



## Mount Olive Devotions by Pastor Glenn Monson

The Third Week After Pentecost (June 27 – July 1, 2022)

### Monday

Psalm 1

- <sup>1</sup> Happy are those who do not follow the advice of the wicked  
or take the path that sinners tread or sit in the seat of scoffers,  
<sup>2</sup> but their delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law they meditate day and night.  
<sup>3</sup> They are like trees planted by streams of water, which yield their fruit in its season, and their  
leaves do not wither. In all that they do, they prosper.  
<sup>4</sup> The wicked are not so but are like chaff that the wind drives away.  
<sup>5</sup> Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment nor sinners  
in the congregation of the righteous,  
<sup>6</sup> for the LORD watches over the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked will perish.

What is a scoffer? A scoffer, according to Webster's, is a person who treats others with disrespect or contempt using derisive language. In short, a scoffer is a person who puts down others regularly, treating them as though they aren't worthy of respect. It is a sad commentary on our present culture that the breaking of this commandment seems almost continuous in our present age. Comedians are noteworthy in this regard; so are talk show hosts on radio and TV. Social media sites are regularly cesspools of scorn as are many blog sites and podcasts. Given all this, it is no wonder that we are, as the psalmist promises, withering as a culture. We need so badly for 'rain' to fall on us: kind words, respectful dialogue, civil discourse. Paul Tournier, a 20<sup>th</sup> century Swiss psychologist, once said that what we all need most is to be listened to, to be understood, and to be taken seriously. That has never been more true than today. As God's people we can do this. We can offer some 'rain' to others. We call it grace.

### Prayer

Loving God, we have received much grace from you. We have also received much instruction in how to live in grace. Fill us with your gracious Spirit so that we might be people who rain grace upon others, each and every day. In your Son's name we pray. AMEN.

### Tuesday

I Corinthians 16:5-12

- <sup>5</sup> I will visit you after passing through Macedonia—for I intend to pass through Macedonia—  
<sup>6</sup> and perhaps I will stay with you or even spend the winter, so that you may send me on my way,  
wherever I go. <sup>7</sup> I do not want to see you now just in passing, for I hope to spend some time with  
you, if the Lord permits. <sup>8</sup> But I will stay in Ephesus until Pentecost, <sup>9</sup> for a wide door for effective  
work has opened to me, and there are many adversaries.

<sup>10</sup> If Timothy comes, see that he has nothing to fear among you, for he is doing the work of the Lord just as I am; <sup>11</sup> therefore let no one despise him. Send him on his way in peace, so that he may come to me, for I am expecting him with the brothers and sisters.

<sup>12</sup> Now concerning our brother Apollos, I strongly urged him to visit you with the other brothers and sisters, but he was not at all willing to come now. He will come when he has the opportunity.

This last chapter of First Corinthians reminds me that this really was *a letter* that the Apostle Paul was writing. He was saying the things we might say in a letter: his hopes for a visit, his plans for the ministry, his advice concerning others they knew and loved, etc. What becomes obvious when we read this is something we often overlook: the Church is really just people. It's just people worshipping God, serving one another, and caring for the world. The Church is certainly unique in its reception of God's Spirit, and in its responsibility to share the Gospel, but still it remains finally a community, a group of people with a common concern and belief. The Archbishop of Canterbury in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, William Temple, once said, "It is a grave mistake to think that God is chiefly interested in religion." So it is. God is interested in life. God is interested in people. God is interested in how we live together. That must be our concern as well.

### **Prayer**

We thank and praise you, Almighty God, for the gift of the community of faith, for people who bless us every day by their faith, their humor, their patience, and their wisdom. Help us to treasure one another, knowing that we are all children of God, called to share the abundant life given to us in Jesus Christ. We ask this through Christ our Lord. AMEN.

### **Wednesday**

Proverbs 5:7-14

<sup>7</sup> And now, my child, listen to me, and do not depart from the words of my mouth.

<sup>8</sup> Keep your way far from her, and do not go near the door of her house,

<sup>9</sup> lest you give your honor to others and your years to the merciless,

<sup>10</sup> and strangers take their fill of your wealth, and your labors go to the house of an alien,

<sup>11</sup> and at the end of your life you groan, when your flesh and body are consumed,

<sup>12</sup> and you say, "Oh, how I hated discipline, and my heart despised reproof!

<sup>13</sup> I did not listen to the voice of my teachers or incline my ear to my instructors.

<sup>14</sup> Now I am at the point of utter ruin in the public assembly."

It is interesting that in the Book of Proverbs, both wisdom and foolishness are personified as women. In this passage it is foolishness that we are advised to stay clear of. In the earlier verses in this chapter the writer points out how seductive foolishness is. He says that foolishness has the taste of honey but its end is bitterness. In this passage the results of following foolish ways are laid out: we lose our honor, our wealth, our health, and at our end, even flesh and body are consumed. We need to pray for ourselves and one another that we are not seduced by foolishness these days.

