



Mount Olive Devotions by Pastor Glenn Monson

The Second Week After Pentecost (June 20 – 24, 2022)

Monday

Luke 1:46-55

⁴⁶ And Mary said, “My soul magnifies the Lord, ⁴⁷ and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,

⁴⁸ for he has looked with favor on the lowly state of his servant.

Surely from now on all generations will call me blessed,

⁴⁹ for the Mighty One has done great things for me, and holy is his name;

⁵⁰ indeed, his mercy is for those who fear him from generation to generation.

⁵¹ He has shown strength with his arm; he has scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts.

⁵² He has brought down the powerful from their thrones and lifted up the lowly;

⁵³ he has filled the hungry with good things and sent the rich away empty.

⁵⁴ He has come to the aid of his child Israel, in remembrance of his mercy,

⁵⁵ according to the promise he made to our ancestors, to Abraham and to his descendants forever.”

In typical medieval Roman Catholic fashion, as a young monk, Martin Luther regarded Mary, the mother of Christ, as a saint and a mediator between God and human beings. As he grew in his understanding, Luther rejected that earlier teaching and saw Mary simply as a wonderful example of faith and humility. You can hear in this famous song, often known by its Latin name, *Magnificat*, some of those characteristics. She calls herself a lowly servant and yet one who is blessed by the Mighty One who has done great things for her. She gives praise to God for the divine pattern of lifting up the lowly and scattering the proud and haughty. She testifies to God’s ability to fill the hungry with good things and to come to the aid of God’s people. All this God does, she says, “in remembrance of his mercy.” That is to say, God does these things not because of something *we* do, but because it is the nature of God to do these things. Are you feeling low, hungry, weak, or poor? Take heart, says Mary, it is God’s good pleasure to fill you and give you strength and life.

Prayer

Thank you, Gracious God, that you have heard our cries and filled our hungry souls with good food. You have sent your Holy Spirit to bear witness to your goodness in the world, and brought hope and faith to us once again. Be near to all who struggle, who hunger, or who suffer in any way. Fill them and grant them your peace. We pray in Christ’s name. AMEN.

Tuesday

Daniel 2:20-23

²⁰ Daniel said: "Blessed be the name of God from age to age, for wisdom and power are his.

²¹ He changes times and seasons, deposes kings and sets up kings; he gives wisdom to the wise and knowledge to those who have understanding.

²² He reveals deep and hidden things; he knows what is in the darkness, and light dwells with him.

²³ To you, O God of my ancestors, I give thanks and praise, for you have given me wisdom and power and have now revealed to me what we asked of you, for you have revealed to us what the king ordered."

Daniel, the Hebrew sage who served in the court of Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, is like Mary, the mother of Christ, an example for us. He too shows us what praise looks like, as well as faith and humility. When he and all the wise ones of Babylon could not tell the king the meaning of his dream it was decreed that they should all die if no one was found to interpret the dream. Daniel prayed to God and was given the meaning. You can hear in his song of praise how he responded. He blessed God as the source of all wisdom and power. He testified to God's control over times and seasons, kingships and sagely wisdom. He acknowledged God as the source of all knowledge and understanding. Daniel is an example for us in this. Have you known confusion? Pray and ask God for clarity. Have you been uncertain about the right path forward? Pray and ask God for guidance. Have you been at a loss to know what to say or do in a certain situation? Again, pray and ask God to give you the words to say and the courage to do what needs to be done. As Jesus said, "Ask and it will be given to you. Seek and you will find. Knock and the door will be opened to you."

Prayer

We praise you, Almighty God for your wisdom and strength. We praise and thank you for the wisdom of Scripture, for the wise guidance of faithful friends, and for the mysterious leading of your Spirit. Help us to listen closely for your guidance and give us the courage to follow.

In Christ's name we pray. AMEN.

Wednesday

Psalm 92:12-15

¹² The righteous flourish like the palm tree and grow like a cedar in Lebanon.

¹³ They are planted in the house of the LORD; they flourish in the courts of our God.

¹⁴ In old age they still produce fruit; they are always green and full of sap,

¹⁵ showing that the LORD is upright; he is my rock, and there is no unrighteousness in him.

