

Monday July 27, 2020

Read Psalm 1

His Delight

Delight is not one of those words that is used a great deal, and that's a good thing. Delight is unique, special. For something to be your delight carries the notion of bringing you absolute joy. You just can't get enough of whatever it is that brings you delight. I think about when my kids were little, and we would go to the park. They loved to go on the swings, and they loved when Dad would push them. "Higher! Higher!" They would plead while giggling. Wanting more and finding endless joy in it – that's what I think of as delight.

“(Blessed is the man)...his delight is in the law of the Lord, and on his law he meditates day and night.” As we begin reading through the Psalms today, keep in mind that usually **“the law of the Lord”** is a way of talking about all of God's Word. The people of God delight in the words of Scripture. As we pray together through the Psalms over the next number of weeks, I pray that you delight in God's Word – you find yourself wanting more and finding endless joy here. The Psalms are prayers and so run the gamut of human emotion and experience in relationship to God, but the common thread is joy and vitality found in God and His Word.

The one who constantly comes back to God's Word to consider it, repeat it, meditate upon it **“is like a tree planted by streams of water that yields its fruit in its season, and its leaf does not wither.”** The picture is one of life that is constantly fed and nourished. This is what God does for us and our faith through the Scriptures. We given direction and command. We are given God's promises of rescue that are realized in Jesus' death and resurrection. Through it all, He speaks to deliver the life-giving Word we need. His Word is our delight.

Prayer – Dear Jesus, make Your Word my delight. Help me to meditate day and night on Your promises and find everlasting joy. Amen.

Today's Devotion was written by Pastor Jason

Tuesday July 28, 2020

Read Psalm 2

The Victory is Ours

There is no doubt - as we look out at the world, the powers-that-be assail God and His salvation. They mock God and His people; they defile Christians with their words; they seize the opportunity to restrict worship of the true God; they teach that all we Christians live for is in vain!

Remember, though, that our Lord Jesus prophesied that this would happen! If they would kill Him, what would they do to His followers? Treat them the same, of course. In our Psalm today (Psalm 2), the question is asked? Why do those who hate God plan such useless, empty, vain activities? Do they really think that they can shut down God? But we don't need the answer to those questions! Try what they might - all they end up doing is showing the power of God!

For us, as we see their attempts, even as we feel those attempts in our personal lives, we know that the wilder the rebellion, the stronger the failure. As the psalmist says, God has them in derision. God's friends, us, know that He is always the winner.

So as you read the news, pity those poor deluded wrong doers. Turn from worries, turn to the Savior who has made you His own, promising to be with you and protect you. Look to His guidance in troubled times; depend on His strength for support; make His Words (the Bible) a regular reminder of His will and actions in your life. He promised: **"Blessed are all they that put their trust in Him."**

Prayer: Father in Heaven, it is scary to see the devil's works displayed brazenly in the news. Yet I thank you for the promise that those actions will be in vain. Please, keep my heart and mind on you, trusting in the victory of Your Son, Jesus, my Savior. Amen.

Today's Devotion was written by Pastor Art Bolstad

Wednesday July 29, 2020

Read Psalm 3

Now I Lay Me Down to Sleep

Many a child has said the bedtime prayer: “Now I lay me down to sleep, I pray the Lord my soul to keep. If I should die before I wake, I pray the Lord my soul to take.” The words are spoken by little ones, but the subject matter is quite serious. During the time of sleep, the child is asking for God to protect her soul. Not just her life, but her soul! After all, God alone can do such a thing. Not just this, but even if death should come in the night, she looks forward to everlasting rescue.

Sleep is important. It’s necessary. And it’s also the time when we most recognize our need for divine protection. We are vulnerable, but we are not without the care of our God. David understood this. He wrote Psalm 3 as he fled from Absalom, his rebellious son, who sought to take the throne and even David’s life.

David marvels at the protection he is provided, **“you, O Lord, are a shield about me...I lay down and slept; I woke again, for the Lord sustained me.”** David lived in constant danger, but every night of sleep was a testimony of God’s provision for him. Every morning he opened his eyes from rest became an occasion to praise the Lord who kept him safe while he slept. Yet even if David fell asleep in death, he knew, **“salvation belongs to the Lord; your blessing be on your people!”**

Perhaps these anxious times keep you up at night. David’s words today teach us to return to the bedtime prayer of children – David’s Lord (and our Savior) guards our souls in life and death on account of His defeat of our enemies of sin, death and Satan. We have nothing to fear. At the same time, perhaps you are tempted to greet the morning with contempt, wishing for more rest. A better perspective would be praise to God when the Lord wakes us. After all, He has kept us safe through the night, and by His mercy given us a new day. Luther’s morning prayer was written with just this idea in mind: as the first words to speak each morning.

Luther’s Morning Prayer – I thank You, my heavenly Father, through Jesus Christ, Your dear Son, that You have kept me this night from all harm and danger; and I pray that You would keep me this day also from sin and every evil, that all my doings and life may please You. For into Your hands I commend myself, my body and soul, and all things. Let Your holy angel be with me, that the evil foe may have no power over me. Amen.

Today’s Devotion was written by Pastor Jason

Thursday July 30, 2020

Read Psalm 4

Dwelling in the LORD's Safety

We can all relate to troubles and troubled relationships. Distress in sufferings of any sort can leave us feeling abandoned and angry, hopeless and despairing, desperate for relief. Many troubles come upon fallen mankind, yet redemption through Jesus Christ has brought us all comfort and hope in troubles and despair, for the shining the light of the LORD's face is upon us richly on account of Christ.

When David continued fleeing from his son Absalom, his troubled heart confidently poured out to the LORD for mercy, **"Answer me when I call, O God of my righteousness! You have given me relief when I was in distress. Be gracious to me and hear my prayer!"**

Notice David trusts in God's promise of relief in distress, certainly trust was not earned or merited by David, rather, given by the shining light and face of the LORD, by His grace and righteousness, His inspired Word and promise bringing us to Himself through faith. As sanctified children of God, like David, we too believe and **"know that the LORD has set apart the godly for himself; the LORD hears when I call to him. Be angry, and do not sin; ponder in your own hearts on your beds, and be silent."** Yikes! Truly this is a struggle for me to not sin in anger, and God's Word always convicts and captures my heart after sin committed in anger toward another person such as harsh words, thoughts, and actions.

We see David repeat and trust in God's Word and promises in prayer, and all of God's house sings hymns, often accompanied **"with stringed instruments,"** proclaiming the righteousness of God. The LORD gives relief in distress and our hearts call out to Him, He causes us to look to the cross where Jesus bled and died and was sacrificed for our sin, giving all of Himself for you, me, and the world, for in Christ alone, we depend and trust in Him whatever the trouble may be, for, **"in peace I will both lie down and sleep; for you alone, O LORD, make me dwell in safety."**

Prayer - O LORD, the light of your face shines upon us, for You have filled our hearts with joy and peace in Jesus Christ given for my sin and salvation forever. Amen.

Today's Devotion was written by Pre-Seminary Student Nathan Tritch

Friday July 31, 2020

Read Psalm 5

Entering the Lord's House

It is a common enough excuse for avoiding worship, even if it is said as a joke. "Pastor, the roof will fall in (or lightning will strike or some other natural disaster will occur), if I go to church." The statement is usually said in jest, but there is something about it that is not a joke at all. Behind this statement is the idea that, "I'm too bad of a sinner to come. The whole place will be judged because of me."

In response to that, I present David. King David was not a particularly great parent, he practiced deception, adultery and ordered a murder to cover-up his wrongdoings. If there ever was a person who should have been concerned that the "roof will fall in if I go," it would have been David.

He seems to know this, but he knew something greater than His sin – God's steadfast love. Pay attention to some of David's words in the middle of Psalm 5, "**I, through the abundance of your steadfast love, will enter your house...lead me in your righteousness.**" David didn't enter the house of the Lord because He was a perfectly upstanding person of impeccable character and virtue. By virtue of his behavior and character, the temple roof would have collapsed. He entered through the abundance of God's steadfast love. That term, "**steadfast love**," is used some 125 times in Psalms and it always talks about God's steadfast love or as Martin Luther described it, "God's goodness in action."

The truth is that the only way anyone can enter the Lord's house (here on earth or His eternal home in heaven) is because of God's goodness in action through Jesus. In His righteousness, we have been clothed, and so we come humbly knowing that our sin should keep us far from the presence of God. Yet His steadfast love covers our sin and invites to be near to our Lord – in prayer, in His Word, in receiving the Lord's Supper. This humbling truth should lead us to yearn to be in God's house. Even though we don't deserve to be in His presence, His steadfast love invites and welcomes us in Jesus' name.

Prayer – Lord, thank You for Your goodness in action for me through Jesus. It is truly only through the abundance of Your steadfast love that I can be in Your presence. Amen.

Today's Devotion was written by Pastor Jason

Saturday August 1, 2020

Read Psalm 6

“King David’s Diary”

When you read about the kings of the ancient world, their records don’t tell about their failures. No, like anyone would, they tell about the great battles they won, the love their people have for them, the great buildings and art they constructed. It’s kind of like you or I telling about the fish we caught – we “embellish” the story to show how great we are. It’s only natural.

But not David, King of Israel. You hear him describe, in his own words, how weak he is. He tells of his weariness, his grief, his “troubled bones”. The bed he sleeps in is literally soaked because of the tears he cries. He’s become dead, exhausted, empty. And you and I are reading about this from his “personal diary”, the intimate, personal account of the depths he’s reached – in his own words, by his own pen.

We don’t know what part of his life this is taken from, but even as a young boy David loved and trusted the Lord. When he heard the foul taunts of the giant Goliath, blaspheming God, it felt like an attack on David himself. And David turned to God for wisdom and strength and refused the armor offered him, trusting in God alone for victory. And, even then, David knew God would bless him.

What kind of king writes like this? The kind of king who is overflowing with despair, but knows where to turn. He knows he’s just a man – a sinful man – and that even his kingly might and power can do nothing to save him. And so, he yet again turns to God for relief, comfort, and for life itself. And God hears him, accepts his prayer, and David is saved.

What kind of king writes about his failures? The kind that wants you to know that God loves you, too, and will care for you and comfort you, even in the worst of times. He writes to tell the entire world what a weakling he is, but that, because the Creator and Ruler of the Universe loves him, **“All my enemies shall be ashamed and greatly troubled; they shall turn back and be put to shame in a moment.”**

Prayer - Heavenly Father, when despair fills my soul, send Your Spirit to comfort me. Remind me that I’ve been baptized into Christ and will rise again like Him. In Jesus’ Name, Amen.

Today’s Devotion was written by Pastor Jeff Nelson

Monday August 3, 2020

Read Psalm 7

The Refuge

Where is your refuge? Perhaps your refuge is your home. Maybe your garden is your refuge. Perhaps your refuge is found on a boat out on the middle of a lake. There are many options of places that you might call your refuge, but any true refuge contains two important aspects.

The first aspect is that a refuge is a place of retreat. You can truly get away from it all. Whatever hounds you is held at bay. Whatever stresses press down on you are alleviated. In a refuge, there is peace.

The second aspect is that a refuge is a place of safety from a dangerous world. You are protected in a refuge. No danger can touch you in this place. Whatever difficulty would cause you harm cannot reach you in the refuge.

What a beautiful image then when David proclaims, “**O Lord my God, in you do I take refuge.**” God is our place of retreat. In Him, we find true peace. Through the mercy of Jesus we have peace with God and refuge from everlasting effects of sin. Our hearts are set at peace because Christ has first made peace with us by His blood. What’s more, we have safety from a dangerous world. We may not avoid every danger in this life, but the great dangers of sin and Satan do not have the final say. Christ, our refuge, guards us in His mercy. Trusting in Him, though every good thing of this mortal life be under attack or taken away, our eternal hope and life in Christ remain. And in Christ, our refuge we have peace and protection even when the battle rages around us.

Prayer – O Lord my, in you do I take refuge; save me from all my pursuers and deliver me. Amen.

Today’s Devotion was written by Pastor Jason

Tuesday August 4, 2020

Read Psalm 8

True Wonder

We are the generation that looks to the stars, expecting to visit them - or at least watch others visit them. The moon, now looking at mars. What great adventures we see before us! And yet, we see so much more out there. More Planets, more moons. And the stars! Not to mention the sun! And the best we can do is to visit.

How glorious God is — to make all those, to place in there, to guide, and sustain them so that we can realize the wonder of the person who made them. O LORD, our Lord, how excellent is your name in all the earth!

But then, comes the real wonder - that God so powerful, with a sense of beauty and control, yet cares about me. Me, powerless, breaker of God's beauty in life, selfish, hurter of others. Me, He cares about. Cares enough to take on my problems, too. He came to us, and lived among us as one of us, subject to our problems - hunger, tired, grief, and loneliness. Somehow, that God so powerful and maker of great beauty, somehow that God subjected Himself to our life. And then, in our place, accepted death. So the maker of all, Lord of Gravity and nuclear burning in the stars, is also the Lord of Life, the giver of life to us who trust Him. How He wants that sky and space to demonstrate His ability to keep His promises. And he promises that the trust in Him He gives us will never fail. Hold on then to Him! You can count on Him.

