



## Mount Olive Devotions by Pastor Glenn Monson

### The Ninth Week After Pentecost (August 8 – 12)

#### Monday

I John 2:7-11

<sup>7</sup> Beloved, I am writing you no new commandment but an old commandment that you have had from the beginning; the old commandment is the word that you have heard. <sup>8</sup> Yet I am writing you a new commandment that is true in him and in you, because the darkness is passing away and the true light is already shining. <sup>9</sup> Whoever says, “I am in the light,” while hating a brother or sister, is still in the darkness. <sup>10</sup> Whoever loves a brother or sister abides in the light, and in such a person there is no cause for stumbling. <sup>11</sup> But whoever hates a brother or sister is in the darkness, walks in the darkness, and does not know the way to go, because the darkness has brought on blindness.

Considerable harm is done whenever the name of Christ is used to promote hate: that is the message of this passage in St. John’s first letter. He was familiar with people who mistakenly thought that being a follower of Christ only entailed *intellectual* assent to certain tenets, but had nothing to do with how one treated one’s fellow believers. John reminds his readers that this notion is false. Hating others and claiming to “walk in the light” do *not* go hand-in-hand. When Jesus was asked by his followers how one would know who was a true follower and who was not, he famously said, “By their fruits you shall know them.” In other words, whenever the fruits of the Spirit – love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, etc. – are present in a person, we can be confident they are people of authentic faith. When those things are *not* present, beware.

#### Prayer

Give us wisdom and humility, Gracious Lord, to know the truth and to live in it. Keep us from deceptive practices and from being misled by deceivers. Grant that all your people would be faithful to live in Christlike ways each day, to live in ways that bless others and bring glory to you. We pray this in your precious name. AMEN.

#### Tuesday

Psalm 141:1-5

<sup>1</sup> I call upon you, O LORD; come quickly to me; give ear to my voice when I call to you.

<sup>2</sup> Let my prayer be counted as incense before you and the lifting up of my hands as an evening sacrifice.

<sup>3</sup> Set a guard over my mouth, O LORD; keep watch over the door of my lips.

<sup>4</sup> Do not turn my heart to any evil, to busy myself with wicked deeds in company with those who work iniquity; do not let me eat of their delicacies.

<sup>5</sup> Let the righteous strike me; let the faithful correct me. Never let the oil of the wicked anoint my head, for my prayer is continually against their wicked deeds.

The first two verses of this psalm will sound familiar to anyone who has sung the Holden Evening Prayer service. These verses are set to a beautiful song that we sing in canon during Advent or Lenten worship. What is most striking about the prayer in this psalm is found in verse 5. The writer prays that God would raise up faithful people *to correct him* lest he go astray. He asks God to keep him from busying himself “with wicked deeds,” and he asks that “the oil of the wicked” never anoint his head. In other words, he asks that he never be found in the favor of the wicked. I wonder how often we pray for correction. I wonder how often we pray that God would raise up other believers who will let us know when we are going astray. Maybe that’s exactly what we should be praying for these days. After all, what did St. Peter remind us of? “Discipline yourself, keep alert. Like a roaring lion your adversary the devil, prowls around, looking for someone to devour.” (1 Pet. 5:8)

### **Prayer**

Give us faithful saints who will tell us the truth about ourselves, Gracious God. Give us courageous friends who love us enough to let us know when we are going astray. Keep us from the devil’s lairs, and guide us always into the way of peace and joy. We ask this through Christ our Lord. AMEN.

### **Wednesday**

Jeremiah 3:15-18

<sup>15</sup> I will give you shepherds after my own heart who will feed you with knowledge and understanding. <sup>16</sup> And when you have multiplied and increased in the land, in those days, says the LORD, they shall no longer say, “The ark of the covenant of the LORD.” It shall not come to mind or be remembered or missed, nor shall another one be made. <sup>17</sup> At that time Jerusalem shall be called the throne of the LORD, and all nations shall gather to it, to the presence of the LORD in Jerusalem, and they shall no longer stubbornly follow their own evil will. <sup>18</sup> In those days the house of Judah shall join the house of Israel, and together they shall come from the land of the north to the land that I gave your ancestors for a heritage.

