



Mount Olive Devotions by Pastor Glenn Monson

The 16th Week After Pentecost (September 26 – 30, 2022)

Monday

Colossians 3:18-4:1

¹⁸ Wives, be subject to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord. ¹⁹ Husbands, love your wives and never treat them harshly. ²⁰ Children, obey your parents in everything, for this is your acceptable duty in the Lord. ²¹ Fathers, do not provoke your children, or they may lose heart. ²² Slaves, obey your earthly masters in everything, not with a slavery performed merely for looks, to please people, but wholeheartedly, fearing the Lord. ²³ Whatever task you must do, work as if your soul depends on it, as for the Lord and not for humans, ²⁴ since you know that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward; you serve the Lord Christ. ²⁵ For the wrongdoer will be paid back for whatever wrong has been done, and there is no partiality. **4** ¹ Masters, treat your slaves justly and fairly, for you know that you also have a Master in heaven.

Clearly this passage supports the status quo in First Century Mediterranean culture. That is to say, there is a clear hierarchy present, and the writer makes no suggestion that such an arrangement is unjust. Having said that, it is instructive that *everyone* is reminded that they have “a Master in heaven.” This is why husbands and fathers and masters of slaves – those who undoubtedly sat in the seats of power in this culture – were told in no uncertain terms that their positions of cultural privilege in no way gave them license to abuse their position. Quite the contrary, they are reminded that they will be held accountable to the One Master of All, and it was required of them to live and act justly. In our day and age hierarchies continue to exist; perhaps that will always be the case. No matter the age we live in, those of us who hold positions of privilege and power do well to remember that the Lord Jesus is our example, who came “not to be served, but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many.”

Prayer

Gracious Master of us all, forgive us whenever we abuse the power we have. Forgive us for lording it over those whom we somehow deem less than us. Help us to see all people as worthy of honor, and to devote ourselves to lives of service for the sake of the world and for the glory of your holy name. We pray this through Christ our Lord. AMEN.

Tuesday

Ecclesiastes 12:1-7

Remember your creator in the days of your youth, before the days of trouble come and the years draw near when you will say, “I have no pleasure in them”; ² before the sun and the light and the moon and the stars are darkened and the clouds return with the rain; ³ in the day when the guards of the house tremble, and the strong men are bent, and the women who grind cease working because they are few, and those who look through the windows see dimly; ⁴ when the doors on the street are shut, and the sound of the grinding is low, and one rises up at the sound of a bird, and all the daughters of song are brought low; ⁵ when one is afraid of heights, and terrors are in the road; the almond tree blossoms, the grasshopper drags itself along, and the caper bud falls; because all must go to their eternal home, and the mourners will go about the streets; ⁶ before the silver cord is

snapped, and the golden bowl is broken, and the pitcher is broken at the fountain, and the wheel broken at the cistern, ⁷ and the dust returns to the earth as it was, and the breath returns to God who gave it.

This narrative poem from the last chapter of Ecclesiastes is part of the wisdom literature associated with King Solomon. Here the writer advises us to remember our creator in the days of our youth, before the days of trouble come. The writer then goes on to list the ways that troubles come, poetically describing the process of growing old. Finally, the writer describes death as the time when “the dust returns to the earth as it was, and the breath returns to God who gave it.” These last words are reminiscent of the funeral service where we do both a commendation and a committal. The commendation is the final part of the funeral liturgy where we commend a person to God, or as the wisdom writer says here, “The breath returns to God.” I often say to families who will be taking part in a funeral service for a loved one, “Here is where we say to God, “He/she is all yours now, God.” The breath or spirit of a person returns to God. The committal, usually done at the burial site, recognizes the presence of the body. Here we say the words, “Earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust.” This also is an acknowledgement that our bodies are from God as well, and they too return to God the Creator. We are, we confess, totally *from* God and we return totally *to* God.

Prayer

We thank you, Creator of All Things, that we are totally *from* you and we will someday return totally *to* you. You promise to keep us all our days. You promise to walk with us through the troubles and joys of this life. You promise to grant us your eternal presence in death. Give us faith to believe these promises and to live in joy all our days. We ask this through Christ our Lord. AMEN.

Wednesday

Luke 12:22-31

²² Jesus said to his disciples, “Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat, or about your body, what you will wear. ²³ For life is more than food and the body more than clothing. ²⁴ Consider the ravens: they neither sow nor reap, they have neither storehouse nor barn, and yet God feeds them. Of how much more value are you than the birds! ²⁵ And which of you by worrying can add a single hour to your span of life? ²⁶ If then you are not able to do so small a thing as that, why do you worry about the rest? ²⁷ Consider the lilies, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin, yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not clothed like one of these. ²⁸ But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, how much more will he clothe you, you of little faith! ²⁹ And do not keep seeking what you are to eat and what you are to drink, and do not keep worrying. ³⁰ For it is the nations of the world that seek all these things, and your Father knows that you need them. ³¹ Instead, seek his kingdom, and these things will be given to you as well.”

