature. <sup>5</sup> For this very reason, you must make every effort to support your faith with goodness, and goodness with knowledge, <sup>6</sup> and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with endurance, and endurance with godliness, <sup>7</sup> and godliness with mutual affection, and mutual affection with love. <sup>8</sup> For if these things are yours and are increasing among you, they keep you from being ineffective and unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. <sup>9</sup> For anyone who lacks these things is short-sighted and blind, and is forgetful of the cleansing of past sins.

The writer of this letter begins by reminding us that “everything needed for life and godliness” has already been given to us in Christ. The promises of God have saved us and now sustain us in our ongoing life. We need never be afraid that what is needed for life and godliness will be taken away from us. It cannot be. Having said this, the writer goes on to remind us that we are called to be “participants of the divine nature.” Needless to say, this will require some effort on our part. And so, the writer tells us that we must strive to support our faith with the following: goodness, knowledge, self-control, endurance, godliness, mutual affection, and love. And he says that if we fail to strive for these things we are forgetting who we are, and we are likely to be “ineffective and unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.” Notice that forgetting these things does not endanger ourselves so much as it renders us of little use to God. How much better to be those who are effective and fruitful witnesses of the Gospel.

## Prayer

Thank you, Loving God, for providing all things for life and godliness. Thank you, also, for granting us faith to live in you and the call to be faithful disciples. Grant us the mind of Christ, so that in all our days we might strive to furnish our faith with goodness, knowledge, self-control, endurance, godliness, mutual affection, and love, so that we might bear beautiful fruit in your kingdom. In the name of Christ, we pray. AMEN.