



Mount Olive Devotions by Pastor Glenn Monson

The 22nd Week After Pentecost (November 7 – 11, 2022)

Monday

II Kings 19:1-7

When King Hezekiah heard it, he tore his clothes, covered himself with sackcloth, and went into the house of the LORD. ² And he sent Eliakim, who was in charge of the palace, and Shebna the secretary, and the senior priests, covered with sackcloth, to the prophet Isaiah son of Amoz. ³ They said to him, “Thus says Hezekiah: This day is a day of distress, of rebuke, and of disgrace; children have come to the birth, and there is no strength to bring them forth. ⁴ It may be that the LORD your God heard all the words of the Rabshakeh, whom his master the king of Assyria has sent to mock the living God, and will rebuke the words that the LORD your God has heard; therefore lift up your prayer for the remnant that is left.” ⁵ When the servants of King Hezekiah came to Isaiah, ⁶ Isaiah said to them, “Say to your master: Thus says the LORD: Do not be afraid because of the words that you have heard, with which the servants of the king of Assyria have reviled me. ⁷ I myself will put a spirit in him so that he shall hear a rumor and return to his own land; I will cause him to fall by the sword in his own land.”

Prior to this passage the king of Assyria had sent a message to King Hezekiah, saying, “Do not let your God on whom you rely deceive you by promising that Jerusalem will not be given into the hand of the king of Assyria.” This is the ultimate insult to God, that God would deceive God’s people. It reminds us of the words of the serpent in the Garden who said to Eve when he heard that God had said she and Adam would die if they ate of the tree in the middle of the garden: “You will not die; for God knows that when you eat of it... you will be like God.” The serpent, you see, was suggesting that God was deceiving them. This voice can also come to us. When we, like King Hezekiah, face daunting odds, perhaps when we or a loved one is gravely ill, or badly injured, or when catastrophe or tragedy strikes, we too might hear this voice that says, “God has deceived you. God has no care of you.” Whenever we hear this voice we must remember the words of Jesus, “I am the Good Shepherd. I am the Bread of Life. I am the Way, the Truth and the Life.” The Deceiver will not have the last word as we turn our gaze to Jesus and hear him say, “I am with you always, even to the close of the days.”

Prayer

Give us faith, dear Lord, especially in those days that are difficult. When we are grieving comfort us. When we are weak strengthen us. When we are lonely embrace us. When we are hungry feed us. Fill us with your Spirit every day, so that, come what may, we might be found faithful and joyful. In your precious name we pray. AMEN.

Tuesday

Luke 18:18-27

¹⁸ A certain ruler asked him, “Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?” ¹⁹ Jesus said to him, “Why do you call me good? No one is good but God alone. ²⁰ You know the commandments: ‘You shall not commit adultery. You shall not murder. You shall not steal. You shall not bear false witness. Honor your father and mother.’ ” ²¹ He replied, “I have kept all these since my youth.” ²² When Jesus heard this, he said to him, “There is still one thing lacking. Sell all that you own and distribute the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; then come, follow me.” ²³ But when he heard this, he became sad, for he was very rich. ²⁴ Jesus looked at him and said, “How hard it is for those who have wealth to enter the kingdom of God! ²⁵ Indeed, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of God.” ²⁶ Those who heard it said, “Then who can be saved?” ²⁷ He replied, “What is impossible for mortals is possible for God.”

There is both Law and Gospel in this passage. On one hand we hear the warning regarding wealth. There is no doubt that Jesus is warning us that wealth can short circuit our relationship with God. We can become so distracted by, and focused on our accumulated wealth that we no longer find our center, our Rock, to be God. Our bank account becomes that. As Luther said in his *Large Catechism*, “Whatever your heart clings to and confides in, that is *really* your God.” On the other hand, there is a promise in this passage as well: “What is impossible for mortals is possible for God.” This promise reminds us that wealth need not ensnare us and rob us of a rich relationship with God. God’s Spirit can free us to live generously, to focus on the Giver and not the gifts, and to be faithful stewards of all God gives. The fact is, there will always be wealthy people amongst God’s people. It is no sin to be wealthy. We must simply be vigilant to listen to the words of Jesus that continually say, “Follow me. I am the way to abundant life.”

Prayer

Good Creator, thank you for the abundance you have poured on your people. Thank you for abundant resources to use to serve others and bring glory to you. Help us always to live our lives freely, generously, and faithfully, reminded that you are the Source of all things, and as we live in you, we experience life in all of its abundance. In your holy name we pray. AMEN.

Wednesday

Psalm 51:1-4

¹ Have mercy on me, O God, according to your steadfast love; according to your abundant mercy, blot out my transgressions. ² Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. ³ For I know my transgressions and my sin is ever before me. ⁴ Against you, you alone, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight, so that you are justified in your sentence and blameless when you pass judgment.

