



Monday

Psalm 104:24-30

²⁴ O LORD, how manifold are your works! In wisdom you have made them all; the earth is full of your creatures.

²⁵ There is the sea, great and wide; creeping things innumerable are there, living things both small and great.

²⁶ There go the ships and Leviathan that you formed to sport in it.

²⁷ These all look to you to give them their food in due season;

²⁸ when you give to them, they gather it up; when you open your hand, they are filled with good things.

²⁹ When you hide your face, they are dismayed; when you take away their breath, they die and return to their dust.

³⁰ When you send forth your spirit, they are created, and you renew the face of the ground.

A number of years ago some friends invited us to spend time with them at their condominium in Hawaii. As part of that trip we went whale watching. What fun it was! The humpback whales were plentiful that year, and they would just rise up out of the water without warning, making the biggest splash, apparently just for the sport of it, as the psalmist says. It is delightful to think that God, the Creator, made some creatures just so they could play in the water and we could delight in their splashing. Perhaps God has done that with many creatures: rabbits hopping about, mosquitoes buzzing in our ear, crows cawing to one another. Maybe they are all just saying, “Look at me. Look at what I can do. Am I not marvelously made?” We might take some instruction from the creatures all about us and be sure to indulge in play ourselves on a regular basis. Perhaps that is what Sabbath entails as well.

Prayer

Thank you, Creator God, for the world you have made, complete with creatures of every kind. You have given us great delight in watching everything from the wren to the great Blue Whale. Grant us joy in all you have made and a determination to steward and protect all with which you have entrusted us. In your holy name we pray. AMEN.

Tuesday

Galatians 5:16-25

¹⁶ Live by the Spirit, I say, and do not gratify the desires of the flesh. ¹⁷ For what the flesh desires is opposed to the Spirit, and what the Spirit desires is opposed to the flesh, for these are opposed to each other, to prevent you from doing what you want. ¹⁸ But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not subject to the law. ¹⁹ Now the works of the flesh are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity, debauchery, ²⁰ idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, anger, quarrels, dissensions, factions, ²¹ envy drunkenness, carousing, and things like these. I am warning you, as I warned you before: those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. ²² By contrast, the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, ²³ gentleness, and self-control. There is no law against such things. ²⁴ And those who belong to Christ have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. ²⁵ If we live by the Spirit, let us also be guided by the Spirit.

Verse 24 is the key verse in this passage. It gives us the only strategy that can result in a life that resembles the way of the Spirit. It says that “those who belong to Christ have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.” This means that daily dying – the daily process of giving our lives over to God – is the *only* way to combat our passions and desires. Our will alone is not enough. As St. Paul says elsewhere, “I can will what is good, but I cannot do it.” No, the way to live a Christ-like life is to give up the self life every day, and say to Christ, “It is not I who live, but you who live in me. Let it be so.” And the amazing thing is that when we *do* give our lives over to Christ we do not even notice the transformation. Our eyes are on our neighbor – to help them – and we are no longer consumed with our own failures or successes. That is the way of joy.

Prayer

Put us to death every day, Lord Christ. Put us to death and come and live within us so that our lives might resemble yours. Take away from us every habit or thought that would lead us away from you, and fill us with the joy of your salvation. We ask this in your precious name. AMEN.

Wednesday

Isaiah 44:1-5

But now hear, O Jacob my servant, Israel whom I have chosen!

² Thus says the LORD who made you, who formed you in the womb and will help you:

Do not fear, O Jacob my servant, Jeshurun whom I have chosen.

³ For I will pour water on the thirsty land and streams on the dry ground;

I will pour my spirit upon your descendants and my blessing on your offspring.

⁴ They shall spring up like a green tamarisk, like willows by flowing streams.

⁵ This one will say, "I am the LORD's"; another will be called by the name of Jacob; yet another will write on the hand, "The LORD's," and adopt the name of Israel.

