



## Mount Olive Devotions by Pastor Glenn Monson

The Twelfth Week After Pentecost (August 29 – September 2, 2022)

### Monday

James 2:1-7

My brothers and sisters, do not claim the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ of glory while showing partiality. <sup>2</sup> For if a person with gold rings and in fine clothes comes into your assembly, and if a poor person in dirty clothes also comes in, <sup>3</sup> and if you take notice of the one wearing the fine clothes and say, “Have a seat here in a good place, please,” while to the one who is poor you say, “Stand there,” or, “Sit by my footstool,” <sup>4</sup> have you not made distinctions among yourselves and become judges with evil thoughts? <sup>5</sup> Listen, my beloved brothers and sisters. Has not God chosen the poor in the world to be rich in faith and to be heirs of the kingdom that he has promised to those who love him? <sup>6</sup> But you have dishonored the poor person. Is it not the rich who oppress you? Is it not they who drag you into the courts? <sup>7</sup> Is it not they who blaspheme the excellent name that was invoked over you?

Showing partiality is something we all do. We naturally gravitate towards people like us – those who look like us, speak like us, and appear to have similar tastes. This is not wrong; it just is. What James reminds us is that partiality can also take on a prejudicial tone, whereby we not only gravitate towards those who are like us, but we put down those who are not like us. Typically this means people we might view as “less” than us, by virtue of their financial wherewithal, their education, their ability or disability, their physical appearance, etc. are regarded by us as less honored. This is where we need to stop and remember that God’s children come in all shapes and sizes, all colors, all flavors, and all abilities. Regarding one as more deserving of honor than another is simply a failure to see people as God sees them.

### Prayer

Forgive us, Lord, when our partiality turns nasty. Forgive us when we dishonor those we encounter by failing to see them as you do. Grant us gracious spirits, generous hearts, and eyes that see beyond appearances so that all might receive the honor they deserve as children of God. In your holy name we pray. AMEN.

### Tuesday

Proverbs 19: 4, 6-7, 10, 17

<sup>4</sup> Wealth brings many friends, but the poor are left friendless.

<sup>6</sup> Many seek the favor of the generous, and everyone is a friend to a giver of gifts.

<sup>7</sup> If the poor are hated even by their kin, how much more are they shunned by their friends!

When they call after them, they are not there. <sup>10</sup> It is not fitting for a fool to live in luxury, much less for a slave to rule over princes. <sup>17</sup> Whoever is kind to the poor lends to the LORD and will be repaid in full.

It has been said that the Bible speaks about money more than any other subject, and certainly the book of Proverbs is full of wisdom sayings regarding money. In chapter 19 we have some examples. We can laugh at the observation that the rich have many 'friends' and the poor few, but just ask a lottery winner and they will tell you about the 'friends' that suddenly showed up. The writer of Proverbs also reminds us that a fool with riches is often a disastrous combination. Great wealth brings with it the need for great wisdom, for great wealth is a fire that can burn out of control in a moment. Finally, the writer reminds us that God has an interesting lending policy. Whenever we are kind to the poor, we, in fact, are lending money to the Lord, and the Lord will repay us with interest. What a generous God we have!

### **Prayer**

Give us wisdom, O Holy One, with our great wealth. We live in a land of abundance and all that we need is ever present. Give us grateful hearts, generous spirits, and a willingness to share our abundance with those in need, so that all may enjoy the abundance you provide. In your holy name we pray. AMEN.

### **Wednesday**

I John 3:16-22

<sup>16</sup> We know love by this, that he laid down his life for us—and we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers and sisters. <sup>17</sup> How does God's love abide in anyone who has the world's goods and sees a brother or sister in need and yet refuses help?

<sup>18</sup> Little children, let us love not in word or speech but in deed and truth. <sup>19</sup> And by this we will know that we are from the truth and will reassure our hearts before him <sup>20</sup> whenever our hearts condemn us, for God is greater than our hearts, and he knows everything. <sup>21</sup> Beloved, if our hearts do not condemn us, we have boldness before God, <sup>22</sup> and we receive from him whatever we ask, because we obey his commandments and do what pleases him.