Prayer - Dear God, build our faith and trust. We know that You will not fail us. Give us strength that we do not fail you. In the name of our Savior, Your Son Jesus Christ, Amen.

Today's Devotion was written by Pastor Art Bolstad

Wednesday August 5, 2020

Read Psalm 9

A Tall Order

We've all had the experience at some point in life of taking on something more than what we could handle. Perhaps you tried to pick up something way too heavy, and you had to just drop it. Maybe you ordered way too much food because it sounded good, and you just could not possibly eat it all. It could be that you started a project that seemed manageable and became an enormous task.

David sets himself up for failure in Psalm 9. He bites off way more than he can possibly chew. Maybe you missed the impossible task that he gives to himself. **"I will give thanks to the Lord with my whole heart; I will recount all of your wonderful deeds."** Wholehearted thankfulness is a beautiful intention. Recounting all of the wonderful deeds of our God is a blessed impossibility.

This is a tall order: to attempt to catalog all the wonderful deeds of God. This would mean to list off his amazing works of creation – from the grandeur of mountain peaks to the intimate [miracle](#) of how a caterpillar becomes a butterfly. Once you got started listing off the wonderful works of God's creation, you could go for days and days and not nearly exhaust the wonders of God.

Yet the wonderful deeds of God are not limited to creation, but extend to His salvation. David rejoices in Psalm 9 in how God has protected him and rescued him from his enemies. The Lord has rescued *you* from the enemies of sin, death and the devil. When you consider your mountain of sins and the intimacy of God's salvation in the person of Jesus, you will again find endless examples of God's wonderful deeds.

What David has absolutely right is that to give thanks with our whole hearts is directly tied to recounting the wonderful deeds of our God. The great detriment to thankfulness is forgetfulness. But as we recount the innumerable mercies of God in the world around us, in our own lives, for our salvation in Christ, we will constantly speak with David, **"I will be glad and exult in you; I will sing praise to your name, O Most High."**

Prayer – O Lord, thank you for all of your blessings to me. Help me to recount your wonderful deeds. Amen.

Today's Devotion was written by Pastor Jason

Thursday August 6, 2020

Read Psalm 10

Prayer of Lament, Desire, and the LORD's Strength

Have you ever lamented and sighed at moments of relief? Hmm, perhaps, but not likely. How about afflictions? Frustrations? Or persecution for the sake of Christ!?

In the world, wickedness is present, and the evil foe and his evildoers lurk about seeking to devour and oppress whomever they may, **"he lurks in ambush like a lion in his thicket; he lurks that he may seize the poor."** Scoffers will scoff at the LORD and His people, mock, persecute, kill the body, and destroy our means and livelihood. Does the LORD allow such mischief? Does not the LORD see all things?

The wicked deny God and blaspheme the Holy Spirit, **"For the wicked boasts of the desires of his soul, and the one greedy for gain curses and renounces the LORD. In the pride of his face the wicked does not seek him; all his thoughts are, "There is no God,"** for they cannot see God and Christ's Kingdom. The Father's Mercy and Grace are hidden in the Eternal Son of God, in the suffering and glory of Jesus Christ who became poor so that all may become rich in His righteousness for all to believe in His birth, life, sufferings, death, and resurrection for eternal life and redemption.

The LORD's just punishment for sin remains on **"the wicked,"** for the ungodly deny the LORD's Messiah Jesus, cursing His righteous judgment, mercy, and existence. Yet, for those who receive the power and wisdom of the God in Christ Jesus by grace through faith are born anew and He claims and calls us His own, children of God declared righteous on account of Christ.

On the contrary to the thoughts and schemes of **"the evildoer,"** the called and baptized into Christ are granted repentance, faith, and suffering for the sake of Christ, and in and with Christ, pray and lament in psalms in afflictions and persecutions, for the LORD does see all things and mischief on the oppressed, He does strengthen the helpless, **"But You do see, for You note mischief and vexation, that You may take it into Your hands; to You the helpless commits himself; You have been the helper of the fatherless . . . The LORD is King forever and ever; the nations perish from His land."**

Prayer - "O LORD, You hear the desire of the afflicted; You will strengthen their heart; You will incline your ear to do justice to the fatherless and the oppressed, so that man who is of the earth may strike terror no more." For the sake of Christ our present Hope, Savior, Lord, and King now and forever, and in the glory of Your new Heavens and earth to come on the Last Day, we thank and praise You for Your strength delivered in our hearts in all things. Amen.

Today's Devotion was written by Pre-Seminary Student Nathan Tritch

Friday August 7, 2020

Read Psalm 11

Confidence

“How can you say to my soul, ‘Flee like a bird to your mountain?’” That’s an easy picture for us to see. At the smallest thing, a bird is scared and flies away at an incredible speed. David has been instructed to do the same thing. Fly away quickly because **“the wicked bend the bow; they have fitted their arrow to the string to shoot in the dark at the upright in heart.”** David has been told to scurry away like a young bird because his enemies have an arrow ready to shoot him down at any moment.

But David is not running. He is asking, “How can you say such a thing?!” David’s refuge is the Lord, and he explains why he doesn’t need to run. **“The Lord is in his holy temple; the Lord’s throne is in heaven; his eyes see...the Lord tests the righteous, but his soul hates the wicked and one who loves violence.”** David knows that the Lord sees all that happens. For David to say **“the Lord’s throne is in heaven,”** doesn’t mean that God is far away or distant from our needs. It means that from His vantage point, the Lord sees everything.

The sees the righteous and wicked. He tests or examines the deeds of all. The wicked are to be met with **“fire and sulfur and a scorching wind.”** The righteous are loved by the Lord and **“the upright shall behold his face.”** So, it is either fire or life in the presence of God.

Why is David confident? He takes refuge in the Lord. His confidence is not in himself. His confidence is in the Lord. David has known wickedness in his own heart, but He trusts in the Lord to forgive. The Lord’s righteousness covers David’s sin. The same is true for you by faith in Jesus. So you, too, can be confident. You can be confident in the righteousness of Christ that belongs to you. You can be confident that the Lord is your refuge. You can be confident that the Lord sees all that you face today, and no matter the outcome of the problems of the day, **“the upright shall behold his face.”** Confidence in our Lord’s everlasting gift of life enables us to be bold living as His people today.

Prayer – Lord, give me confidence to face the day in the certainty of Christ’s righteousness until the day I behold your face by the mercy of Jesus. Amen.

Today’s Devotion was written by Pastor Jason

Saturday August 8, 2020
Read Psalm 12

“Worldly words vs. Godly Words”

I “enjoy” following the news. It makes me feel like I know what’s going on in the world around me. However, in today’s world of 24-hour news, instant connectivity to everything, and the loud voices endlessly shouting everywhere around us, that sometimes gets you down. As the saying goes, “good news doesn’t sell”, and today’s news business is thriving.

In the 12th Psalm, David, like some of the Old Testament prophets, could only see lies and deceitfulness in the people around him. And he knew exactly where this two-facedness came from – they had no faith in God, but rather had total trust in their own words and strength. They proclaimed, **“Our lips are with us; who is master over us?”**

And so, as the lies grow, the **“poor are plundered”**, and **“the needy groan.”** David is led to the conclusion that “the faithful have vanished from among the children of man.” It’s a good thing we don’t have those problems anymore!

But that’s not David’s conclusion. Because of these things, **“I will now arise,” says the Lord**. Remember the Beatitudes? **“Blessed are the poor...”** God came for those who hunger for righteousness. He comes for you. And, in stark contrast to the lies, flattery, and double-speak that come from the faithless, God speaks Truth.

God spoke a perfect creation into existence. God promised a Savior. God told Moses and Abraham, and you and me, **“I will be with you.”** Jesus told Lazarus to come out of the tomb, He rose from the dead on the third day, and you and I will live with Him forever. God promises in His holy Word that he will care for you in every trouble. And His Word is Truth.

Prayer - Lord God, when I read Your Word, help me to remember, “You, O Lord, will keep them; you will guard us from this generation forever.” Amen, and Amen!

Today’s Devotion was written by Pastor Jeff Nelson

Monday August 10, 2020

Read Psalm 13

How Long, O Lord

Today's Psalm is the unofficial Psalm of 2020. It is the questioning of God as pain and suffering lingers, and the hope of its conclusion is low. The presence of Psalm 13 in the Scriptures reminds us that it is okay to ask the Lord, "How long?" We are invited to bring everything before the Lord in prayer, including our frustrations.

Yet it is a fine line between voicing our complaints and blaming God. "**How long, O Lord?**" can be a question of faith that is looking in anticipation to the rescue of God in His time and according to His will. On the hand, "**How long, O Lord?**" can be an accusation against God, when our beef with God consists primarily in Him not acting according to our wishes and our timetables for problems to be solved. In both faith and frustration, I imagine many of us have asked, "**How long, O Lord?**" in both ways through this year.

When our prayers question God and His ways, we do well to remember that Jesus not only commanded us to pray but also graciously promised to hear our prayers and intercede for us before the Father. No matter how weak our prayers or deep our frustration, Jesus' grace makes up for their short comings.

Prayer – Lord Jesus, You conquered death and the grave and, therefore, can handle anything, including our impatient or even disrespectful prayers. Teach us to know that You are greater than all things, so that we pray confidently, Thy will be done. Amen.

Today's Devotion was written by Pastor Jason

The prayer and some thoughts for today's devotion come from [the Lutheran Study Bible](#).

Tuesday August 11, 2020

Read Psalm 14

Them and Us

It is so easy to look at all the others out there! To look around and consider how they fit this Psalm. They show no regard for God; they steal and kill - whether directly or by word. Others think it fine to destroy the world and so deserve God's contempt. But God says, **"They have all gone astray."** ALL? But surely, He is talking about them...

When God brings His Law on us - we argue, we look away. It is so hard to admit to our faults. And so God puts those words for us to ponder: **"all have gone astray."** I too need to repent. It might be laziness, it might be anger, it might be pride, and so on. But hard as it is to admit it, I too have gone astray. This Psalm is talking about me too!

Look! The Psalm does not end with "astray". There is mention made of **"the Salvation of Israel"**. We know that God came to the earth: Jesus, God Himself, has come as a man and paid the price of our wrongdoing. He conquered death, dying on the cross, rising on Easter morning. Here is the answer to our (and their) being "astray". Trusting in Him, abandoning our dreams of being righteous, letting His salvation bring us to rightness with God - means, "Yes, we were astray; But He has made it right, brought us back to God. We are saved."

Prayer - Dear God, thank you for reminding me of the fact of my need for your salvation. Thank you also for giving me that salvation, rich and free. Guide me now, Lord, as I live in You and the life you give me. Amen.

Today's Devotion was written by Pastor Art Bolstad

Wednesday August 12, 2020

Read Psalm 15

Walk Blamelessly

Sometimes God's law sounds like something we can handle: don't murder, don't steal, no problem. Then we run into words like those in Psalm 15. Think of these as entry requirements of worship, thus David's question, "O Lord, who shall sojourn in your tent?" Here are the requirements:

- Walks blamelessly and does what is right
- Speaks truth in his heart (truth = God's truth)
- Doesn't slander
- Does no evil to his neighbor
- A vile person is despised
- Honors those who fear the Lord
- Keeps his word even when it may harm him
- Refuses to charge others interest
- Won't take a bribe to convict someone innocent
- He always does all of these things

No one can get past the first two words, "walk blamelessly," and our record only gets worse as we read through the list. The point is that a wise person would recognize the impossibility of this list. That doesn't mean we shouldn't aim to fulfill God's law. Of course, we desire and strive to live as holy people, but we are called holy only by Christ who walked blamelessly and always did what was right. And he did so on our behalf.

Out of love for Christ, we strive to live to this standard while humbly knowing that only Christ "always does all of these things."

Prayer – (For today's prayer, ask the Lord to forgive you and help you with one of the items above that particularly struck you as a sin with which you struggle.)

Today's Devotion was written by Pastor Jason

Thursday August 13, 2020

Read Psalm 16

Refuge and JOY Forevermore

We have all likely been delighted and joyful in many worldly temporal ways; in childhood, marriage, parenthood, grandparenthood, birthdays, holidays, reunions, gatherings, concerts, trips/vacations, and accomplishments of many sorts. Although having JOY in the LORD is not a worldly temporal experience or feeling, rather **“fullness of JOY”** is the presence of the LORD, given and fulfilled for all in Christ through faith alone. This JOY is a heavenly spiritual and eternal promise of **“pleasures forevermore”** in God dwelling among His people for the sake of Christ Jesus crucified, risen, ascended and exalted at the right hand of God with power. True JOY is more than human emotion and experience, JOY is God’s eternal action preserved and fully secured for you forevermore in Christ Jesus.

As we meditate on God’s Word in this psalm, David prophesied the Messiah, pointing all people and all Christians to Jesus. Saint Peter proclaims this fulfillment in Psalm 16:

this Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men. God raised him up, loosing the pangs of death, because it was not possible for him to be held by it. For David says concerning him, ‘I saw the Lord always before me, for he is at my right hand that I may not be shaken; therefore my heart was glad, and my tongue rejoiced; my flesh also will dwell in hope. For you will not abandon my soul to Hades, or let your Holy One see corruption You have made known to me the paths of life; you will make me full of gladness with your presence’” (Acts 2:23-28; see Acts 2:29-31; 13:35).