Our vegetable garden is now planted and after only a few weeks, the little leaves are poking through the soil, promising radishes, beans, lettuce, and all sorts of other things to come. My wife faithfully waters and weeds this little garden, and through this simple process, a miracle that changes a minute seed into a bountiful harvest takes form. This is what God promises to the ancient people of God: "I will pour my spirit upon your descendants and my blessing on your offspring. They shall spring up like a green tamarisk, like willows by flowing streams." God promises to water us with the Spirit. We might feel like we are little seeds in a thirsty ground with little hope of bearing fruit, but God sends the Spirit to encourage, empower, and guide us, and through this watering we become a blessing to the world. Fruit is borne in us through this gracious Spirit, and in response we joyfully declare, "I am the Lord's."

Prayer

We thank and praise you, Almighty God, for your gentle Spirit that is poured out, oh so carefully on us, your people. We often wonder if any fruit will be borne in our life, and yet you say, "Trust me. You will bear fruit." Grant us grace to believe your promises and trust that we will bear fruit in the lives of those around us, and be a blessing to all. We ask this in your holy name. AMEN.

Thursday

I Corinthians 2:10-16

¹⁰ God has revealed to us through the Spirit, for the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God. ¹¹ For what human knows what is truly human except the human spirit that is within? So also no one comprehends what is truly God's except the Spirit of God. ¹² Now we have received not the spirit of the world but the Spirit that is from God, so that we may understand the gifts bestowed on us by God. ¹³ And we speak of these things in words not taught by human wisdom but taught by the Spirit, interpreting spiritual things to those who are spiritual.

¹⁴ Those who are unspiritual do not receive the gifts of God's Spirit, for they are foolishness to them, and they are unable to understand them because they are spiritually discerned. ¹⁵ Those who are spiritual discern all things, and they are themselves subject to no one else's scrutiny.

¹⁶ "For who has known the mind of the Lord so as to instruct him?" But we have the mind of Christ.

Jean Vanier, the founder of L'Arche, an international organization of communities for people with developmental disabilities, once wrote this: "To love someone is not first of all to do things for them, but to reveal to them their beauty and value... To love someone is to reveal to them their capacity for life, the light that is shining in them." I love that saying. It defines love in a way that is rarely thought of: as a means to show someone their gifts. St. Paul says that the Spirit does this for us. He says that one of the reasons we have received the Spirit that is from God is so that "we may understand the gifts bestowed on us by God." We all have gifts, yet sometimes they are hidden to us. Do you love to open your home to others? That is the gift of hospitality. Do you love to provide generously for those in need? That is the gift of giving. Do you love to study and preach? That is the gift of proclamation. The Spirit shows us these things. This is one more way God shows us the divine love.

Prayer

Gracious God, you are all generosity and love. You constantly bestow on us gifts galore, even many of which we are not aware. Make us attentive to your Spirit, and let us take joy in all you reveal to us through your Spirit, so that we might be used by you every day to bring glory to your name and blessing to the world. We ask this in Christ's name. AMEN.

Friday

John 14:8-14

⁸ Philip said to him, "Lord, show us the Father, and we will be satisfied." ⁹ Jesus said to him, "Have I been with you all this time, Philip, and you still do not know me? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, 'Show us the Father'? ¹⁰ Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own, but the Father who dwells in me does his works. ¹¹ Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me, but if you do not, then believe because of the works themselves. ¹² Very truly, I tell you, the one who believes in me will also do the works that I do and, in fact, will do greater works than these, because I am going to the Father. ¹³ I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. ¹⁴ If in my name you ask me for anything, I will do it.

I understand how Philip was thinking. He knew who God was and he knew who Jesus was; he just never put the two together. Who could fault him? God was seemingly far off and Jesus was right there in front of him. Yet, Jesus rebukes him for not realizing that whoever has seen Jesus has seen God the Father. It is a good thing Philip was so confused because Jesus' answer to him is helpful to us. If you ever wonder what God is like, look at Jesus and you will know. Do you see Jesus healing? That's what God does. Do you see Jesus refusing to condemn sinners? That's what God does. Do you see Jesus railing against those who abuse their authority? That's what God does. There is much that we do not know about God, but of this we can be sure: God's characteristics are those we see in our Lord.

Prayer

You are a great mystery to us, Almighty God. We struggle to understand your ways and to fathom your wisdom. Yet you have revealed yourself to us in Christ. You are loving. You are merciful. You are long-suffering. Help us always to trust in you, and to live our lives in thankfulness and joy all our days. In the name of Christ we pray. AMEN.