



Mount Olive Devotions by Pastor Glenn Monson

The 20th Week After Pentecost (October 24 – 28, 2022)

Monday

I Peter 4:7-11

⁷ The end of all things is near; therefore be serious and discipline yourselves for the sake of your prayers. ⁸ Above all, maintain constant love for one another, for love covers a multitude of sins. ⁹ Be hospitable to one another without complaining. ¹⁰ Like good stewards of the manifold grace of God, serve one another with whatever gift each of you has received. ¹¹ Whoever speaks must do so as one speaking the very words of God; whoever serves must do so with the strength that God supplies, so that God may be glorified in all things through Jesus Christ. To him belong the glory and the power forever and ever. Amen.

Scholars have, for years, recognized that Christians in the first century of the Church very much expected Christ to return in their lifetime. They truly thought “the end of things” was near. In today’s world most of us do not think in those terms. We believe that the End will come, but few of us expect it in our lifetime. Indeed, we tend to dismiss people who spend a lot of time announcing that the End is near, perhaps pegging them as mentally unstable or even deranged. In the apostle Peter’s letter it is clear that nothing could be further from his thinking. But notice what Peter exhorts the believers to do as a matter of first priority: “*maintain constant love* for one another, for love covers a multitude of sins.” Isn’t that interesting. The most important thing we can do as we await the 2nd coming of Christ is to maintain constant love for those in the faith community. Why? Because this love “covers a multitude of sins.” In other words, mutual love makes up for the fact that we are all sinners, all the time, which means we do and say things that are hurtful to one another. So that’s our agenda as we look forward to Christ’s coming: we love another.

Prayer

Loving God, give us your loving spirit. Forgiving God, give us your forgiving spirit. Compassionate God, give us your compassionate spirit. We are so prone to be unloving, even though we wish to be otherwise. Help us in our weakness, we pray. In the name of Jesus. AMEN.

Tuesday

Matthew 20:20-28

²⁰ Then the mother of the sons of Zebedee came to him with her sons, and kneeling before him, she asked a favor of him. ²¹ And he said to her, “What do you want?” She said to him, “Declare that these two sons of mine will sit, one at your right hand and one at your left, in your kingdom.” ²² But Jesus answered, “You do not know what you are asking. Are you able to drink the cup that I am about to drink?” They said to him, “We are able.” ²³ He said to them, “You will indeed drink my cup, but to sit at my right hand and at my left, this is not mine to grant, but it is for those for whom it has

been prepared by my Father.”

²⁴ When the ten heard it, they were angry with the two brothers. ²⁵ But Jesus called them to him and said, “You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones are tyrants over them. ²⁶ It will not be so among you; but whoever wishes to be great among you must be your servant, ²⁷ and whoever wishes to be first among you must be your slave; ²⁸ just as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many.”

I remember as a kid playing King of the Mountain. It usually happened after school in the winter when there were huge snow piles around town. We’d scramble to the top of one of those big piles and attempt to be the one who stayed on top. Of course everyone else’s job was to throw us off. For some reason the disciples of Jesus had this notion of life in Christ’s kingdom. They thought being king of the mountain was part of their calling. “Not so much,” said Jesus. And Jesus says the same thing to us. When we start to believe that our place as disciples of Christ is to take the best seats at the table, and the most honored positions in the community, and receive the most acclaim for our efforts, Jesus says, “Not so much.” He reminds us that as he came *not* to be served but to serve, so that is our calling too. We find that such service is actually where life and joy are found.

Prayer

Thank you for showing us the joy of being a servant, Lord Christ. Thank you for calling us into service, and for equipping us for it every day. Thank you for people who serve joyfully and show us the way. Help us all to be joyful servants of yours. In your holy name we pray. AMEN.

Wednesday

Psalm 119:63-72

⁶³ I am a companion of all who fear you, of those who keep your precepts.

⁶⁴ The earth, O LORD, is full of your steadfast love; teach me your statutes.

⁶⁵ You have dealt well with your servant, O LORD, according to your word.

⁶⁶ Teach me good judgment and knowledge, for I believe in your commandments.

⁶⁷ Before I was humbled I went astray, but now I keep your word.

⁶⁸ You are good and do good; teach me your statutes.

⁶⁹ The arrogant smear me with lies, but with my whole heart I keep your precepts.

⁷⁰ Their hearts are fat and gross, but I delight in your law.

⁷¹ It is good for me that I was humbled, so that I might learn your statutes.

⁷² The law of your mouth is better to me than thousands of gold and silver pieces.

