



Mount Olive Devotions by Pastor Glenn Monson

The 21st Week After Pentecost (October 31 – November 4, 2022)

Monday

Psalm 1

- ¹ 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,
² but their delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law they meditate day and night.
³ 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.
⁴ The wicked are not so but are like chaff that the wind drives away.
⁵ Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment
nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous,
⁶ for the LORD watches over the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked will perish.

There is a pair of Burr Oaks that stand in the park just outside the east windows of our home. I am always amazed at how fruitful and resilient they are. In the spring they look like they are dead (though they are not) compared to other trees as they are late to come out of their winter slumber and acquire greenery. In the summer they are green and strong, no matter the rain or lack thereof. Now, in the fall their leaves have turned a brilliant yellow but they will not drop as other trees do. They will remain hanging on through the winter until the new green sprouts push through in the spring. The psalmist says that God's faithful people are like these trees. They bear fruit in season and do not wither even when winds and storms assail them. They know that the Lord watches over them, and living in that promise, they retain their commitment to service and experience the attendant joy. In all things they stand as a testament to God's undying faithfulness. How good it is to know that God's faithfulness endures and because of that, God's people endure as well.

Prayer

Thank you, Ever-living God, that your faithfulness is everlasting. Thank you that because of your active Spirit in our lives we can stand tall and bear fruit all our days. Enable each of us to live in faith, to take joy in you and in one another, and to finally find our rest in you, our Savior and Lord. AMEN.

Tuesday

Deuteronomy 7:12-16

¹² "If you heed these ordinances by diligently observing them, the LORD your God will maintain with you the covenant loyalty that he swore to your ancestors; ¹³ he will love you, bless you, and multiply you; he will bless the fruit of your womb and the fruit of your ground, your grain and your wine and

your oil, the increase of your cattle and the issue of your flock, in the land that he swore to your ancestors to give you. ¹⁴You shall be the most blessed of peoples, with neither sterility nor barrenness among you or your livestock. ¹⁵The LORD will turn away from you every illness; all the dread diseases of Egypt that you experienced, he will not inflict on you, but he will lay them on all who hate you. ¹⁶You shall devour all the peoples that the LORD your God is giving over to you, showing them no pity; you shall not serve their gods, for that would be a snare to you.

The promises in this chapter are given to the Israelite people as they are preparing to enter the land of Canaan. It has been many years since their escape from slavery in Egypt, indeed nearly the entire generation that left Egypt has passed away. Now Moses is reminding the people that the Lord has made a covenant with them, and that covenant must be the basis for their life together. Moses stresses the fact that blessings follow the keeping of this covenant, but serving other gods is nothing but a snare for them. We also live in a covenant with our God, a covenant sealed in the waters of baptism. At our baptism we or our parents or sponsors promise to faithfully live out the calling which is ours. At the affirmation of baptism – a rite we call confirmation – we once again affirm our intention to “continue in the covenant God made with us in Holy Baptism,” to live, hear, share, proclaim, serve and strive according to God’s will for our lives. Once again, we affirm that as we live in this covenant we are blessed. God is the same today and yesterday and tomorrow.

Prayer

As you made covenant with Israel so many years ago, so you have made covenant with us in our baptism, O God. We thank and praise you for this marvelous covenant with all its gifts. Grant us your Spirit so that we might be inspired each day to live faithfully, following in the footsteps of Christ, who showed us the way of justice, peace and love. We ask this through Christ our Lord. AMEN.

Wednesday

Matthew 10:34-39

³⁴ “Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth;

I have not come to bring peace but a sword.

³⁵ For I have come to set a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law,

³⁶ and one’s foes will be members of one’s own household.

³⁷ “Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me, and whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me, ³⁸ and whoever does not take up the cross and follow me is not worthy of me. ³⁹ Those who find their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will find it.