As Lutherans we believe that the powers that lead us away from God's ways are 1) Our own lusts and desires, 2) The world's lies and deceptions, and 3) The Destroyer, Satan. We pray against all these things. The wisdom writer is clear: God's wisdom is the way of life. Worldly foolishness only leads to sorrow and regret.

### **Prayer**

Send your angels to guard us these days, O God. Surround us with faithful voices who will speak with truth and integrity. Protect your Church from being drawn into the ways of destruction. Thwart the plans of liars and despots. Bring sanity and wholeness to our common life, and by your Spirit, grant us peace. We pray all this in the strong name of Christ our Lord. AMEN.

### **Thursday**

Luke 4:31-37

<sup>31</sup> [Jesus] went down to Capernaum, a city in Galilee, and was teaching them on the Sabbath. <sup>32</sup> They were astounded at his teaching because he spoke with authority. <sup>33</sup> In the synagogue there was a man who had the spirit of an unclean demon, and he cried out with a loud voice, <sup>34</sup> "Leave us alone! What have you to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are, the Holy One of God." <sup>35</sup> But Jesus rebuked him, saying, "Be quiet and come out of him!" Then the demon, throwing the man down before them, came out of him without doing him any harm. <sup>36</sup> They were all astounded and kept saying to one another, "What kind of word is this, that with authority and power he commands the unclean spirits and they come out?" <sup>37</sup> And news about him began to reach every place in the region.

This story about Jesus and his dialogue with an unclean demon is illustrative of how authority works. The demon knew that Jesus had authority, and because of this he feared him. He knew that a person who truly has authority has the capability of doing anything they please, even to the point of destroying another. And so the demon cried out, on behalf of his demonic community, "Leave us alone!" This story illustrates how important it is that people in authority are trustworthy. Whether they be law enforcement personnel, judges, attorneys, doctors, teachers, pastors, or any others in authority, being able to trust them is paramount, for their authority gives them the power to do things that they otherwise would not be entitled to do. As people of God, when we are given authority, God calls us to use it wisely and justly. As people of God, we are also called to hold others accountable when they misuse their authority. Nothing less than the well-being of our world is at stake.

### **Prayer**

Almighty God, you have given each of us a certain degree of authority, whether as parents or as leaders or as supervisors of others. Forgive us whenever we have misused this authority. Grant us faithfulness and wisdom in our decision-making. Grant that we who have authority might be found to be using it always to your glory and for the blessing of all. In Christ's name we pray. AMEN.

## Friday

Psalm 96:1-9

<sup>1</sup> O sing to the LORD a new song; sing to the LORD, all the earth.

<sup>2</sup> Sing to the LORD; bless his name; tell of his salvation from day to day.

<sup>3</sup> Declare his glory among the nations, his marvelous works among all the peoples.

<sup>4</sup> For great is the LORD and greatly to be praised; he is to be revered above all gods.

<sup>5</sup> For all the gods of the peoples are idols, but the LORD made the heavens.

<sup>6</sup> Honor and majesty are before him; strength and beauty are in his sanctuary.

<sup>7</sup> Ascribe to the LORD, O families of the peoples, ascribe to the LORD glory and strength.

<sup>8</sup> Ascribe to the LORD the glory due his name; bring an offering, and come into his courts.

<sup>9</sup> Worship the LORD in holy splendor; tremble before him, all the earth.

We, in our day, do not often talk about idols. Perhaps we have seen pictures of people in distant lands for whom worship includes small objects of veneration, but we in the Western world aren't typically involved with idols. In the days of the psalmist, idols were common and an accepted part of the culture. But notice how clear the psalmist is in delineating between the Lord and idols: "All the gods of the peoples are idols, *but the Lord made the heavens.*" It's as if the psalmist is saying, "Yes, you have idols that you may attribute some power to, but here's the difference, *the Lord God made all things!*" In other words, our God and these household gods are not even to be compared; they are worlds apart in power and authority. This reminds me of St. Paul's succinct statement regarding idols. He said, "Indeed, even though there may be so-called gods in heaven or on earth – as in fact there are many gods and many lords – yet for us there is one God, the Father, from whom are all things and for whom we exist, and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things and through whom we exist." (I Corinthians 8:5-6). There it is: there are idols and there is the Living God. We need never confuse the two.

## Prayer

Almighty God, Gracious Creator of all, we praise you for your power and wisdom. You have created all things, and you are worthy of all praise. Keep us from following false gods that have neither power nor goodness. Keep us close to you, listening to your wisdom, following in your ways, and walking in the way of your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, in whose name we pray. AMEN.