I have always loved these verses, particularly the ones that testify to the elders amongst God's people who continue to bear fruit and "are always green and full of sap." I remember one man, Paul, about whom it can be fairly said, he was full of sap. Well into his nineties, he could be found at church, helping out by painting, fixing things, raking the lawn, or whatever was needed. He was distinguished by his constant whistling while he worked. Paul found reasons to bear fruit wherever he went. He encouraged others. He supported those in need. He was a constant source of joy to those around him. One day during a fishing trip to Canada one summer, Paul and his grandson came in with a mess of walleyes. "Why don't you go lay down and take a nap while I clean these fish, grandpa," said his grandson. So that is what Paul did; he laid down and even before the fish was fried, he died. Right there. I have often thought about Paul, the way he lived and the way he died. He was one who, even in old age, still produced fruit. What a blessing.

Prayer

Thank you for our elders, Dearest Lord. Thank you for those aged amongst us who show us how to bear fruit in the twilight of life. Bless them in their serving. Bless them in their living and in their dying. In every way embrace them, we pray. In the name of Christ. AMEN.

Thursday

I Thessalonians 4:13-18

¹³ But we do not want you to be uninformed, brothers and sisters, about those who have died, so that you may not grieve as others do who have no hope. ¹⁴ For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have died. ¹⁵ For this we declare to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will by no means precede those who have died. ¹⁶ For the Lord himself, with a cry of command, with the archangel's call and with the sound of God's trumpet, will descend from heaven, and the dead in Christ will rise first. ¹⁷ Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up in the clouds together with them to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will be with the Lord forever. ¹⁸ Therefore encourage one another with these words.

I remember a funeral I once did for an elderly gentleman who had lived nearly 70 years with his wife. He had been a hard worker, a good provider, husband, and father, and his life had now ended. The funeral for Mike was held in a small funeral home chapel that held perhaps 50 people. At the end of the service everyone filed out except, Violet, his widow. Violet stayed behind to say one last goodbye. I can still remember her words: "Don't be afraid, Mike. I'll be along shortly." Violet clearly believed the words of St. Paul in this 4th chapter of Thessalonians. Yes, her beloved Mike had died, but they would be together again before long. She was sure of that. Death held no fear for her. She and Mike would someday be caught up together with Christ and live together with him forever. Of that she was certain. We too can encourage one another with these words. Because of Christ's death and resurrection our resurrection is sure. The Holy Spirit which has been given to us is evidence that this is so.

Prayer

Lord of All Life, we praise and thank you for your victory over death. On the Cross you put to death all that is Death. You declared victory over the grave, over all sin, and over the Evil One. There is nothing left that can keep us from you. Grant us faith each day to remember your promises and live in the joy they provide. In Christ's name, we pray. AMEN.

Friday

Jeremiah 29:10-14

¹⁰ For thus says the LORD: Only when Babylon's seventy years are completed will I visit you, and I will fulfill to you my promise and bring you back to this place. ¹¹ For surely I know the plans I have for you, says the LORD, plans for your welfare and not for harm, to give you a future with hope. ¹² Then when you call upon me and come and pray to me, I will hear you. ¹³ When you search for me, you will find me; if you seek me with all your heart, ¹⁴ I will let you find me, says the LORD, and I will restore your fortunes and gather you from all the nations and all the places where I have driven you, says the LORD, and I will bring you back to the place from which I sent you into exile.

Verse 11 is one of those verses often quoted on religious graduation cards. In an affirmation of God's good plans for a graduate, the giver assures the graduate that God is going before them. What is often missed in this verse is that the word translated 'welfare' is a much richer word in Hebrew; it is the word "shalom." Shalom means prosperity and peace in the deepest sense. It means having a life that is characterized by abundance and strength. There is no greater blessing than to be blessed with shalom. Also easily missed in this verse is that the word translated "plans" is better thought of as "purposes." Plans suggest that God has written out a plan for our lives which cannot be altered. Better to understand that God has *purposes* in mind for each of us. God wills for us to lead lives of abundance and strength, primarily so that we can fulfill the purpose God has for us, which is to bear fruit in our lives. We are not granted shalom only for our own benefit, but for the benefit of all those we encounter. Abraham's mantra, "blessed to be a blessing," is ours too. What a blessing it is to be granted shalom.

Prayer

In every season you bless us, Holy One. You grant us peace and strength, faith and hope. You give us a future with a purpose. Show us your purposes for our life every day, and give us the will to live them out. In Christ's name we pray. AMEN.