These strident words were spoken by Jesus to the twelve disciples as he sent them out on their first mission. He was making clear to them what discipleship meant. Of course, all of them were Jews,

and so following Jesus would inevitably find them in conflict with the traditions of their elders. Jesus reminded them that finally *his* claim on them was superior to even that of their families'. That must have been a bitter pill to swallow. As we continue to heed the call to discipleship we too are left with choices. When family or career or leisure activities or even seemingly noble causes threaten to pull us away from Christ we must choose: will we continue to follow Christ in this circumstance or not? Sometimes the choices are neither simple nor easy. In all this we must remember that Christ's way is the way of *life*, and his call is meant neither to estrange us from others nor to rob us of joy. Quite the contrary, when we follow Christ we experience life in all of its fullness.

Prayer

Discipleship is often tough for us, dear Lord. We hear the call to sacrifice and we falter. We hear the call to leave behind people and things that pull us away from you, and we struggle. Help us to trust that your way for us is the way of life. Grant us faith, we pray. In your precious name. AMEN.

Thursday

II Kings 17:24-28

²⁴The king of Assyria brought people from Babylon, Cuthah, Avva, Hamath, and Sepharvaim and placed them in the cities of Samaria in place of the people of Israel; they took possession of Samaria and settled in its cities. ²⁵When they first settled there, they did not worship the LORD; therefore the LORD sent lions among them that killed some of them. ²⁶So the king of Assyria was told, "The nations that you have carried away and placed in the cities of Samaria do not know the law of the god of the land; therefore he has sent lions among them; they are killing them because they do not know the law of the god of the land." ²⁷Then the king of Assyria commanded, "Send there one of the priests whom you carried away from there; let him go and live there and teach them the law of the god of the land." ²⁸So one of the priests whom they had carried away from Samaria came and lived in Bethel; he taught them how they should worship the LORD.

Isn't this an interesting passage. Following the defeat of Israel by the Assyrian army and the subsequent exile of many of Israel's leaders, the king of Assyria sent citizens of his country to live in Israel. As they settled there they necessarily brought with them their pagan gods and worship practices. When this idolatry proved to be a curse to them they cried out to the king who commanded that the transplanted Assyrians be taught in the ways of "the god of the land." And so the Assyrians were taught to worship the Lord. In this way these Assyrians were given a glimpse into life as a covenant nation. I wonder if we ever do this. Do we see people who are floundering in their religious practice and offer them the experience of life in Christ? Do we know people for whom the life of faith is only burden and guilt and offer them a glimpse of grace? Perhaps this story reminds us of the blessing that is ours in our life with Christ, and urges us on to extend this blessing to others.

Prayer

You are the God of All People, Holy One. You are the creator of all things. We give you all honor and praise for your wonderful works. Help us to share generously with others the blessing we have received as your people. Keep us from fear and doubt. Remind us that you are calling all people to yourself. In your holy name we pray. AMEN.

Friday

I Timothy 4:6-10

⁶ If you put these instructions before the brothers and sisters, you will be a good servant of Christ Jesus, nourished on the words of the faith and of the sound teaching that you have followed. ⁷ Have nothing to do with profane and foolish tales. Train yourself in godliness, ⁸ for, while physical training is of some value, godliness is valuable in every way, holding promise for both the present life and the life to come. ⁹ The saying is sure and worthy of full acceptance. ¹⁰ For to this end we toil and suffer reproach, because we have our hope set on the living God, who is the Savior of all people, especially of those who believe.

Some of us have a workout routine. We go to the gym, or we lift weights at home, or we have a regular time at the racquetball court. Our goal is to get in good physical shape, or perhaps to stay in some semblance of physical shape. This is important work, and we are told that such training will likely give us a better quality of life, especially as we age. The elder who wrote to Timothy also recognized the value of physical training, but he insisted that training in godliness is of even greater value, as it holds promise for “both the present life and the life to come.” That’s true. Training in godliness *does* provide blessings right now *and* it provides blessings for the life to come. How do we train in godliness? A routine of prayer, scripture reading, listening to God, serving others, worship, and fellowship with other believers are just a few ways that God’s people, down through the ages, have trained in godliness. As you find your own way, you will be blessed.

Prayer

We wish to be strong in faith and love, O God. Train us. We wish to be faithful in the Word and in prayer. Sustain us. We wish to be servants to others, a source of encouragement and hope, always bearing testimony to the life of Christ within us. Fill us. We pray all this in the name of Jesus our Savior. AMEN.