



## Mount Olive Devotions by Pastor Glenn Monson

The 17th Week After Pentecost (October 3 – 7, 2022)

### Monday

Psalm 89:5-11

<sup>5</sup> Let the heavens praise your wonders, O LORD, your faithfulness in the assembly of the holy ones.

<sup>6</sup> For who in the skies can be compared to the LORD? Who among the heavenly beings is like the LORD, <sup>7</sup> a God feared in the council of the holy ones, great and awesome above all who are around him? <sup>8</sup> O LORD God of hosts, who is as mighty as you, O LORD? Your faithfulness surrounds you. <sup>9</sup> You rule the raging of the sea; when its waves rise, you still them.

<sup>10</sup> You crushed Rahab like a carcass; you scattered your enemies with your mighty arm.

<sup>11</sup> The heavens are yours; the earth also is yours; the world and all that is in it—you founded them.

As I sit down to write this week, Hurricane Ian is bearing down on the Gulf Coast of Florida. With winds nearing 150 miles per hour, accompanied by torrential rains, catastrophic damage is predicted. Few natural phenomena rival the power of this storm. We pray for all in its ferocious path. The psalmist certainly knew of the power of nature. The deserts and mountains and seas of Israel were certainly not strangers to wind and rain. Yet, the psalmist says that these powers are no match for the power and majesty of God. “You rule the raging of the sea; when its waves rise, you still them,” says the writer. “The heavens are yours; the earth also is yours,” the psalmist declares. In other words, though these storms are powerful beyond compare, there is One whose power makes even these storms seem puny. What a great and mighty God we have! There is none to compare. What a faithful and generous God we have! Again, there is none to compare.

### Prayer

We praise you mighty God for your great power and faithfulness. We praise you for the powers of nature that bring life to the world. Have mercy on those whose lives are impacted so greatly by powers of nature unleashed. Have mercy too, on the creatures and vegetation who have little defense against such powers. Give us faith to believe in you, and the resolve to do all we can to protect and support all life. In your holy name we pray. AMEN.

### Tuesday

II Chronicles 33:9-13

<sup>9</sup> Manasseh misled Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, so that they did more evil than the nations whom the LORD had destroyed before the people of Israel.

<sup>10</sup> The LORD spoke to Manasseh and to his people, but they gave no heed. <sup>11</sup> Therefore the LORD brought against them the commanders of the army of the king of Assyria, who took Manasseh captive in manacles, bound him with fetters, and brought him to Babylon. <sup>12</sup> While he was in distress, he entreated the favor of the LORD his God and humbled himself greatly before the God

of his ancestors. <sup>13</sup> He prayed to him, and God received his entreaty, heard his plea, and restored him again to Jerusalem and to his kingdom. Then Manasseh knew that the LORD indeed was God.

Scholars differ in their assessment of the reign of King Manasseh, who reigned as king of Judah for 55 years. Some say he was the most corrupt king Judah ever had. They note that not only did he encourage idol worship amongst the people, but he even erected idols *in the temple* of the Lord and encouraged their worship there! Other historians, specifically the chroniclers of ancient Judah, had another take, however. While they admit that King Manasseh misled the people, they blame *the people* for the wickedness that emerged. Furthermore, they remembered Manasseh's repentance and announced that, after his exile, Manasseh had learned his lesson and he "knew that the Lord indeed was God." We could pray for such repentance and enlightenment for some of the leaders in our country. We have elected officials in America who repeatedly mislead the people, trafficking in lies which they know to be false. As a result many good people are led into patterns of thinking and living that are hurtful and dangerous. This is not how God would have us live. We must be led by those who are loyal to the truth.

### **Prayer**

We pray for our country and our leaders, O Lord. We pray that wisdom and righteousness, justice and compassion, would prevail. We pray that those who use their power only to steal and destroy, only to create fear and division, would be thwarted in their plans, and brought to repentance. Protect us and guide us, gracious Lord. In your holy name, we pray. AMEN.

### **Wednesday**

Hebrews 11:1-7

Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. <sup>2</sup> Indeed, by faith our ancestors received approval. <sup>3</sup> By faith we understand that the worlds were prepared by the word of God, so that what is seen was made from things that are not visible. <sup>4</sup> By faith Abel offered to God a more acceptable sacrifice than Cain's. Through this he received approval as righteous, God himself giving approval to his gifts; he died, but through his faith he still speaks. <sup>5</sup> By faith Enoch was taken so that he did not experience death, and "he was not found, because God had taken him." For it was attested before he was taken away that "he had pleased God." <sup>6</sup> And without faith it is impossible to please him, for whoever would approach God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him. <sup>7</sup> By faith Noah, warned by God about events as yet unseen, respected the warning and built an ark to save his household; by this he condemned the world and became an heir to the righteousness that is in accordance with faith.