The first line in this passage says it all: we love because Christ first loved us. Our lives are simply a response to the love of God. Our giving is simply a response to God's generosity to us. Our willingness to forgive, to be steadfast in the face of challenges, to be patient even when we want to lash out – all this comes from the fact that this is how God has first dealt with us. *We have been forgiven, so we forgive. We have been shown steadfast love, so we show steadfast love. God has been patient with us, so we are patient with others.* Perhaps then the best way to start each day is to simply meditate upon the ways God's love has been shown to us, and then that might set us up to mirror those acts of love in our own lives.

### **Prayer**

We thank and praise you for your steadfast love, O God. We thank and praise you for the life Christ laid down on our behalf. Give us grateful hearts, and then use us to bring this steadfast love to the world. We are your servants. Use us for your glory, we pray. In the name of Christ. AMEN.

## Thursday

Ecclesiastes 9:13-18

<sup>13</sup> I have also seen this example of wisdom under the sun, and it seemed great to me. <sup>14</sup> There was a little city with few people in it. A great king came against it and besieged it, building great siegeworks against it. <sup>15</sup> Now there was found in it a poor wise man, and he by his wisdom delivered the city. Yet no one remembered that poor man. <sup>16</sup> So I said, "Wisdom is better than might; yet the poor man's wisdom is despised, and his words are not heeded."

<sup>17</sup> The quiet words of the wise are more to be heeded than the shouting of a ruler among fools.

<sup>18</sup> Wisdom is better than weapons of war, but one bungler destroys much good.

I have always been thankful for common folks who have uncommon wisdom. Churches are often filled with such people. I remember a man that my father used to talk about. This man could build anything, fix anything, and seemed able to tackle any problem. Even though he was a man without a college education, a man who lacked any of the sophistication you might regularly assume to be necessary to be wise, he was uncommonly wise. This is the kind of person that the wisdom writer was speaking about in this passage. This is the wise one whose quiet words are to be heeded more than the shouting of the ruling fool. I wonder if it isn't long past time for us to start listening again to the quiet voices amongst us – those who can easily get lost in the din of nonsense that assaults us so regularly – and hear what they have to say. It may be that they are the ones who will save the city.

## Prayer

Thank you, God, for common people with uncommon wisdom. Thank you for common folk who see what is right and true and speak that truth. Thank you for common persons who live amongst us who speak softly and lead us in the ways of wisdom. Give us ears to hear them, O God. Give us courage to follow their lead, trusting that you are guiding us. In your holy name we pray. AMEN.

## Friday

Matthew 25:31-40

<sup>31</sup> "When the Son of Man comes in his glory and all the angels with him, then he will sit on the throne of his glory. <sup>32</sup> All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats, <sup>33</sup> and he will put the sheep at his right hand and the goats at the left. <sup>34</sup> Then the king will say to those at his right hand, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world, <sup>35</sup> for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, <sup>36</sup> I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me.' <sup>37</sup> Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry and gave you food or thirsty and gave you something to drink? <sup>38</sup> And when was it that we saw you a stranger and welcomed you or naked and gave you clothing? <sup>39</sup> And when was it that we saw you sick or in prison and visited you?' <sup>40</sup> And the king will answer them, 'Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did it to me.'

In this well-known passage we often concentrate on the words of the king who commended the person for their acts of charity. This is as it should be, but what is equally telling is the response of the faithful person. What do they say? They ask, "When did we see you hungry, thirsty, naked, or a stranger? And when did we see you sick or in prison?" You see they are completely unaware of their own acts of charity. They are blind to their own righteousness because they are so completely engaged in helping those in need. Martin Luther, in his commentary on the Magnificat, once said that it never enters the mind of the humble that they are humble because they are so completely consumed with humble acts. They are then always surprised by any honors bestowed on them, and indeed wonder what all the fuss is about. What all this points out is that true service is always outward centered, not inward looking. True service seeks the good of those served not the adulation that comes from service. As Jesus famously said, "Strive first for the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well."

### **Prayer**

Grant us hearts that are fixed solely on serving you, Gracious One. Grant us eyes that see the needs before us and not our own reward. Grant us the faith to believe that when we seek your kingdom and righteousness, all that we require will be provided. In your precious name we pray. AMEN.