Till the Last Day Resurrection, we Christians are now and forevermore in Christ, **“looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the JOY that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.”** (Hebrews 12:2)

Prayer - LORD God, **“I have no good apart from You.”** We thank You that You go before us and preserve us in Your eternal refuge in Christ Jesus crucified and risen for our Hope and salvation through faith. Your presence delights, instructs, and burns in our hearts to love and serve You above all things, and to love our neighbors as we rejoice in Your **“fullness of JOY”** forevermore in Jesus Christ. Amen.

Today’s Devotion was written by Pre-Seminary Student Nathan Tritch

Friday August 14, 2020

Read Psalm 17

The Apple of Your Eye

It's a funny phrase – “the apple of your eye.” The phrase originally came from the belief that your pupil looked somewhat like an apple. So it literally referred to the center of your eye, but you can see where the meaning came from. Whoever or whatever is at the center of your vision is the apple of your eye. This person or this thing captivates your attention like no one else.

The phrase shows up a few times in Scripture, but two times it is worth special notice. Here in Psalm 17, David is once more running for his life, perhaps from King Saul. Enemies are after him, but David is well aware of how the Lord has cared for him again and again. So he prays, “**keep me as the apple of your eye.**” David isn't necessarily saying that he personally is more important than every other person in the eyes of God, but to know the mercy and love of God is to be the apple of his eye. This means that in a very real way, you are the apple of God's eye. You and your salvation have captivated the Lord's attention like nothing else as the Son of David, Jesus Christ, gave all because you are so precious to Him.

The reality of God's captivating mercy for us leads us to the second mention of this phrase that I want to mention. As you are the apple of God's eye, He has in mind what He wants to captivate your attention. Proverbs 7:2 says, “**keep my commandments and live; keep my teaching as the apple of your eye.**” The Lord who loves us and treasures us as the center of His vision wants us to focus our attention on His Word. After all, if we have His Word, we will know Him.

Prayer – Lord, make Your Word the apple of my eye. Amen.

Today's Devotion was written by Pastor Jason

Saturday August 15

Read [Psalm 18:1-24](#)

“The Lord Is My Rock and My Fortress”

Have you ever felt like you were the “little kid on the block”? You know, the one the bullies just love to pick on? On the other hand, do you think of yourself as a mighty warrior, generally able to safely navigate through the most challenging battle? Either way, there are always those really tough times when you wish you could turn on a “Bat-Signal” to call a superhero to save you.

Our Psalm today is another from David’s pen, in which he shows both these sides. He had been anointed by God to be King of Israel and had already proven to be a mighty general that led God’s People to victory in battle over all their enemies. So you wouldn’t think he’d be afraid of much. At this point, though, he was being pursued by Saul and his armies and David was outnumbered and surrounded. He felt the “cords and snares of death” staring him in the face. Destruction was like a flood pouring over him and hell itself was pulling him down.

So, **“In my distress I called upon the Lord,”** and David was lifted from his despair. In the most vivid language possible, David describes how it’s good to have a “jealous” God.

**“Then the earth reeled and rocked;
the foundations also of the mountains trembled
and quaked, because he (God) was angry.
Smoke went up from his nostrils,
and devouring fire from his mouth;
glowing coals flamed forth from him.”**

This imagery (and that which follows) brings to mind earlier times of God’s deliverance – from the Egyptian armies as the Israelites fled through the Red Sea, for Noah and his family, as they were delivered from the floodwaters of the deep, and as God delivered the 10 Commandments to His People from the clouds over Mt. Sinai.

You see, that jealous, fire-breathing, earth-shaking God is the same God you and I are invited to bring our troubles to. He’s jealous for you and me and all those who call on the Name of His Son, Jesus. And, like the Shepherd of Israel He is, he holds you in His arms and comforts you.

Prayer: I love you, O Lord, my strength. You are my rock and my fortress and my deliverer; my God - my rock, in whom I take refuge, Amen.

Today’s Devotion was written by Pastor Jeff Nelson

Tuesday August 18, 2020

Read Psalm 19

God's Reminders

Who has not looked at the world, and marveled at the beauty in what they saw? Even bears have been seen watching a sunset in awe! The world does not need words of human languages to express the reality of what God has done. But with all the evidence before them, with the opportunity to see and experience what God has done, people still refuse to admit that He knows what He is doing!

He showed His power in the sun - blazing across the sky. He shows His concern and love for people when He gave them direct information on His Will and ways in the Bible - His law, His testimonies, His statutes, His commandments! They too reflect God's purity and beauty. And then they show His power when they change our lives, bringing trust and confidence, bringing what is good in our lives, living in Him in His ways.

How else would we know how to live? How else would we be able to enjoy the world He has given us? Without His intervention we would be so focused on ourselves we would miss out on life! So, God gives us a reminder that He is in control with the wonder of days and nights and the sun storming across the sky. So, God directs us to His ways and His Word to see, believe, and understand His ways. Praise the Lord!

Prayer: Father in Heaven! Thank you for your attention to my needs for reminders. Thank you for the Bible where You do give me Words that change my life. Thank you for it all! Amen.

Today's Devotion was written by Pastor Art Bolstad

Wednesday August 19, 2020

Read Psalm 20

What Do You Trust In?

“Some trust in chariots, some trust in horses...” David’s statement here is striking. He is a king. He is a military leader. Chariots and horses would have been essential tools. Often times, the best tools, the best technology, lead to victory over a foe. It makes me think about the current commercial from pharmaceutical companies that concludes with a series of doctors (or actors in lab coats) saying, “Science...science...science is what will get life back to normal.”

Some trust in chariots, some trust in science, some trust in horses, some trust in _____ (fill in the blank). No matter the enemy, we have a tendency to trust in tools, instead of the Giver of all Good Gifts. You see, used properly, chariots and science and horses are all good tools that can be incredibly helpful. When we trust in them as THE great answer, they become idols. They become dangerous.

So, King David who would have used chariots and horses in battle, still didn’t trust in them. **“Some trust in chariots, some trust in horses, but we trust in the name of the LORD our God.”** The name Yahweh (translated as LORD in all caps) means “I am.” He is present everywhere. He knows all. He is able to do all. He is the Creator. He is the Savior. He is above all. He is THE great answer to our needs. He provides for our needs in many ways – through chariots, through scientists (who simply discover what He already knows), and most importantly through His own self-giving love in Christ that rescues us from sin, death and the devil. We trust in Him.

Prayer – Lord, help me to use properly Your gifts, but help me to trust in You alone. Amen.

Today’s Devotion was written by Pastor Jason

Thursday August 20, 2020

Read Psalm 21

“We will Sing and Praise Your Power”

Singing, social closeness, congregational singing with dear brothers and sisters in Christ have been varyingly restricted in many places. While necessary for a time, congregational singing is an everlasting blessing prohibited in many places in Christ’s Kingdom in the “now and not yet.” Yet, now, the LORD’s love and JOY is with us, present and eternal, unfailing and immovable for us in the Anointed Jesus, in His victory over the power of sin, death, and the enemy Satan and forces of evil, putting **“them to flight,”** the Power of God for salvation!

This musical Psalm of David eternally relates to and prophesies Christ and shows thanksgiving to Yahweh, likely from a recent victorious battle won for Israel. This is the LORD’s victory and presence with His people, the same everlasting JOY we see throughout the psalms, **“For You make him most blessed forever; You make him glad with the JOY of Your presence.”** The favor of the LORD is Yahweh’s presence (as we learned the Name of the LORD “Yahweh” in yesterday’s psalm meditation, “I AM”) in the flesh, Jesus the Messiah crucified and risen given to us through faith!

Praise and thanksgiving are due to the **“Most High”** during good and bad times; celebrations, plagues, famines, spiritual dryness, and spiritual growth; for our Lord Jesus Christ, **“the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end”** (Revelation 1:8; 21:6; 22:13), will come quickly with reward, recompense, and final deliverance (see Rev. 22:7, 12, 20) from this present sinful and redeemed world.

In the New Heaven and New Earth, the fullness of all things and the LORD’s presence will be consummated on the Last Day Resurrection when Jesus comes **“with the clouds of heaven”** (Rev. 1:7; see Dan 7:10). Today, we share in Christ’s death and resurrection through faith receiving the LORD’s JOY delivered in Word and Sacraments. During pestilences and victories, and yes even COVID-19, The LORD is **“Most High,”** as there is nothing and no one higher bestowing **“unending blessings”** and immovable unfailing **“steadfast love”** in Christ our King!

Prayer - LORD **“Most High,” “we will sing and praise Your power”** and give thanks in Your victory over the power of sin and death, delivering us from all evil and granting us grace and strength to trust in You now and forever on account of Christ Jesus and His righteousness freely given to us by grace through faith. Amen.

Today’s Devotion was written by Pre-seminary student Nathan Tritch

Friday August 21, 2020

Read Psalm 22

Writing Someone Else's Story...that is Still Yours

Many of the Psalms offer an incredibly intimate look inside of David as he expresses faith through celebration and suffering. Sometimes we see how David's words reflect our experience. Sometimes we see how David's words prepare us for the Son of David, Jesus Christ, who is King of Israel and King of all. Then, in today's Psalm, we recognize that what David describes poetically in himself is a prophecy of what Christ will experience.

Jesus quoted the opening words of the Psalm as He hung on the cross: **"My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?"** In the mouth of Jesus, the point is not so much that Jesus is unsure. He is living Psalm 22. David knew abandonment and suffering, but some of this Psalm clearly points to only one person in David's family tree. Consider, "For dogs encompass me; a company of evildoers encircles me; they have pierced my hands and feet—I can count all my bones—they stare and gloat over me; they divide my garments among them, and for my clothing they cast lots." Jesus is clearly the fulfillment of these words.

Yet in a mysterious way, David can write these of Himself. We can consider these as our words as well. Why? Because Christ endured this suffering for us. Not only that, Paul tells us, "For as we share abundantly in Christ's sufferings, so through Christ we share abundantly in comfort too." (2 Cor. 1:5) As we hear the horrible description of Christ's suffering, we rejoice in the beautiful mystery that these words declare the unlimited bound of Christ's love for David, for you, and for all.

Prayer – Comfort my heart in all trials, as I stand in awe at your boundless love for me and all. Amen.

Today's Devotion was written by Pastor Jason

Saturday August 22

Read [Psalm 23](#)

“The LORD is my shepherd”

While in the Air Force, I had an instructor who had proudly piloted F-4 fighter jets while in the service. Over his desk hung a plaque that read, “Yea, though I fly through the valley of the shadow of death, I shall fear no evil, for the F-4 is one fast son of a gun.” That stuck with me over the years. It turns out, if you search the internet for “Psalm 23 parodies”, a lot of people have tried to improve on David’s words. Some are funny; most just substitute things to intentionally show the futility of looking for comfort and hope anywhere other than God (for example, “The TV is my shepherd, I shall not want. It makes me to lie down on the sofa”).

Every image created by David’s words evokes calm, peace, and a soothing sense of being perfectly and completely loved and cared for. For me, verse five makes a peculiar connection. As I grew up during the 70s, I enjoyed the odd humor of Monty Python. So, whenever I hear the words, **“You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies”**, I picture the Python troupe sitting at a table outdoors, quietly enjoying lunch, as thousands of barbarians armed with swords, battle axes, and spears rush towards them, yelling war cries at the tops of their lungs. But they continue making small talk and eating, completely oblivious to the chaos around them, for the LORD is serving them.

Sound crazy? Yes, it does. The world would say our “imaginary man in the sky” is nutty. They’d say it’s ludicrous to look for comfort in someone you can’t see or touch. But, just as surely as Jesus calmed the stormy seas, the Father provided manna and quail in the desert, and the Holy Spirit washed you with water and the Word, we understand David’s words. **“The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want.”**

Prayer - **Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever, Amen.**

Today’s Devotion was written by Pastor Jeff Nelson

Monday August 24, 2020

Read Psalm 24

A Pure Heart before THE King

Today's Psalm is bookended with a glorious description of God. He is the One to whom all things belong, for he made all things. **"The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof, the world and those who dwell therein, for He has founded upon the seas and established it upon the rivers."** But that's not all. At the end of the Psalm, He is described as THE King – **"strong and mighty."** He is the One who fights for His people and has power over **"the hosts,"** that is the angel armies. He is over all.

Stuck in the middle is a fair question: **"Who shall ascend the hill of the Lord?"** Who has any business being in the presence of One who has such power and glory belonging to Him? Really, the answer is no one. No one is worthy to stand before such a holy, powerful king. David describes who may climb the hill. **"He who has clean hands and a pure heart, who does not lift up his soul to what is false and does not swear deceitfully."** Clean hands and a pure heart. This is someone righteous inside and out. Thoughts, words, and deeds. For sinful people, even forgiven ones, how is this possible?

Martin Luther described it this way: "What is meant by a pure heart is this: one that is watching and pondering what God says and replacing his own ideas with the Word of God. This alone is pure before God. ... Therefore, though a common laborer, a shoemaker or a blacksmith may be dirty or may smell because he is covered with dirt and pitch, still he may sit at home and think, 'My God has made me a man. He has given me my house, wife and child and has commanded me to love them and to support them with my work.' Note that he is pondering the Word of God in his heart, and though he stinks outwardly, inwardly he is pure incense before God, but if he attains the highest purity, so that he also takes hold of the Gospel and believes in Christ, then he is pure completely. Inwardly, in his heart toward God and outwardly toward everything under him on earth."