These well-known verses from Hebrews 11 have long been the definition of faith: "the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen." Faith is not, as American satirist, H. L. Menck-en, once quipped, "An illogical belief in the occurrence of the improbable." Rather faith is being convinced that what God has promised will come to pass. Faith is living out the hope we have in Christ, where all things are made new. Faith is trusting in the mercy and justice of God, and living all

our days in the peace that such trust gives. I sometimes wonder if faith isn't simply part of the human condition. I do not mean faith in God, per se, but faith in *something*. It seems impossible to live if one doesn't believe in *something*, in some goal, or some pattern of meaning, or some purpose to life. Perhaps one of our jobs as people of faith is to remind one another, and whomever we might encounter, that faith is what gives one hope, and hope is what one needs to get out of bed in the morning.

## Prayer

Gracious and Faithful God, thank you for your great promises. Thank you for your declaration of everlasting love, for the example of Jesus, and for your Holy Spirit that inspires us all our days. Grant that we might live in faith and hope all our days, and inspire others to do the same. Through Christ our Lord. AMEN.

## Thursday

Luke 12:42-48

<sup>42</sup> And the Lord said, "Who, then, is the faithful and prudent manager whom his master will put in charge of his slaves, to give them their allowance of food at the proper time?" <sup>43</sup> Blessed is that slave whom his master will find at work when he arrives. <sup>44</sup> Truly I tell you, he will put that one in charge of all his possessions. <sup>45</sup> But if that slave says to himself, 'My master is delayed in coming,' and begins to beat the other slaves, men and women, and to eat and drink and get drunk, <sup>46</sup> the master of that slave will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour that he does not know and will cut him in pieces and put him with the unfaithful. <sup>47</sup> That slave who knew what his master wanted but did not prepare himself or do what was wanted will receive a severe beating. <sup>48</sup> But the one who did not know and did what deserved a beating will receive a light beating. From everyone to whom much has been given, much will be required, and from the one to whom much has been entrusted, even more will be demanded.

This severe parable ends with a memorable sentence that could be a mantra for any of us who are fortunate enough to have lived in abundance all our lives. Though most of us would not call ourselves rich, it is undeniable that most of the world would. Many of us have received a long and rich educational experience. We have benefited in innumerable ways as citizens of a country where laws and norms of behavior that benefit all are regularly in place. We have enjoyed an infrastructure that other nations can only dream of: medicine, finance, transportation, commerce, education, public works, and voting rights, to name a few. In short, we are those "to whom much has been given." And as such, God says, "From you much is required." This is only fair. Even a child knows that if one playmate has five pieces of candy and another playmate has one, fairness requires that the playmate with five pieces of candy shares more than the playmate with one. More is required of us who have more. How much more peaceful our world would be if we all understood and abided by this simple rule.

## **Prayer**

Lord Jesus, grant us who have much, the grace to do all that is required of us. Forgive us when we fail to see our abundance and do not do what justice requires. We are your people. We wish to be faithful. Inspire us, we pray. In Christ's name. AMEN.

## **Friday**

Joshua 7:1-7

But the Israelites broke faith in regard to the devoted things: Achan son of Carmi son of Zabdi son of Zerah, of the tribe of Judah, took some of the devoted things, and the anger of the LORD burned against the Israelites.

<sup>2</sup> Joshua sent men from Jericho to Ai, which is near Beth-aven, east of Bethel, and said to them, "Go up and spy out the land." And the men went up and spied out Ai. <sup>3</sup> Then they returned to Joshua and said to him, "Not all the people need go up; about two or three thousand men should go up and attack Ai. Since they are so few, do not make the whole people toil up there." <sup>4</sup> So about three thousand of the people went up there, and they fled before the men of Ai. <sup>5</sup> The men of Ai killed about thirty-six of them, chasing them from outside the gate as far as Shebarim and killing them on the slope. The hearts of the people melted and turned to water.

<sup>6</sup> Then Joshua tore his clothes and fell to the ground on his face before the ark of the LORD until the evening, he and the elders of Israel, and they put dust on their heads. <sup>7</sup> Joshua said, "Ah, Lord GOD! Why have you brought this people across the Jordan at all, to hand us over to the Amorites so as to destroy us? Would that we had been content to settle beyond the Jordan!

This is the beginning of the story of the Sin of Achan, who, following the defeat of Jericho, took some of the spoils of war for himself, even though there were strict orders forbidding it. As a result of his dishonesty, God refused to continue championing the armies of Israel, and they were routed at the battle of Ai. When Joshua, the leader of Israel, heard of the defeat at Ai, he cried out to God, "Why has this happened?" He did not yet know that Achin had disobeyed the explicit command to take none of the plunder. What Achin's sin highlights is how one person's sinful pattern can become a devastating poison that spreads through the whole community. We all know this. It can happen in workplaces, in neighborhoods, in churches, and in whole communities. One destructive person can create havoc with an entire ecosystem. It turns out we are all connected, for better or for worse. How much better to be that leaven of kindness, that fragrance of generosity, and that spirit of helpfulness that make communities into healthy, happy places for all. Surely this is what God wills for us all.

## **Prayer**

Give us wisdom, Holy God, to live as people who understand how connected we are, one to another. Forgive us when we forget this and act as though our misdeeds have no effect on anyone else. Protect our communities from division and wickedness, and give to all those who lead, a clear understanding of what is required for all to flourish. In the name of Jesus we pray. AMEN.