“Stop worrying,” says Jesus. If only it were that easy! It’s like saying to a person who is afraid of heights, “Relax.” “Easy for you to say,” they might say. And we might say the same to Jesus: “Easy for you to say, ‘Stop worrying,’ when you’re the Son of God and all. As for me, I’m not all-powerful, all-knowing, and all-seeing, and I’ve got lots of good reasons to be worried!” But then Jesus changes our gaze. He points out that worry comes from what we are *seeking, what we are focusing on*. I remember a woman I once knew who was always seeking deals. I visited her home once and she

brought me to her basement where she had literally *hundreds* of cans of food that she had gotten “a deal” on. She was completely blind to the abundance she had because of her obsessive focus on getting deals. We can be like this too, living in abundance, yet continually seeking more. Jesus says, “Seek my kingdom. I will see that you have enough. Seek to live a life of love and compassion. I will take care of you. Seek to bring joy to others. I will bring joy to you.” It’s all about what we are seeking.

Prayer

Gracious Lord of All, grant us faith in you. Grant us the ability to let go of our fears and anxieties and seek those things that will bring your kingdom a little closer in this world. We know that we often worry about things that you have promised to provide for us. Release us from such worry, and give us the joy of seeking the kingdom. We ask this in Jesus’ name. AMEN.

Thursday

Psalm 33:13-22

¹³ The LORD looks down from heaven; he sees all humankind.

¹⁴ From where he sits enthroned he watches all the inhabitants of the earth—

¹⁵ he who fashions the hearts of them all and observes all their deeds.

¹⁶ A king is not saved by his great army; a warrior is not delivered by his great strength.

¹⁷ The war horse is a vain hope for victory,
and by its great might it cannot save.

¹⁸ Truly the eye of the LORD is on those who fear him, on those who hope in his steadfast love,

¹⁹ to deliver their soul from death and to keep them alive in famine.

²⁰ Our soul waits for the LORD; he is our help and shield.

²¹ Our heart is glad in him because we trust in his holy name.

²² Let your steadfast love, O LORD, be upon us, even as we hope in you.

The scene here is of the Lord looking down from heaven and observing the goings on of humankind. No surprise to the Lord, people are seen trusting in power and might. Kings trust in their armies, warriors in their great strength, and war horses trust in their great might. It is as if all creatures, great and small trust in their own strength. This is foolish, says the psalmist. Our only hope is God. God alone is our help and shield. God alone will make our hearts glad. We are no different today. Wars still rage and tyrants still rule. And all the world assumes that the one with the biggest weapons will win. Of course, in our day and age that could include nuclear weapons, which if used, could be the end of all humanity. How much better to trust in the God whom Jesus pointed to, the One who said, “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called children of God.

Prayer

Your way is the way of life, Dear Lord. Your way is the way of peace. Bring us into a right mind that we might see the insanity of trusting in armies and armaments, and instead begin trusting in your wisdom and guidance. Make us into peacemakers, and give to all who seek peace, courage and resolve. In Christ’s name we pray. AMEN.

Friday

Matthew 6:19-24

¹⁹ “Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust consume and where thieves break in and steal, ²⁰ but store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust consumes and where thieves do not break in and steal. ²¹ For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

²² “The eye is the lamp of the body. So if your eye is healthy, your whole body will be full of light, ²³ but if your eye is unhealthy, your whole body will be full of darkness. If, then, the light in you is darkness, how great is the darkness!

²⁴ “No one can serve two masters, for a slave will either hate the one and love the other or be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth.

A friend of mine used to say, “The more stuff you have, the more tending it takes.” That simple phrase reminds us that whatever we accumulate makes demands on us. When we sell our starter home and move into a bigger one, we soon find out that more square footage means more time cleaning and repairing things. When we buy that long-dreamed of lake home, we find we have an extra lawn to mow, another roof to repair, and all the other tasks that go with owning a second home. When we decide to collect keepsakes or artwork or any other fine things we soon learn that all those things need tending, and so it goes. Jesus does not say fine things are a hindrance to faith, but he does remind us that treasures finally demand something from us, and we need to be cognizant of this. We cannot serve God and wealth. Only one master is possible. Better to serve the master who is gracious and forgiving.

Prayer

You are the Gracious Master of us all, Dear Lord. You are the one who gives us life and sustains us all our days. Grant us wisdom with our wealth, and a firm faith in you, all our days. In your precious name we pray. AMEN.