Prayer – Lord, make me completely pure through Christ and Your Word. Amen.

Today's Devotion was written by Pastor Jason

Tuesday August 18, 2020

Read Psalm 25

Our God – Immense and Yet Personal

When one considers the universe, the size the complexity of all that is; when one matches that to oneself, there comes a temptation to put it all aside, to figure that God can't be bothered with me - or what I do or think! But ... God is more than the architect of it all, He is a personal relationship person. God knows all about me - and cares. He cares about rightness and wrongness. Relationships need rightness, and He wants His relationship with me!

But I know myself - too well. I don't do rightness, there are my transgressions - selfishness, greediness, a mocking of God's right ways... I know that and it scares me! How can God continue to want a relationship with someone so opposed to His ways? And so **"The troubles of my heart are enlarged."** I want to be like God but keep failing.

I thank you God, that You have come to me rather than waiting for me to come to You. You came to me, Jesus, carried my penalties and restored me to rightness. Now I am God's friend. Keep helping me! As you direct, guide, and support me, I find your ways are best. Keep teaching me, O God, keep me learning your ways. Let your Words, your teachings grow in my mind, my heart, and my actions. Thank you again.

Prayer: O Lord, when I look at myself, I get worried and sad; I see my failures; but when I look to You I see your successes. O Lord, let my eyes and mind focus on You alone. In Jesus', name, Amen.

Today's Devotion was written by Pastor Art Bolstad

Wednesday August 26, 2020

Read Psalm 26

Quite a Test

What is the hardest test that you've ever taken? You may remember an extremely stressful exam from high school or college. You may think of an especially challenging time in your life that tested you physically, mentally or spiritually. But did you ask for it? Did you request the test?

David does. **"Prove me, O Lord and try me; test my heart and my mind."** Imagine asking God for a test to see how your faith is doing right now. How would you be doing? Do you find yourself drowning under a lot of worry and anxiety or do you trust in him? Or a mixture of both?

Either way, it seems remarkable for David to stand before God and ask to be tested. We know enough about David to know he was an adulterer and a murderer, yet also called by Scripture a man **"after God's own heart."** David wants to be a godly man of high integrity and love, though he fell woefully short. Still, he asks to be tested on this basis: **"For your steadfast love is before my eyes, and I walk in your faithfulness."** Where is David's trust? In the steadfast love of God. In HIS faithfulness.

We may not request for our faith to be tested, but it is regularly through this life. For many this has been a year of great testing, and more than anything tests lead us to reveal where our trust is. At times, we trust too much in our ability to handle every problem, and this tends to lead us either to arrogance or anxiety. In the time of testing, Christ calls us to trust in His steadfast love and faithfulness. He invites us to look to Him, the One who passed every test for us and our salvation. Since Christ's love dwells in us, we say, "I trust in Him, because I know He is for me, He died and rose again for me, and in His strength He will see me through every test."

Prayer – Lord, in my time of testing, help me to trust in You. Amen.

Today's Devotion was written by Pastor Jason

Thursday August, 27, 2020

Read Psalm 27

The LORD is My Light and Salvation

We all have many fears coming at us in this world. Some fears are kind of silly, and some produce anxiety and panic. As a child, I was terrified of forklifts and their “beep! beep!” noises coming to get me. In my fear, I remember crying and hugging my parents, hiding in their presence, and trusting in them for safety and shelter from the horrific metal “beeping” dinosaurs.

What fears did David face? A host of evildoers encamping against him, coming to devour his flesh. Yet, in the midst of darkness, David is confident and trusts in the LORD and His Light and Salvation:

“My heart shall not fear; though war arise against me, yet I will be confident. One thing have I asked of the LORD, that will I seek after: that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to gaze upon the beauty of the LORD and to inquire in His temple. For He will hide me in His shelter in the day of trouble, He will conceal me under the cover of His tent [tabernacle].”

Luther makes an appropriate observation:

“Tabernacle is the Church or the Body of Christ . . . And in it is hidden every believer. This hiding must not be understood in a physical sense, because the saints are certainly placed on the candlestick (cf. Mark 4:21) . . . Therefore *to be hidden* is nothing else than not running with those who live carnally, something the carnal people see plainly. . . . *The cover* therefore is the Church’s faith, or spirit, which is the same. For they live by faith and in spirit . . . But the Church is defended in spiritual things, so that they cannot be taken away from her or she be harmed in them, for they are invincible and eternal spiritual benefits of faith.” (LW 10:125).

Yahweh is our Light and salvation in the Gospel of Jesus Christ. What courage, what comfort, and what JOY! **“I will offer in His tent sacrifices with shouts of JOY; I will sing and make melody to the LORD . . . [for] I believe that I shall look upon the LORD in the land of the living!”**

Prayer - O LORD, You are my light and my salvation, thank You for protecting me in Your Beauty, Goodness, and Mercy for the sake of Jesus Christ our Savior. Amen.

Optional: If you have your Lutheran Service Book at home, turn to “The Lord is My Light” (LSB: 723), and follow this link, <https://youtu.be/2aXy20wc-a4> for classic piano “stringed instrument,” and sing with JOY to the LORD in Christ Jesus!

Today’s Devotion was written by Pre-seminary Student Nathan Tritch

Friday August 28, 2020

Read Psalm 28

When God is Silent

Psalm 28:1 **"Do not turn a deaf ear to me. For if You remain silent, I will be like those who have gone down to the pit."**

David's request is one that we can appreciate. It bothers us when God seems to be silent. When we look at our lives and the world around us, we think there is plenty for Him to talk about right now. If only He'd come out and prove by some word that He is there. Not just that, with only a word, He could resolve the things that are so wrong about this world. But many days, it feels like God says nothing.

But perhaps, the problem is not with God, but with us. As the book of Hebrews puts it, **"In many and various ways, God spoke to His people of old by the prophets, but now, in these last days, He has spoken to us by His Son."** Many times, God seems silent. Many times, we are tempted to think that He doesn't care. But this is usually because we only listen for Him to tell us what we want to hear in the moment.

Remember He is the One who left His throne in heaven and exchanged it for a bed of straw at Christmas time because He cares; He is the One who let the soldiers mock and beat and crucify him because He cares; He is the One who bore our grief and carried our sorrows because He cares. And as we hear the words of the Psalms, we are reminded of His care at all times. After all, **"The Lord is the strength of his people; he is the saving refuge of his anointed."** (Ps 28:8)

Prayer – **"Oh save your people and bless your heritage! Be their shepherd and carry them forever."** Amen. (Ps 28:9)

Today's Devotion was written by Pastor Jason

Saturday August 29

Read [Psalm 29](#)

"A Vision of God"

Throughout its many words, the Bible records visions and dreams experienced by the faithful in order to reveal something about God in amazing ways. This Psalm may be the closest thing to such an account by David. His words absolutely gush out of his pen, racing to describe this awesome image of God.

"The voice of the LORD...breaks the cedars of Lebanon" (imagine the redwoods of California, crushed with a word). **"The voice of the LORD flashes forth flames of fire...(and) shakes the wilderness"**. Lebanon and Sirion (tall mountains where pagan gods would reside) are made by the LORD to skip and dance. The LORD's voice **"makes the deer give birth and strips the forests bare"**.

I don't believe this is a vision, though. I think David is gathering into one Psalm many of the encounters he's witnessed of God's actions in the world around him. David has fought lions trying to steal his sheep, led armies in battle, he's ruled as king over Israel; in other words, he's seen God at work. He's seen God paint beautiful sunrises, provide for the animals in the wild, and give David victories he did nothing to earn.

But what makes this Psalm even more mind blowing is that it is traditionally read at baptisms. Next time you see a little baby, being held by an adult because he or she can't even sit up, having water poured over him while the Name of the Triune God is spoken into him – remember these words. **"The voice of the Lord is over the waters; the God of glory thunders"** as He washes the sins from the child.

What a perfect description of baptism:

**"The Lord sits enthroned over the flood;
the Lord sits enthroned as king forever.
May the Lord give strength to his people!
May the Lord bless his people with peace!"**

Prayer - Lord God, make me remember how Your mighty hand washed me in the waters of baptism. Continue to dwell within me, strengthening me and blessing me with Your peace. Amen.

Today's Devotion was written by Pastor Jeff Nelson

Monday August 31, 2020

Read Psalm 30

Joy Comes with the Morning

Yesterday, I was finally able to come out of quarantine. I spent two weeks in the basement. Resting, recovering, praying. I was still pretty spent when it was time for me to come upstairs, but I was greeted by something wonderful – not just the smiling faces of my family members, but also the sun. It was as though dawn had broken after a two-week night.

It might not be illness. Perhaps your darkness has been grief, or it could be guilt. In this life, a myriad of problems plunges us into darkness for a time, and the night of our pain, illness, grief or guilt can seem to last forever. In the darkness, we can be consumed with tears whether the darkness has been caused by our own doing or just by our presence in this sin-filled world.

David wrote Psalm 30 as **“a song at the dedication of the temple.”** You may know that David didn’t build the temple, but he did purchase the land. He had taken a census of all fighting age men, which was really a sign that David trusted in his fighting force more than in the Lord. A plague came on the land. The darkness led to the death of 70,000. In sorrow for his sin, David bought land and offered a sacrifice there. (This later was the place of the temple.) In a darkness of illness, grief and guilt, David, **“cried to (the Lord) for help, and (He) healed me.”** The forgiveness of God meant physical and spiritual healing – an end to the plague and peace with God.

So David proclaimed, **“Sing praises to the Lord, O you, his saints, and give thanks to his holy name. For his anger is but for a moment, and his favor is for a lifetime. Weeping may tarry for the night, but joy comes in the morning.”** Such healing to bring you through your time of darkness is assured in Your Savior, the Son of David, who has **“turned for me (and you!) my mourning into dancing,”** by defeating pain and illness and sin and death by His death and resurrection. Rejoice today in the light and mercy of Christ!

Prayer – Dear Jesus, in my time in darkness, grant me healing in body and soul according to Your mercy. Amen.

Today’s Devotion was written by Pastor Jason

Tuesday September 1, 2020

Read Psalm 31

Still I Rejoice

There are times when troubles overwhelm me. Everyone around me seems to delight in my vulnerability, and I know how weak I am. But I have one comfort in such troubled times - I have a refuge! God who knows my failures; God who knows my heart; God who knows - yet loves me! God who is above all, unlike me, a success. He took on the whole world, gave His life for me, and yet conquered all.

So in the midst of trouble, in the midst of aching loneliness, still I rejoice. When I look at myself, when I try to control my life, despair rides high; but when I look at my refuge, my fortress, that is, God my Savior, then despair crumbles, sinks away in small pieces. My Savior knows me and loves me. He stands in the way of those perils, making me successful and strong.

But what about how weak I am? What about my vulnerabilities? They still exist, but now they direct me to Jesus. The weaker I am, the stronger I realize that He is. Now instead of fearing my troubles, I can rejoice because they direct to Jesus and to depending on Him.

How God turns life upside down? What life wants to make my worst day; God turns into my best. The less I depend on what I can do, the less I try to handle things alone, the better it all turns out. Thank you God! Thank you for being here for me!

Prayer: Many, O Lord, are my troubles. Please save me - save from letting them dominate me. Bring me out of myself, to see You - trust You - and rejoice with You. Thank you for turning my life upside down. Amen.

Today's Devotion was written by Pastor Art Bolstad

Wednesday September 2, 2020

Read Psalm 32

With Guilt or Guile

Today's reading brought to mind a question that I once heard: how do you deal with sin in your life, with guile or with guilt? Our inclination is often towards guile. If at all possible, we want to explain our sin away. We become exceptionally adept at guile in our relationships with others. We flatter others in order to try and get what we want. We backbite against our employers and fellow workers, slow down deliberately in our work, and take company materials home with us for our own use. Guile. Children sneak a cookie when no one is looking, take something belonging to a brother or sister, and lie to Mom or Dad. Guile. In church we sometimes pretend piety toward God while blaming others for our wrong attitudes and bad example. Guile.

David was well accustomed to the same tactics. He tried to deal with his sin by using guile – with extremely poor results. **“when I kept silent, my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long. For day and night your hand was heavy upon me; my strength was dried up as by the heat of summer.”** Imagine trying to hide your sin from God! What foolishness, and yet it is a foolish attempt at guile that we all know too well.

Yet when he honestly admitted guilt, David experienced the beautiful forgiveness of God. **“I acknowledged my sin to You and did not cover up my iniquity. I said, ‘I will confess my transgressions to the LORD’ – and You forgave the iniquity (the guilt) of my sin.”**

Consider the freedom to be found in laying guile aside and confessing our guilt. We are promised that as we confess our guilt to God and to one another, **“the blood of Jesus, His Son, purifies us from all sin”** (1 John 1:7). Jesus, who lived a sinless life, dealt with our guilt on the cross as He fully paid for the sins of the world. Children of God in Baptism, we regularly receive forgiveness in the Word and at the altar, where His body and blood await us. In the end, neither guile nor guilt avail, but grace and the good news of Jesus.