The vision that the prophet Jeremiah has in this passage is a glorious one: a united nation of Israel, all worshipping together in Jerusalem. No longer will the land of Judah and the land of Israel be separate, but they will once again be one great people of God. This could be a vision for Christians too. Just think: Lutherans, Presbyterians, Methodists, Roman Catholics, Episcopalians, etc., all worshipping together in one great Body of Christ! Just imagine the great works of compassion and healing, encouragement and evangelism, that could be done if we worked together regularly. We see hints of this even now as groups like Church World Service and the Red Cross do wonderful interdenominational work. We see wonderful signs of this vision whenever we join with other churches and faith communities to advocate for the poor, such as through the work of the Joint Religious Legislative Coalition of MN, and Isaiah. We even see signs of this vision when we join with our neighbors in taking care of one another, no matter what their faith. Unity is a blessing.

## **Prayer**

God of all life, give us hearts that long for unity. Keep us from being tools of divisiveness in a world where people are so divided already. Bring us together around works of compassion and care for the world and all who dwell in it. We pray this in Jesus' name. AMEN.

## **Thursday**

Matthew 10:16-22

<sup>16</sup> "I am sending you out like sheep into the midst of wolves, so be wise as serpents and innocent as doves. <sup>17</sup> Beware of them, for they will hand you over to councils and flog you in their synagogues, <sup>18</sup> and you will be dragged before governors and kings because of me, as a testimony to them and the gentiles. <sup>19</sup> When they hand you over, do not worry about how you are to speak or what you are to say, for what you are to say will be given to you at that time, <sup>20</sup> for it is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you. <sup>21</sup> Sibling will betray sibling to death and a father his child, and children will rise against parents and have them put to death, <sup>22</sup> and you will be hated by all because of my name. But the one who endures to the end will be saved.

Rabbi Harold Kushner once said, "Expecting the world to treat you fairly because you are a good person is like expecting the bull not to charge you because you are a vegetarian." So it is. Jesus reminds us in this passage from Matthew that persecution is part of the life of faith. People who are threatened by us when we live and speak in the ways of Jesus will not always be quiet. They may even, at time, become hostile toward us. Jesus said we should expect this. Naturally we don't seek such a reaction, nor do we glory in it, as though martyrdom is some kind of badge of courage. No, we do as St. Peter admonishes us: "Always be ready to make your defense to anyone who demands from you an accounting for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and reverence. Keep your conscience clear, so that, when you are maligned, those who abuse you for your good conduct in Christ may be put to shame." (I Pet. 3:15-16).

## **Prayer**

Give us courage these days, Loving Lord. Give us courage to follow in the way of Christ, despite any opposition we might face. Grant that we might be well-spoken, self-controlled, and gracious in all our words and ways. And bless your Church that a world-wide witness of peace and love might prevail. In your holy name we pray. AMEN.

## Friday

Ephesians 5:6-14

<sup>6</sup>Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes on those who are disobedient. <sup>7</sup>Therefore do not be associated with them, <sup>8</sup>for once you were darkness, but now in the Lord you are light. Walk as children of light, <sup>9</sup>for the fruit of the light is found in all that is good and right and true. <sup>10</sup>Try to find out what is pleasing to the Lord. <sup>11</sup>Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness; rather, expose them. <sup>12</sup>For it is shameful even to mention what such people do secretly, <sup>13</sup>but everything exposed by the light becomes visible, <sup>14</sup>for everything that becomes visible is light. Therefore it says,

“Sleeper, awake! Rise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you.”

St. Paul is reminding his readers here that because of their new-found faith in Christ their whole identity has changed: “once you were darkness, but now in the Lord you are light.” Notice the words that St. Paul uses. He doesn’t say that you were walking in darkness and now you are walking in the light; he says that you *were* darkness, and now you *are* light. St. John says it another way. He says that in Christ *we are reborn*; we become completely new; we are given a new life. St. Paul says elsewhere that our old self is crucified with Christ and now it is no longer we who live, but Christ who lives in us. All of these statements point to the radical change that comes over us as we live in Christ. Christ’s life becomes our life, and our life becomes a thing of the past. This is all God’s doing. It is the miracle of new birth in Christ.

## Prayer

We praise you, Loving God, for making us new in Christ. We praise you for the light of Christ that can shine through us. We praise you for the light of Christ that gives us faith and joy. Help us to live each day in its glow. We pray this in the name of Christ our Lord. AMEN.