In this section of Psalm 119 the writer mentions more than one time that he learned wisdom by being humbled. I don’t know about you, but that’s not my favorite way of learning wisdom. But the fact is, it really works. Years ago, I was in the market for my first car. I had seen an ad in a magazine for the French car, Peugeot, and I had fallen in love with that car. When I went car shopping my dad advised me to buy a new car with a warranty, a small, sporty car that would serve

me without problems. But I saw a used Peugeot on the lot and said, “No new car for me. I want that Peugeot.” So I bought it. Talk about learning wisdom by being humbled! That car was in the shop more than it was on the road. Meanwhile the car my dad wanted me to buy was so popular that I could have sold it three years later for more than I paid for it! Ouch. Being humbled is no fun, but there’s no doubt that it can lead to some lessons well learned. It can also lead to life.

Prayer

God of all wisdom, thank you for your desire to guide us in the way of truth all our days. Thank you for wise teachers, mentors, and leaders who lead us in your way. Thank you, also, for humbling us now and then to teach us well. Help us to listen so that we might gain the wisdom that leads to life. In your holy name we pray. AMEN.

Thursday

Isaiah 2:12-17

¹² For the LORD of hosts has a day against all that is proud and lofty,
against all that is lifted up and high;

¹³ against all the cedars of Lebanon, lofty and lifted up; and against all the oaks of Bashan;

¹⁴ against all the high mountains, and against all the lofty hills;

¹⁵ against every high tower, and against every fortified wall;

¹⁶ against all the ships of Tarshish, and against all the beautiful craft.

¹⁷ The haughtiness of people shall be humbled, and the pride of everyone shall be brought low;
and the LORD alone will be exalted on that day.

Gerhard Forde, a longtime professor of systematic theology at Luther Seminary, used to talk about our “upward rebellion” against God. But this he meant that we are always trying to be like God. That first temptation in the Garden of Eden, when the tempter said to Eve, “God knows that when you eat of [the tree of knowledge] your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God,” is still with us. We want so much to be all-knowing, and yet our knowledge is incomplete. We want so much to be all-powerful, and yet our powers are limited. We want so much to be immortal, but our bodies are in a constant state of decay. All of our limits as mortals are a source of frustration to us and so we rebel against God, crying out, “I want more!” Isaiah the prophet recognized this too. He saw upward rebellion in everything from the cedars of Lebanon to the ships of Tarshish. Wherever the creation was prone to declare itself mighty the prophet said, “Remember that there is but One who is to be exalted.” Humility is the garment that suits us best, not pride.

Prayer

Forgive us, Lord, for our upward rebellion. Forgive us for our desire to be in control of all things. We know that would be a disaster, and yet it is our desire. Grant us humility and the grace to live humbly in joy all our days. In the Name of Christ we pray. AMEN.

Friday

Isaiah 57:17-21

¹⁷ Because of their wicked covetousness I was angry;
I struck them, I hid and was angry;
but they kept turning back to their own ways.

¹⁸ I have seen their ways, but I will heal them;
I will lead them and repay them with comfort,
creating for their mourners the fruit of the lips.

¹⁹ Peace, peace, to the far and the near, says the LORD;
and I will heal them.

²⁰ But the wicked are like the tossing sea
that cannot keep still;
its waters toss up mire and mud.

²¹ There is no peace, says my God, for the wicked.

“There’s no rest for the wicked,” is a phrase one might hear just about anywhere these days. A boss is working late and a co-worker comes by and says, “No rest for the wicked, eh?” Or a homeowner is busy cutting the grass or painting or doing some other household chore and the neighbor calls across the lawn, “I can see there’s no rest for the wicked.” It’s a phrase we use in jest in many situations. The prophet Isaiah was not jesting, however. He meant it. The wicked have no peace, but are like the tossing sea, he said, tossing up mire and mud. Perhaps this means that the wicked are stirring up trouble for themselves and others, or that their speech is continually tearing others down, what we call mudslinging. Peace, however, comes to those whom the Lord draws near, says the prophet. Peace and healing come to those whom God embraces and comforts. Peace comes to those who quit their wicked ways and allow God to show them the way. Peace comes to those who confess sin and hear the word of God’s forgiveness. Rest comes to the forgiven.

Prayer

Grant us peace, dear Lord. Help us to let go of patterns of life that stir up trouble for ourselves and others. Give us good and faithful friends who will support us in the ways of goodness and life. In all things, be near us and guide us we pray. In Christ’s name. AMEN.