PRAYER: Lord God, I confess my sins to You and thank You for sending Your Son to die for me so that my sins are now forgiven. Amen.

Today's Devotion was written by Pastor Jason

Thursday September 3, 2020

Read Psalm 33

The Word of the LORD

So we say, “you have my word,” and “I promise!” How good are these statements when we hear or speak them? Sometimes? Always? Never? Hmm . . . I like to think my words are trustworthy all the time, yet, I have not kept my words pure, righteous, upright, and faithful. Although I cannot, the LORD keeps His Word and promises steadfast all the time, for His steadfast love, mercy, and Word endures forever!

We know and believe by God’s grace alone through faith alone, the Joy and Hope of the LORD our GOD because of the Gospel of Christ alone revealed to us in Scripture alone; the Word of God come down from Heaven to save us, **“in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins. . . For by Him all things were created”** (Col. 1:14, 16; see Gen. 1:1-4; John 1:1-5).

Today, we see the psalmist rejoicing, **“By the word of the LORD the heavens were made, and by the breath of His mouth all their host . . . Let all the earth fear the LORD; let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of Him! For He spoke, and it came to be; He commanded, and it stood firm”** (33:6, 8-9).

Luther’s *What does this mean?* on the first commandment rings loudly here, “We should fear, love, and trust in God above all things” (Luther’s Small Catechism), and yet, we do not. Again, we cannot do good works or believe in God apart from Christ, but God in Christ alone has done all good works for and through us by faith in His birth, life, death, resurrection, and ascension, for He is **“upright, and all His work is done in faithfulness”** (33:4).

JESUS, **“the Christ, the Son of the living God”** (Matt. 16:16), foretold and fulfilled God’s Word that He would die and rise again on the third day, and through faith in Him, we sing **“a new song”** (33:3; Isa. 42:10; Rev. 5:9; 14:3) because of redemption and forgiveness of sin in Him, and His eternal life and righteousness given for us.

Prayer - O LORD, we hope in Your steadfast love and deliverance of our souls from eternal death through Jesus Christ for our redemption and the forgiveness of sins, **“For our heart is glad in Him, because we trust His holy name. Let Your steadfast love, O LORD, be upon us, even as we hope in You** (33:22),” in JESUS Name. Amen.

Today’s Devotion was written by Pre-seminary Student Nathan Tritch

Friday September 4, 2020

Read Psalm 34

At All Times?

David's beginning to Psalm 34 seems...unrealistic. **"I will bless the Lord at all times; his praise shall continually be in my mouth."** Now you can probably think of plenty of times when praise would be on your lips: at the sight of a beautiful sunset or the first glimpse of your child, when serious harm was narrowly avoided or when a painful conflict was finally ended, perhaps when you were able to be in worship after a long absence (or perhaps you are looking toward that day). There are SOOO many times when praise is on our lips.

But continually? At all times? How can David say such a thing? How can he invite us to say the same? As the heading to the Psalm points out this Psalm was written, **"when he changed his behavior before Abimelech."** David was on the run from King Saul, but his only option was to hide out in enemy territory ruled by Abimelech. The only way he was safe was to act insane, but even then David was endanger until he was **"driven out...and went away."** David's song of praise at all times comes while he is under attack on every side. This does not seem like the occasion when praise would be on his lips. Nevertheless, he wrote this Psalm. It is an acrostic poem in Hebrew (each line begins with a letter of the alphabet).

Taken together the point is even more remarkable. For every letter, there is a word of praise. In every occasion, David has been **"delivered from all his fears,"** had **"the angel of the encamped around him,"** and **"tasted and seen that the Lord is good."** In difficult times, we may not feel like this, but the truth is that we have been delivered from our greatest fears of sin, death and the devil. The Lord has protected us through untold dangers physical and spiritual, and in Christ, we have tasted and seen the goodness of the Lord in forgiving us, strengthening us, providing for us, and promising us eternal life and hope. No matter the challenge of the moment, we could list from A-Z (and more!) why in Christ the praise of the Lord shall continually be in our mouths.

PRAYER: Oh Lord, I praise and thank you for your great goodness to me in every time through Christ, my Savior. Amen.

Today's Devotion was written by Pastor Jason

Saturday September 5

Read [Psalm 35](#)

“Bearing Your Cross”

At face value, today’s Psalm relates King David’s lamentation to the LORD regarding the deceitfulness of some of his former “friends” and supporters. These weren’t simply royal officials who no longer liked the king – they were actively seeking his failure and overthrow. They wanted him dead. David prays that the traps they set for him would instead ensnare *them*, that the figurative pit they dug to swallow up his life would become *their* place of destruction. He had worn sackcloth and fasted over their travails “**as one who laments his mother**”. He mourns the fact that these were the same ones that he had prayed for when they were sick.

At an entirely different level, reading this Psalm – all the way through – as if spoken by Jesus Himself – will reveal the intensely personal experience Christ endured on Good Friday. The lies, the false accusations, the hate that David writes about is just a shadow of the spite that Jesus received at His trial, His march to Golgotha, His crucifixion.

This is a psalm about bearing your cross. Unlike David, you and I probably don’t feel like people around us want us dead. Most of the time, we don’t experience the “king” sized problems that David did. We don’t have all humanity and God Himself turn their backs on us, as Jesus did. We have “normal” sized crosses to bear. If you’re like me, you might have a physical/health issue that you bear every day. It’s a matter-of-fact kind of thing – it will never go away and will worsen as you age, but it constantly reminds you of where your hope must lie.

David tells us about his cross. It got him down and tore at his very soul, every day. It hurt him to his bones. But, like the amazed discovery by Jesus’ followers on Easter morning that “**He is alive!**”, David is delivered from his tormentors. And David rejoices in the congregation of believers who join him in praising God, “**who delights in the welfare of His servant!**”

Heavenly Father, strengthen me to bear the crosses that come my way in life. Like David, make them turn me to You for my sure Hope. In Jesus’ Name, Amen.

Today’s Devotion was written by Pastor Jeff Nelson

Monday September 7, 2020

Read Psalm 36

Two Consuming Words

Psalm 36 presents an astounding difference. The opening words speak of the incredible power of delusion that sin possesses. **“Transgression speaks to the wicked deep in his heart...he flatters himself in his own eyes that his iniquity cannot be found out and hated...He plots trouble while on his bed; he sets himself in a way that is not good; he does not reject evil.”** It is hard to hear these words and not imagine an almost comic book master villain cackling at his own evil plot. The scary thing is that such delusion is directly tied to sin. Consider this power: **“transgression speaks to the wicked deep in his heart.”** It brings to mind the words of Jesus that tells us that **“evil comes from the heart.”** At the very least, this tells us that sinful people should be very wary of the common advice to “follow our hearts.” According to Scripture, the sinful heart makes for a lousy compass.

Yet after describing the sinister nature of the heart that follows only its own guidance, David presents a picture of a wholly (Holy) different word. **“Your steadfast love, O LORD, extends to the heavens, your faithfulness to the clouds...your judgments are like the great deep; man and beast you save, O LORD...For with you is the fountain of life; in your light do we see light. Oh, continue your steadfast love to those who know you, and your righteousness to the upright of heart!”** In your light do we see light. With the Word of the Lord that proclaims His steadfast love, we are freed from delusion to see what is good and right. We have life and forgiveness in Christ. We have direction and guidance toward what our hearts should desire. In faith, we are guided by His light, and only then are we “upright of heart.”

PRAYER: “Let not the foot of arrogance come upon me, nor the hand of the wicked drive me away.” Lead me to trust in the all-consuming good of Your Word. Amen.

Today's Devotion was written by Pastor Jason

Tuesday September 8, 2020

Read Psalm 37:1-17

Fret Not

So often the song of our lives is measured by “control”. I want to ensure that my life goes correctly - as I plan it. So, I take steps to make my actions and those of others correspond to those plans. But the wicked, how they disrupt my plans; how they fail to act rightly. I call on our God to act, to take care of them, to eradicate their false actions! I am right, those are false actions; so why doesn't God punish them?

My desire for “control” is itself wrong. Why do “I” think I can tell God what and when to do anything? **“Fret not yourself,”** the psalmist tells us. A “fret” is a raised bar on a guitar - you can run your fingers over it and hear a repeated thudding sound - like making a motor on you bicycle wheel. Fretting worries repeatedly about something, usually something we have no control over! Our desire for control is the problem.

God will take care of the wicked. He never fails, but He does things in His good time, not ours. So “fret not yourself” but rather rest in knowing that God will indeed do what is needed.

Instead of paying attention to those bad people, look at God and His ways. Focus your thoughts on how you yourself live with God. There is more than enough in His Word to keep you living in wonder and grace all your life. And there you will find that God pulls your thoughts and ideas into His ways, making that fretting we did seem totally inconsequential.

Prayer: O Lord, how my affairs in this world grab my attention and bring it away from You. Help me to drop the “fretting” and in attending to Your Word, to live in the Joy that that brings me. Amen

Today's Devotion was written by Pastor Art Bolstad

Wednesday September 9, 2020

Psalm 37:18-40

Turn Away from Evil and Do Good

In the beginning of Psalm 37, we hear about control, the things we try to control, and how we should not fret, but we should trust in God. If you have not yet, take a look at the devotion from the beginning of Psalm 37 from yesterday.

Yet we hear at the beginning of our reading for today in verse 20, that the wicked will perish. Hooray! We think of that and we rejoice a little bit, thinking that thought, "Ah, they are getting what they deserve now!"

Have you ever had that thought? I think I can take a good guess and say that most, if not all of us have thought that at one point or another. Whether it is the person who cut you off on the highway, or the person who snuck in the line before you and got the very last whatever you were in line for. But we often think about those things and think about the other people.

Today, I am giving you a chance to think selfishly. Now reading that you might be a little confused. But the selfish way I want to think today, is to look at how we can often times think more of ourselves and have those selfish thoughts and turn them to selfless thoughts.

We read in our psalm today many ways that we should live. Ways WE should live, not trying to critique others to how they should.

The righteous is generous and gives. The steps of a man are established by the Lord when he delights in his way. Turn away from evil and do good. The mouth of the righteous utters wisdom...the law of God is in his heart. The salvation of the righteous is from the Lord...The Lord helps them and delivers them.

We can look at these and look inward a bit today. Maybe we have not been as generous as we should be, maybe we have not done what is always good, maybe we have thought a bit too selfishly the past couple of days. Turn. Turn away from evil and do good. So today as we read and reread this psalm, we turn from evil and do good. Not because our salvation depends on it, but because our neighbor does. On you and I showing that love and care that the Lord shows to us, the love that took him to the cross for me and you.

Prayer - Gracious God, help me to put the needs of others before myself. Help me to live my life for you, my Lord and Savior. Not for the sake of my salvation, but for the sake of my neighbor. Remind me every day of who You are and what You have done for me. Amen.

Today's Devotion was written by Seminary Student Chris Deneen

September 10, 2020

Read Psalm 38

Help Me, O Lord, My Salvation

Perhaps one could tell a thousand instances of a terrified conscience, such as, “I could have told the truth and was going to, but instead, I let someone else take the blame for my actions, I feel horrible, I have sinned!”

We should confess our sins to those we sin against and to God because of Christ’s righteousness and forgiveness for us. Yet I find confession hard to do, in fact, I cannot repent, believe, or do good works because of sin in my heart. I need help, Lord Jesus.

How many times does “help me Lord,” “help me God,” help me Jesus,” pour out of our hearts? Too much or too little?

David, in terror of his sin, and through faith in the LORD, confesses, **“There is no soundness in my flesh because of Your indignation; there is no health in my bones because of my sin. (v. 4) . . . I am feeble and crushed; I groan because of the tumult of my heart. (v. 8) . . . But for you, O LORD, do I wait; it is you, O Lord my God, who will answer. (v. 15) . . . I confess my iniquity; I am sorry for my sin” (v. 18).**

Philip Melanchthon writes in the *Apology (defense) of the Augsburg Confession*:

“We say that contrition is the true terror of conscience, which feels that God is angry with sin and grieves that it has sinned. This contrition takes place when sins are condemned by God’s Word. . . . The Gospel, in which the forgiveness of sins is freely promised concerning Christ, should be presented to consciences in these terrors. They should believe that, for Christ’s sake, their sins are freely forgiven” (Apology, XII:29, 35).

Prayer - O LORD God, when I am weak, You are strong. **“Make haste to help me, O Lord, my salvation!”** Forgive me freely for the sake of Christ Jesus who paid for our sin on the cross and rose from the dead on the third day for our justification. Amen.

Today’s Devotion was written by Pre-seminary Student Nathan Tritch

Friday, September 11
Read Psalm 39

Feeling Small

Last weekend, I went for a long hike in Elephant Rocks State Park. It's a beautiful wilderness area named after a line of pink, multi-ton granite rocks that resemble a line of elephants. Looking out from the top of these huge rocks over miles and miles of forest took my breath away, and as I considered how vast and marvelous God's creation is, I have to admit, I felt quite small.