These opening words of King David are thought to be his confession following his encounter with the prophet Nathan, who made known his adulterous and murderous affair with Bathsheba (recounted in II Samuel 12). What David understood, and what we often fail to understand, is that sins not only hurt us and other people, they also hurt God. David, in fact, claims that his sin was done against *God alone*, for his sin was done in secret. No one, with the exception of Bathsheba, knew that David had taken Bathsheba for himself, and had had her husband killed. David's sin and guilt were his alone, or so he thought. With Nathan's rebuke, he understood that nothing that he had done was a secret to God. All was known to God. It is good for us to remember this too. Our secret sins may be things *others* fail to see or suspect about us, but God knows. God knows everything about us, and certainly God knows our sins. We can learn from David and say with him, "Against you, you alone, O God, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight." When we do this, we are assured of God's forgiveness; that is sure, for as the psalmist says, "As far as the east is from the west, so far will I remove your transgressions from you."

Prayer

Thank you for your forgiveness, Merciful God. Thank you for your Spirit of rebuke that calls us to repentance. Keep us from deceiving ourselves, thinking you do not see or know us. Remind us of your love and your desire that we be wholly yours. Grant us your peace, O God. In the Name of Jesus we pray. AMEN.

Thursday

I Timothy 1:1-7

Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the command of God our Savior and of Christ Jesus our hope, ²To Timothy, my true child in the faith: Grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord. ³I urge you, as I did when I was on my way to Macedonia, to remain in Ephesus so that you may instruct certain people not to teach different teachings ⁴and not to occupy themselves with myths and endless genealogies that promote speculations rather than the divine training that is known by faith. ⁵But the aim of such instruction is love that comes from a pure heart, a good conscience, and sincere faith. ⁶Some people have deviated from these and turned to meaningless talk, ⁷desiring to be teachers of the law, without understanding either what they are saying or the things about which they make assertions.

These opening words to Timothy are instructive to us even in this modern age. Paul says, "Do not occupy yourselves with myths and endless genealogies that promote speculations." In other words, as disciples of Christ, we are not to occupy ourselves with endless chatter about things that lead us nowhere. Martin Luther was of much the same mind. It is reported that when asked what God was doing before God made the world, Luther replied, "God was making hell for people who ask such questions!" In other words, don't spend your time wondering about such things; it leads nowhere. Paul says that rather we should spend our time in 'divine training' which has as its aim "love that

comes from a pure heart, a good conscience, and sincere faith.” We can see immediately that these are aims that bear fruit in our lives. Paul says elsewhere that faith, hope, and love are the greatest gifts. This godly training leads us there.

Prayer

Thank you, Divine Teacher, that you guide us in faith. Thank you for your word that is a “lamp to our feet and a light to our path.” Help us to be attentive students, ready to receive the divine training that leads to life. Grant that we too might lead others, so that all might know the life that is truly life. In your holy name we pray. AMEN.

Friday

Genesis 8:1-7

But God remembered Noah and all the wild animals and all the domestic animals that were with him in the ark. And God made a wind blow over the earth, and the waters subsided; ² the fountains of the deep and the windows of the heavens were closed, the rain from the heavens was restrained, ³ and the waters gradually receded from the earth. At the end of one hundred fifty days the waters had abated, ⁴ and in the seventh month, on the seventeenth day of the month, the ark came to rest on the mountains of Ararat. ⁵ The waters continued to abate until the tenth month; in the tenth month, on the first day of the month, the tops of the mountains appeared. ⁶ At the end of forty days Noah opened the window of the ark that he had made ⁷ and sent out the raven, and it went to and fro until the waters were dried up from the earth.

The Hebrew verb that opens this chapter seems curious to us. The writer says that God ‘remembered’ Noah and all the animals. Does that mean God that had forgotten about them for a time? Actually not. The meaning of the word is more precisely that God “turned God’s attention to” them once again. That is to say, God’s attention had been elsewhere for a while and now God was again focused on Noah and the rest of creation. God then gets to work, causing a wind to blow, causing the waters to subside, the rains to cease, and the waters to recede from the earth. When God’s attention turns toward something, things happen – dramatic things. This is important to remember. We may not be riding an ark through a deluge, but there are times in our lives when the sea is rough. We might be encountering bouts of depression or anxiety or fear. We might be battling an illness or enduring a long recovery from an injury, and it feels like we shall never be whole again. We can call out to God as the thief on the cross near Jesus did, “Jesus, remember me.” When we do so, we can be sure that God’s attention will be drawn to us once again.

Prayer

Thank you, Merciful God, for your loving attention to your whole creation. Thank you for the beasts and plants, for the mountains and seas, for the rain and sun. Thank you for your people whom you have made to give you praise. Give us ears to hear you when you speak. Give us hearts open to your will. Give us faith to trust you all our days. We ask this in the name of Christ. AMEN.