This is the humble feeling that David writes about in today's psalm. He says:

**"O Lord, make me know my end and what is the measure of my days.
Let me know how fleeting I am!
Behold you have made my days as handbreadths
And my lifetime is as nothing before You.
Surely, all mankind stands as a mere breath!"**

David is asking for the humility to know his standing in the world. Even a great king will one day die, and all of his earthly work will pass away.

There is no way around this reality. We can fight against it and try to **"heap up wealth"** to make ourselves feel like we are something. Or we can look to the Creator, Who is all in all. Even though we are nothing before Him, He has looked upon us with favor. Despite our sin, God became man and dwelt among us. The Creator of the universe died and rose again for *us*. Knowing how little we are reveals how great the love of God is in Christ Jesus and how precious we are in His sight

Prayer - Heavenly Father and Creator of all things, we thank You for Your beautiful creation and that You have created us in Your image. We thank You even more that You have come to us and been made man and humbled Yourself to death, even death on a cross for the sake of we who are nothing. Teach us to number our days so that we might gain wisdom in our heart. Teach us humility so that as we value ourselves less, we value You more. We pray this in the name of the One Who valued us even above His own life, Amen.

Today's Devotion was written by Seminary Student Case Farney

Saturday September 12

Read [Psalm 40](#)

“All Over the Place”

Have you ever run into someone that had everything happen to them that day and it was all so overwhelming that it just blew their socks off and then the thing on their car went “ka-blooey” and what does that even mean and then they heard the sad news about Sam and it just hit them in the gut and knocked all the air out of them and...

Sometimes, life is like that. You have one of those days where you find yourself “all over the place”. In today’s Psalm, I doubt David is writing about a single day, but he describes every category of thing that can happen to a Christian. He “**waits for the LORD...and He drew me up from the pit of destruction**”. After setting David solidly on a rock, “**He put a...song of praise**” in his mouth.

When David thought his offerings or sacrifices weren’t enough, he was reminded that “burnt offering and sin offering You have not required”. And this reminder of God’s free, merciful gift of righteousness and salvation leads David to the Temple, where he told of God’s deliverance to everyone in “the great congregation.”

When evils surround him and the effects of his sin pile up, threatening to overtake him, his “**heart fails him**”. Again, he prays for deliverance from “**those who seek to snatch away**” his life and “**delight in his hurt**”.

Where is God in all these normal, human encounters? When everything’s going your way; or when it’s not? When trouble is behind every corner, when you feel like you can never measure up? Where is God when you’re “all over the place”?

He’s there – with you. Whether your day is going great – the best ever! Or you just want to go back to bed and start over – tomorrow – God is there with you. When you’re down, He comforts and cares for you. When you’re so overjoyed you can’t think of how to rejoice, He fills you with the words to the Magnificat.

Prayer - Immanuel, Praise be to You for being “with me” through everything. Great are You, LORD! Amen.

Today’s Devotion was written by Pastor Jeff Nelson

Monday September 14, 2020
Read Psalm 41

Nowhere Else to Go

In reading Psalm 41, I was reminded of the comment by Abraham Lincoln: "I have been driven many times upon my knees by the overwhelming conviction that I had nowhere else to go." David is suffering from illness which is evident as others comment that **"a deadly thing is poured out on him; he will not rise again from where he lies."** Obviously, this is not just seasonal allergies. David is facing a life-threatening illness of some sort.

To make matters worse, illness is not the only pain he is enduring. His enemies are downright giddy at the prospect of David's demise. They imagine filling the void that King David's death will create. **"All who hate me whisper together about me; they imagine the worst for me."** This is an evil impulse that many are tempted towards in relation to their political opponents. Yet David's enemies include his friends. **"Even my close friend in whom I trusted, who ate my bread, has lifted his heel against me."** With friends like these, who needs enemies?

What is David's response? **"But you, O Lord, be gracious to me."** Lincoln's wisdom above seems an echo of David's attitude. When everything else fails, we recognize we have nowhere else to go. The truth is that we may imagine that we have the ability to make it on our own strength, cleverness or ability. Yet even these have been gifts from God. There is nothing we accomplish apart from His gracious giving, and it is a painful blessing in suffering that sometimes we only see His provision when pain and loss leave us nowhere else to go.

As the hymn puts it, *"When every earthly prop gives way, He then is all my hope and stay. On Christ the solid rock I stand, All other ground is sinking sand."* Many people, abilities and possessions in this life are incredible blessings from God, but they all make lousy foundations, except for Christ Jesus. There is nowhere else to go.

Prayer – Lord, please use my times of trial to help me see Your gracious work in and through all times. In Jesus name. Amen.

Today's Devotion was written by Pastor Jason

Tuesday September 15, 2020
Read Psalm 42

Seeing God Clearly

Some days are happy, and everything seems bright. You can feel the closeness to God, you just know that all is right. But everyone has other days - days when you see the darkness in the world, when you feel like you have dark glasses on, nothing is going right, and you are left asking, "Where is God?"

When things are dark - we aren't asking the question out of doubt, no rather it is more of a complexity. Look, I know God; I see Him in church and in His Word. No, it is perplexing: to God and His promises - to be there with me, to support me - but in dark times it is hard to see fulfillment of His promises. I see the evil in the world, seemingly powerful, blinding me to God. Seeing the world, I lose sight of God's activity and begin to ponder the lack in my vision.

And yet this is when I see God the clearest. When the world is doing its worst; when this life shows me to be powerless - ah, then I can see God acting. Then when I can do nothing, when I can see the uselessness of all my efforts; then I know my salvation comes from God. It has to, it surely can't come from me! The light shining in the darkness is brightest!

That Church going, that Bible reading is my staff holding me up when the world is too dark, for there I see the light. There I am reminded that God keeps His promises - and that He has promised to ward me, even in the darkest times.

Prayer: Please dear Lord, remind me to simply trust you. Don't let the darkness days get me down; rather raise me up, build my confidence. Thank you for your promise that you will indeed do just exactly that. Amen.

Today's Devotion was written by Pastor Art Bolstad

Wednesday September 16, 2020

Read Psalm 43

Light in the Darkness

“For you are the God in whom I take refuge;” What a wonderful thing we here about God in the second verse of Psalm 43. This idea of God being our fortress isn’t a new thought, but it is one we know quite well. A Mighty Fortress is our God! In him we take refuge! But then our psalmist takes this turn and says, “Why have you rejected me?”

When someone is looking for refuge, a safe place, a place to feel welcomed and comforted, this is the last thing they would want. For a lighthearted example today, it would be as if you are out on a walk, and all of a sudden it starts pouring rain. You go to a nearby house to ask for a place to get out of the rain. But they say no, and you are left out in the rain, the cold, and the darkness. But our God doesn’t leave us out in the rain and darkness, we read on and we hear the pleas of the psalmist, and the pleas of our own hearts as they cry out to God.

“Send out your light and your truth; let them lead me.” Darkness is an interesting topic. It’s one of the ideas that we hear about quite often, but not just darkness, normally we end up hearing about its counterpart, light. If you’ve ever walked around your house in the middle of the night, you might know how dark darkness can actually be. If you have no lights, or the power is out, that darkness can envelop rooms, almost entire houses at times!

But then just a bit of light, just a flicker, a small nightlight in the corner, it takes the darkness and it splits it. It gives you something to look towards, something to at least be able to give you a little bit of familiarity. Just a little light, can do all that. That light which God sends to us isn’t just a flicker of a light, it isn’t just a little night light, it is a full blown all the lights on, all on at once, and piercing to the darkness! We can sometimes feel stuck in the dark, but our God gives us that light, He brings light to the darkness, so that we may come to Him!

So when we are feeling down, sad, distraught, left in the darkness, turn to the light, the light of God, and as the Psalmist says to our downcast souls, and even to us at times, **“Hope in God; for I shall again praise him, my salvation and my God.”**

Prayer - Gracious Lord, giver of all God things, thank you. Thank you for giving us your light, helping us to see You even in the darkest of nights. Help us to turn to You, and find our refuge, strength, salvation, and light from the darkness. Amen.

Today’s Devotion was written by Seminarian Chris Deneen

September 17, 2020

Read Psalm 44

For the Sake of Your Mercy

This psalm of lament and national crisis sung by the Israelites cries for God's help in their distress after suffering defeat by their enemies. In Israel's (Jacob's) lament, they praise God for past triumphs, layout their current defeat and its results, plea their innocence, and pray for God's help, **"For our soul is bowed down to the dust; our belly clings to the ground. Rise up; come to our help! Redeem us for the sake of Your [mercy] steadfast love!"** (v.26).

Sin separated man from the LORD God in the garden when Adam and Eve disobeyed God's Word by eating from the tree that He told them not to. This separation of our sin causes an eternal result of pain, death, suffering, distress, weakness, oppression, and other dark lamentable consequences. Yet, in the eternal light of God's favor and promise, for the sake of His lovingkindness, the eternal Son of God, our Lord Jesus Christ, redeemed us to Himself forever by His death and resurrection.

As God's chosen people, we will suffer and be persecuted in the world for confessing the Holy Name of our Lord Jesus Christ, and it may seem like defeat by the enemy who constantly attacks and wounds the saints. God in Christ Jesus crushed the enemies head as promised (Gen. 3:15) on the cross bringing us redemption and the forgiveness of sins. So, we, the Bride of Christ, cry and lament in distress to our King and Redeemer whose victory over the power of sin, death, and all evil brought us freedom and victory over the law of sin, death, and Satan.

Sometimes it may not seem like victory and more like defeat as the psalmist cries, **"Yet for your sake we are killed all the day long; we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered"** (v. 22; Rom. 8:36). The Apostle Paul writes by the breath of the Holy Spirit, **"For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord"** (Rom. 8:38-39).

Prayer - "Father of all mercy, we thank You for sending Your Son into our flesh to redeem us for Yourself. For the sake of His obedience and suffering, grant us forgiveness of all our sins and shortcomings, and keep us from the evil, as Your Son, our Lord, prayed for us. Amen." (*Reading the Psalms with Luther*, Psalm 44).

Today's Devotion was written by Pre-seminary Student Nathan Tritch

Friday September 18, 2020
Read Psalm 45

An Overflowing Heart

This Psalm begins with the words "**My heart is stirred by a good word**". The Psalmist is so pleased by what he is about to describe that he feels it in the depth of his soul. Surely, we've all been moved to the core by inspiring words or a dramatic story or a really exciting event. For the Psalmist, nothing could be more exciting than the wedding of this handsome young man and his beautiful bride. As we keep reading, it becomes clear that this is none other than Christ and His Church. So wonderful is this union that it cuts to the core of anyone who tells the story.

When we consider how God has come Himself to save His people, how He has clothed her with beautiful robes, and how He will live with her forever in love, how can we help feeling awestruck? Just like the disciples on the road to Emmaus when Jesus appeared to them and explained the Old Testament, our hearts burn within us when we consider the things that the Lord has done for us.

Prayer - Heavenly Father, we thank You for all the good You have done for us and all the good You do for us each day. Ignite our hearts with the glorious story of the redemption won for us by Jesus Christ. Give us wisdom to know how broad and how deep and how long and how high Your love is for us. Help us to keep our eyes trained on You, the bridegroom who has come to make us holy and will come again to dwell with us forever, to be our God as we are Your people. Stir up our hearts to share this good word with those around us, and keep us in your abounding peace. Through Your Son, our Lord, Amen.

Today's Devotion was written by Seminary Student Case Farney

Saturday September 19

Read [Psalm 46](#)

“A Mighty Fortress”

Everyone knows that when the 98 pound weakling shows up as a freshman in high school, it will be his end. Not knowing anyone, looking “different”, and generally being a “dork”, it won’t take long for the school bullies to have their way with him. Except. His big brother is the tall, muscular, popular, wide receiver on the football team. Who was homecoming king last year. And has promised his little brother “No one will lay a hand on you or their life is over!” Everything goes great for the little brother (until next year when big brother goes away to college).

Maybe, as an adult, you took comfort in living in the only superpower in the world. America – no one can touch us! Until 9/11, when a small group of men struck terror into the hearts of America, as we instantly became aware there were people who hate us enough to commit suicide to attack us.

In the 15th century, when Martin Luther wrote “A Mighty Fortress Is Our God”, the commonly understood enemy of man was that “devils all the world should fill, all eager to devour us”. Today, maybe because we’re “too smart” to believe in devils, or maybe because mankind itself has become more demonic, it seems now we’re our own worst enemy.

So, while **“the mountains be moved into the heart of the sea”** and **“the nations rage, the kingdoms totter”**, “no strength of ours can match his (the devil’s) might”. While COVID kills thousands, unemployment turns many to despair, terror still threatens us, and our own government can’t agree on how to help, we need a refuge. A big, strong brother to protect us.

“But for us fights the valiant One, Whom God Himself elected.” Jesus is that brother and was willing to give His life for us! He died to bring you into His family, the **“city of God, the holy habitation of the Most High”**. This is the Almighty God who, when **“He utters His voice, the earth melts.”** Twice, in the Psalm, we’re reminded, **“The LORD of hosts is with us”**.

Check out [2 Kings 19:35](#). Those “hosts” that our Big Brother is LORD of are His army of angels. When Jesus was arrested in the Garden of Gethsemane, He told Peter to put away his sword. If He wanted, Jesus said, He could call down 12 legions of angels (about 72,000!) to fight for Him. (In 2 Kings, one lone angel struck down 185,000 of Israel’s enemies. While they slept).

“God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.” This is what He’s been doing since before the beginning of time. He’ll continue to be our “Mighty Fortress” through our present troubles.

Prayer - Heavenly Father, help me to “be still and know that You are God”. Through Your Son and my Brother, Jesus. Amen.

Today’s Devotion was written by Pastor Jeff Nelson

Monday September 21, 2020
Read Psalm 47

Clap your Hands, All Peoples!

A reason for universal joy. That's what is pictured in Psalm 47. That sounds incredibly enticing as our fractured world and nation find fewer things to rejoice over together, and the rest of this year seems to be as contentious (or more so!) than the rest of the year has been.

We need a reason for universal joy. Of course, the declaration of the Psalm is that we don't have to wait for it. No peace plan, preferred election outcome, reform package, or perfect Supreme Court nomination is needed. Those all have their place in the temporal affairs of the world. But we have a supreme reason for joy that stands above the time bound affairs that consume all the oxygen on the nightly news: **"God has gone up with a shout, the Lord with the sound of a trumpet."**

From our perch in time, the words of Psalm 47 turn our eyes to the seemingly odd occurrence of Jesus' Ascension into heaven. We might be tempted to despair at the notion of Christ "leaving," but Psalm 47 gives us the proper perspective. The phrase **"God has gone up"** refers to what the psalm says clearly in verse 8, **"God sits on the throne."**

Here is a reason for joy: Christ ascends to rule over all things! He rules over heaven and earth, life and death, present and future. Yes, the One who **"loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God"** (Eph 5:2), that's who **"reigns over the nations"** and **"is the King of all the earth."** There is no greater reason for joy and optimism in all creation. Christ, the Lord of mercy and grace, sits on the throne for us.

Prayer – Lord Jesus, in our contentious and changing world, strengthen me in the assurance that You rule over Your church in love, you preside over all things, and, unlike the kingdoms of this world, Your merciful reign will never end. Amen.

Today's Devotion was written by Pastor Jason

Tuesday September 22, 2020

Read Psalm 48

Zion We Are

Zion, the city of God. What a wonderful picture - a picture of our citizenship. In these times of conflict, it is good to remember that our true citizenship is with God - part of the city of God.

We live in the mountain of God's holiness - a purity we acquire only through the salvation we get from Jesus Christ, God Himself. The trust He builds within us, the faith He gives us to trust Him and His death and resurrection to make me right with God, that faith makes us God's children, opens our eyes to see the disgusting nature of sin (and our former participation), and fills our hearts with the joy of being part of Him.

Zion, our home, is a refuge from troubles. We can see here the totality of God's power and majesty. The forces and results of nature are His; what He does makes all things beautiful - and we live among them. All those who try to ignore God, the so-called powers of the world, all fear and tremble at the forces of "nature" (which God creates and controls)!

Consider the church God has established. Oh, not our human organizations, but the assembly of all of God's people. How they have a fellowship surpassing our human-only ties! How the Bible, the Word of God, changes the hearts of those receiving those words. How God acknowledges our material nature with the promise of acting through the sacraments - promises we receive while living.

Zion it is, Zion we are. Thank you Lord Jesus.

Prayer: Lord Jesus, thank you for making me part of your city. Thank you for your church and our life in You, not only in heaven but here on earth as well. Again, thank you!

Today's Devotion was written by Pastor Art Bolstad

Wednesday September 23, 2020

Read Psalm 49

Ransomed

Today's Psalm, Psalm 49, when you read through it, may seem quite odd. It doesn't necessarily sound like a "normal" psalm. This is considered a wisdom psalm, and thus it is one where the psalmist is calling upon those who are hearing or reading it to listen closely!

Looking at the first section in this psalm from verses 5-9, we hear this question asked, of why should I fear? There's sinners around me, and many are trusting in their riches! But yet, riches will only get you so far. In verse 7, we read no man can ransom another or give to God the price of his life.

Ransom is one of the many metaphors that we have that can help us to understand the Gospel a little better. When we hear something like this, we look and see, that it is indeed the case, that we can't pay the ransom for our sins. The price is too high for you or me to pay! There's no way that we could pay that ransom.

When we think of ransom, you might think of movies or something like that where you have heard of it. It is where there needs to be a payment for the safety and freedom of someone. And amidst all of the language of death, worry, perishing, there comes a glimmer, a sparkle, a moment of hope.

Turn back to verse 15, and read it again.

"But God will ransom my soul from the power of Sheol, for he will receive me." What a wondrous sentence that is. You and I alone, would be stuck in our sins, enslaved, not knowing freedom. But thanks be to God, because of the ransom that is paid through Christ's death and resurrection! And amidst a psalm where we might scratch our heads and wonder what is going on, we can see that hope that we have. Not in the things of this world, but the hope in Christ. The hope and the knowledge that Christ has freed us from the bondage of sin.

Prayer - Gracious Lord, Almighty God, thank you that you sent your Son to pay for my sins. Help me to repent of my ways and turn back to you and away from my sinful ways. Help me to strive to live a pure life for you, knowing that you have given me freedom from sin, death, and the devil. Amen.

Today's Devotion was written by Seminarian Chris Deneen

Thursday September 24, 2020

Read Psalm 50

God Shines Forth

When the word “shines” comes to mind, what are your first thoughts? The sun, moon, stars, lights, glass, mirror, kitchen, bathroom, shoes, cars, wheels, tires, metal, buildings, paint, teeth, and hair? Well, sure, but these are not the “shine” God speaks of through Asaph in Psalm 50.

The LORD judges and “shines” in power and mercy in His Church, calling us to repentance and faith, **“The Mighty One, God the LORD, speaks and summons the earth from the rising of the sun to its setting. Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty, God shines forth . . . He calls to the heavens above and to the earth, that He may judge His people”** (vv. 1-2, 4). Asaph spoke God’s judgment on Israel’s heartless actions in their offerings and sacrifices to the LORD God.

Reformer Philip Melanchthon writes, “The people in the Law [the Israelites] imitated sacrifices with the opinion that by means of these works they would appease God...We see here how earnestly the prophets rebuke the people: Ps. 50:8: I will not reprove thee for thy sacrifices, and Jer. 7:22: I spake not unto your fathers concerning burnt offerings. Such passages condemn not works, which God certainly had commanded as outward exercises in this government, but they condemn the godless opinion according to which they thought that by these works they appeased the wrath of God” (*Apology [Defense] of the Augsburg Confession*, V:86).

What’s the point? God’s Word has a “shine” that often sheds light on the true darkness of our sinful hearts, **“Mark this, then, you who forget God, lest I tear you apart, and there be none to deliver!** (v. 22), showing we need deliverance and salvation! God’s Word continues; **“The one who offers thanksgiving as his sacrifice glorifies Me; to one who orders his way rightly I will show the salvation of God!”** (v. 23). Who can do this rightly but God alone?

The LORD says, **“I am God, your God . . . call upon Me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you shall glorify Me”** (v. 15). God’s mercy and favor “shines” forth in Christ crucified and risen for you and me, calling all to see **“the salvation of God!”**

Prayer - LORD God of heaven and earth, shine forth and reform our hearts from all godlessness so that we may rightly give thanks and praise to You. For, Your grace and mercy are freely given on account of Christ Jesus for the forgiveness of sins quickening our hearts and creating us anew in His righteousness. Amen.

Today’s Devotion was written by Pre-seminary Student Nathan Tritch

Friday September 25, 2020
Read Psalm 51

Day by Day

It's hard to say something new about the fifty-first psalm. We've heard the beautiful poetry of David's lament echoed in every confession and absolution. Very many of our services begin with verse 15: "**O Lord open my lips, and my mouth will declare your praise.**" It seems that we have trouble coming to God in worship without these words of David. The reason isn't hard to figure out, just as verse 3 says, "**our sin is ever before us.**"

As Christians, we know that we sin every day, that we were even born in sin. With this in mind, we are always coming to God and confessing. We know that God can make us clean, no matter how often we make ourselves filthy with sin. We have the privilege of bringing our sin before God not only when He claims us at baptism or when we receive the Lord's Supper but every moment of our lives. And we know that as often as we live a life of sin and repentance, even more often does God forgive us.

Through the death of Jesus Christ, we have been purged of our sins and washed so that we are white as snow. By His blood, God has blotted out our iniquities. Because Christ was forsaken on the cross, God has not forsaken us nor has He taken His Spirit from us. Instead, He upholds us by His Spirit day after day, creating in us clean hearts. Each day, we bring God the sacrifices of our hearts and spirits broken and crushed under the weight of our sin and He points us to the ultimate sacrifice by which our sin is removed, and our hearts and spirits made whole.

Prayer - O God Who created all things and knows the hearts of all people, we come before You humbled at the weight of our sins. Even when we have tried our hardest, our best efforts have not been enough. We have sinned before you and offended you deeply and often. You have been merciful to us by giving Your Beloved Son, Jesus, to die in our place so that we might be fully cleansed from all of our many sins. Remind us in our every sin to think of our Savior. We know that Your mercy is new everyday but is at the same time constant. Let your love be our constant in this everchanging world. Open our mouths daily to declare Your praise, upholding us with your Holy Spirit. Through Your Precious Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord and Redeemer, Amen.

Today's Devotion was written by Seminarian Case Farney

Saturday September 26

Read [Psalm 52](#)

“Treachery vs. Love”

In case you’ve been living under a rock, hiding from the crazy world we live in, it’s been said, “America is divided”. You can be for one political side or the other, or just an undecided observer, but everyone is united in agreeing: we’re split. Whichever side you’ve chosen, you might believe that the other side is filled with liars, bigots, deceit, and slander. You might believe that, come the election (or some other day of reckoning), if your side wins, everything will be better. We’ll then be able to move on to peace, harmony, and unicorns. Deep down, though, you know that that’s just a fantasy (except the unicorns!). If this describes you, this Psalm is for you.

Political intrigue had been going on in Israel. While Israel was united under one king at this time, that king was convinced that his best general, David, was conspiring to take his throne. King Saul saw traitors behind every tree – his own son, Jonathan, had befriended David and (in his mind, anyway) betrayed him. So, his armies were scouring the countryside, pursuing David. Down to only a handful of loyal followers and out of food and weapons, David entered a synagogue for relief. The priest there, aware of God’s plan for David and of David’s faithfulness, gave him consecrated bread to sustain him and Goliath’s sword to support him.

Saul’s chief herdsman witnessed this and reported it to the king. He ordered the herdsman to kill all the priests and their families and the whole town, as an example to anyone who might consider supporting David.

If you were there, which side would you choose? Much like today, when caught between choosing between two sides of a human conflict, the choice can be difficult. Might? Or what’s right? Life, or death? Or, should I just ignore it and pretend I don’t see anything?

David knew where to turn. He complimented Doeg, the herdsman, on his “**mighty**” treachery. He admits that this man, and the wicked king he works for, both excel at doing evil. But David doesn’t turn to his own might, his popularity with the people, or his military skills for rescue. “**Why do you boast of evil, O mighty man? The steadfast love of God endures all the day.**”

David was unafraid of Saul. He stood in God’s house with His godly people, flourishing in the abundant garden of God’s favor. We, too, stand in that garden. Be good citizens – vote, pray, participate as you see proper – but for rescue? Turn to the Lord.

Lord God, King of the Universe,
**I will thank you forever,
because you have done it.
I will wait for your name, for it is good,
in the presence of the godly. Amen.**

Today’s Devotion was written by Pastor Jeff Nelson

Monday September 28, 2020
Read Psalm 53

Not Even One

There is no end to surveys. As the election approaches, surveys are published daily. Who will people vote for? What issues make a big difference? Survey after survey published with results presenting a plus or minus 3% margin of error.

As the Lord looks down from heaven, there is no margin of error for the holy, perfect God of the universe. His accounting is absolutely correct. **“God looks down from heaven on the children of man to see if there are any who understand, who seek after God. They have all fallen away; together they have become corrupt; there is none who does good, not even one.”**

We’d really like a recount. No one? Not even...one???

Nope. Not one.

This is why I found this recent survey result particularly disturbing. An extensive recent survey declared this, “Among Americans who consider themselves Christian, 52% believe they are saved by their good works rather than by faith in Christ as Savior.” Even with a 3% margin of error, half of the Christian in America trust in themselves, in their own good works.

Psalm 53 could not be clearer, **“there is none who does good, not even one.”** We are hopeless on our own. Every one of us. Our only hope is in the God who not only “looks down from heaven on the children of man,” but also came down from heaven and became a child. He alone is our hope. He alone is capable of rescuing us. He alone is truly good – for us and our salvation. Don’t count on yourself. Count on Christ alone.

Prayer – Dear Lord, I know that there is none who does good. I certainly do not live up to the perfect standard of your holiness. But Christ has. Forgive me for the sake of Jesus. By faith, count His righteousness as my own. In Jesus’ name. Amen.

Today’s Devotion was written by Pastor Jason

Tuesday September 29, 2020

Read Psalm 54

Troubled

The promises of God speak to my heart, because my heart is so often troubled. I experience the world. I hear the false notes of invitation, of terror, of abandonment. But with God I hear the love of One who cares for me, I hear reassurance that I am not alone, that all those troublings are not my concern but His!

And when I worry and wonder why He lets all this go on, He reminds me to rest on Him, not on my own powers (which are so worthless!). So, I turn in prayer "God help me!". There's no such thing as a poorly worded prayer for He sees my intentions and reads them rightly. There is assurance that He not only hears, but acts. He not only supports me protecting me from the world, but He acts on the World, quenching its attempts.

Yes, there are troubles out there; but I live in Christ, not in myself. I have the privilege of watching God turn back the evil I see, of seeing God's salvation working to free others from sin, to see God's justice clearing the world of those in rebellion against Him. True those who follow God are rescued in His love, while those who refuse Him, who attack Him and His people lose it all in failure. So those false notes I heard fail, but even in their failure they send me to my Lord, rejoicing in His Salvation. Praise the Lord!

Prayer: O God, You who answer prayer: listen to my troubles. Yes, solve them for me, but even more so: Let me always turn to you remembering that You can and will solve them. Let me trust in You through everything. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.

Today's Devotion was written by Pastor Art Bolstad

Wednesday September 30, 2020

Read Psalm 55

Want to Get Away?

Have you ever been there? In the same place as David in this psalm? At the beginning of this Psalm David is in some deep anguish. David is crying out to God, and then in verse 6 writes, **“Oh that I had wings like a dove! I would fly away and be at rest; yes, I would wander far away;”** Have you ever been there?

There has probably been a time in your life where you’ve experienced this. All you can do is cry out to God. You have something in your life that just hurts, tears you down, makes you weary, something that makes you just want to fly away and lodge in the wilderness. David continues in the psalm about his enemies. And in many other psalms, David writes that God is far away from him, that he doesn’t know where God is, or he feels as though God has left him.

But then in verse 16, after all of this lamenting, David writes this beautiful line,

“But I call to God and the Lord will save me. Evening and morning and at noon I utter my complaint and moan, and he hears my voice.”

Just as in other psalms David is lamenting to God, just as we do often times in our lives. But David reminds us, and is beyond thankful, that God hears him. **And God hears YOU!**

Burdens in our lives can come from anywhere. Work, family, school, jobs, need I go on? And these burdens can almost overtake us with worry, fear, or guilt at times. But then we see at the end of this psalm, in verse 22, **“Cast your burden on the Lord, and he will sustain you; he will never permit the righteous to be moved.”**

Where are your burdens in life? From where do they come? Cast them on the Lord. Throw them away, speak to God, for he hears you! Find time today to really sit down with God, and lay your burdens on Him. And why? Because he hears you, and will sustain and comfort you. Find that time today. Cast your burdens on the Lord.

Prayer: Gracious God, You know the burdens on our hearts and mind. Help us to come to you and lay those at your feet. Guide us, be with us, and sustain us through these burdens that we face in life. Amen.

Today’s Devotion was written by Seminarian Chris Deneen

Thursday, October 1, 2020

Read Psalm 56

God is For You

David trusted that God was for him when he was afraid and when his enemies attacked him, **“my enemies will turn back in the day when I call. This I know, that God is for me”** (Ps. 56:9). So also, everyone who trusts in God’s deliverance from evil, sin and death, believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. This I know, God is for you and me.

Jesus speaks powerful and authoritative words of light and life to our hearts, **“I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life”** (John 8:12). God’s Word brings faith, peace, hope, joy, light, and life for us in our sufferings and despair over sin and evil in and around us. Paul posed questions to the Romans over things of sin and death, and of life and light, **“What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us?”** (Romans 8:31).

Paul continues in Romans, **“He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things? Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us”** (Rom. 8:32-34).

David trusted in Yahweh’s deliverance, **“For you have delivered my soul from death, yes, my feet from falling, that I may walk before God in the light of life”** (Ps. 56:13). God’s face shines upon us for the sake of Christ for the forgiveness of sins given for you and me so that we may walk according to the Spirit.

Prayer - LORD God, for the sake of Christ, You are for and with us as Jesus promised, “I am with you always to the end of the age.” Thank You, LORD, for giving us True light and life. In the Name of Jesus, “who indeed is interceding for us.” Amen.

Today’s Devotion was written by Pre-seminary Student Nathan Tritch

Friday, October 2, 2020

Read Psalm 57

God Who Fulfills His Purposes for Us

"I cry out to God Most High, to God who fulfills his purpose for me." Over and over we see the refrains that are echoed through this Psalm. Cries to God for help and refuge. Prayers that the righteous be preserved and that the unrighteous would give way. What we see less often in the Psalms is God called **"God who fulfills his purpose for me."** This phrase is actually only used in one other instance in the Bible, in Psalm 138, so it may not be a really familiar piece of our biblical vocabulary.

What exactly does David have in mind when he talks about God fulfilling his purpose for us? Maybe this passage from Jeremiah 29 comes to mind: **"I know the plans I have for you' declares the LORD, 'plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope.'"** There's a lot of comfort in that verse but if you're like me, sometimes our faith and trust in God isn't as strong as maybe it should be. Maybe we think "'A future and a hope'? Well that sounds awesome, God, but I would really feel a lot more comfortable if you would spell things out for me." It can be hard to give ourselves over to God when his ways and his plans are so different from ours and so unclear to us. Sometimes what God is doing doesn't make any sense to us at all. I'm sure there were times when David was afraid and didn't understand God's plan, but had to trust in him nevertheless.

Luckily for us, we know what David didn't. As David asks in verse 3, God does **"send from heaven to save"**. He does **"put to shame him who tramples on me."** God answers David's prayer in an infinitely greater way than David could have imagined. Rather than merely providentially thwarting David's persecutors, God miraculously sent his Son from heaven to save us. By his glorious death and resurrection, Jesus puts to shame the devil and our sinful nature that always trample us down. They are no match for the one in whom our souls take refuge. We do not know every detail of God's purpose for us, but we know the big picture: God has given us hope and a future to live with him now and forever.

Prayer - God Most High, we come before you to humbly thank you that you have given us hope in Jesus Christ. We know that as far as the heavens are above the earth, so your holy thoughts are above ours. Teach us to trust in your ways and judgments, for you work all things for good for those who trust in you. Strengthen our faith that we might also trust in you, taking refuge in the shadow of your wings when we are scared or anxious. Fulfill your purposes in us and through us to the glory of your Holy Name. We ask all of this and whatever else you see that we need in the name of Jesus Christ, Amen.

Today's Devotion was written by Seminarian Case Farney

Saturday October 3

Read [Psalm 58](#)

“Judges”

Just two weeks ago, we were reminded of how much importance is placed on our Supreme Court as Ruth Bader Ginsberg died and the fight over her replacement began. After all, judges decide matters of life and death and answer questions like “what is a human right?” One of the critical questions to help choose a new judge (this time or any time) is, “what motivates this person?” Is it personal likes and dislikes, political ideology, or ideally – a pure, altruistic sense of justice? We place tremendous trust in these individuals but, over the years, we’ve often discovered that what we expected a judge to do is not what he or she actually did.

O.J. Simpson, the former NFL record-setter, was tried for murder in a sensational trial, now 25 years ago. America stayed glued to their televisions to watch the spectacle unfold – “if the glove does not fit, you must acquit!” and other dialogue from the trial entered our common language. Also, the belief was nurtured that, if you were rich and famous, you could get away with murder.

In today’s America, there is a sense of fear, distrust, and powerlessness in the face of people with immense wealth who use their power to carry out their will on the rest of us. Whether it be “tech giants”, the media, politicians, or celebrities, it seems their voices carry over our own. In today’s Psalm, King David bewails this condition (it turns out, our experience is nothing new).

He points to the powerful of his day, **“you gods”** who judge others according to the evil that fills their hearts. These are people who have departed from God at birth, speaking lies from their infancy. Not only do they have **“venom like...that of a serpent”**, their craftiness inspires these snakes to outwit the “snake charmer” by stopping their ears so they can’t even hear his voice. And so, said David, **“you devise wrongs; your hands deal out violence on earth.”**

Human leaders who have God in their hearts, instead of this kind of emptiness, are rare. Whether a person is the President of the United States or is simply responsible for cleaning up rooms in a hospital, when given power, that power attempts to turn people from God and toward their own selfish desires.

But we have a Judge, Who emptied Himself and became one like us. Even though He was sinless, He judged Himself guilty on our behalf, so that while He died on the cross for our sin, we might live. And so, **“Mankind will say, “Surely there is a reward for the righteous; surely there is a God who judges on earth.”**

Prayer - Heavenly Father, fill the hearts of our leaders with Your love so they may do Your will. And fill our hearts with peace, knowing that Jesus rules over us. In His Name, Amen.

Today’s Devotion was written by Pastor Jeff Nelson

Monday October 5, 2020

Read Psalm 59

Morning Comes

“Each evening they come back, howling like dogs and prowling about the city.” Twice David describes his dilemma in these words. His enemies have him surrounded. They are arrogantly stalking him each and every evening.

You may not have enemy armies closing in around you every time that the sun goes down, but your enemies surround you. Despair and depression may press in with a darkness as real as night. Sin and temptation stalk your every movement. The clever enemy Satan **“prowls about like a roaring lion seeking whom he can destroy (1 Peter 5:8).”**

David’s answer is your answer. **“But I will sing of your strength; I will sing aloud of your steadfast love in the morning.”** Even in the face of adversity, we have confidence in our Lord who is greater than our enemies. Darkness has its moment, but there is an end to the darkness. In the morning, the light eradicates the darkness. The mercy, love and strength of Christ subdues our enemies.

Your darkness is real, but it will not win the day. Your fortress is the One who has defeated sin and death and will bring you through to the morning.

Prayer – **“O my strength, I will sing praises to you, for you, O God, are my fortress, the God who shows me steadfast love.”**

Today’s Devotion was written by Pastor Jason

Tuesday October 6, 2020

Read Psalm 60

How Can it Be?

How, when God is in control, when He sent His own Son to die in my place, how can He now let the devil, the world, and even my own nature war against me? I remember His promises, promises that He has good for me - but all I can see are my troubles. Why O Lord, do I not see Your acting for me?

And yet ... I see your power in the world! Your power displayed in smashing natural events - hurricanes, earthquakes, sunrises, the ocean, the growth of plants and animals. I see it, I know it is real. Give me your strength of Lord, strength to apply what I see to myself.

Lord, You do remind me. You put all those powers out there, to remind me that you do indeed act, and that your actions succeed. You came for me (and all the others), You came and died that I might live, that I might live this life in You. It is not knowledge that I lack. I know the truth; but rather I lack confidence in myself, in my trusting of You. Give me that trust, please, that I might witness to your presence, power, and support

There too lies your promise! I didn't make up my mind, You gave me that trust. I couldn't do even that much, but You gave me faith. So I turn to You again, asking You to hold me, build up my trust, my faith - And you will and do!

Prayer: Lord Jesus, make my heart to learn to look at You and not the world. Build my faith, bring to my mind all that You do. In your name do I ask. Amen

Today's devotion was written by Pastor Art Bolstad

Wednesday October 7, 2020

Read Psalm 61

A Good Cry Heard

Have you ever just needed a good cry? Have you ever just needed to vent and get something off of your chest? That seems to be what David is doing here at the beginning of Psalm 61. He prays, “**Hear my cry**, O God, listen to my prayer; from the end of the earth I call to you when **my heart is faint**.” The end of the earth seems pretty far away, and yet that is where David cries out from. He feels that distant from the people around him. His heart is faint, and all he can muster up is to cry out to God.

And when David is calling out to God asking him to hear his cry, it is not as if God isn’t listening to him, or that he won’t listen, but he is reaching out to God. And we do this as well, whenever we pray, we call out to God, and although at times it might feel as though He doesn’t hear, He does. God always has an ear out for His people.

Now I wasn’t around during the medieval times, back in the times of Kings and Queens, castles, warriors, jousting all of that, but I’ve seen movies, and have been to the Renaissance Festival. Paul cries out to God and asks for Him to be His strong tower. In other places we hear the word fortress. So we may not have known what some of these old castles and fortresses looked like, but we can still see remnants of them today.

These gigantic fortresses. These huge castles made of stone. These impenetrable fortresses. These wonderful man-made structures. These fortresses are wonderful and in battle they stood the test of man, weather, and time. And yet none of those fortresses, can compare or match up to our God. The true fortress that we abide in, the fortress that gives us strength and comfort. That fortress, our God, will never be bested in battle. His fortress will reign forever. Take heart, the fortress of the Almighty and All-Powerful God is yours.

Prayer – Gracious and Almighty God, thank you for being my fortress. Defend me from my enemies, those who would see me fall. Grant me your grace, courage, and peace, to make it through the day. In Jesus’ name. Amen.

Today’s Devotion was written by Seminarian Chris Deneen

Thursday October 8, 2020

Read Psalm 62

Trust and Power

With all the noise of the world today, how do we trust in God at all times? Trust is confident, bold, safe, secure, and sure, not wavering or doubting. Trust hopes in the promises of God.

We cannot help but see the enemy scheming and plotting evil against us in the world. Yet, the psalmist boldly and confidently confesses: **“For God alone my soul waits in silence; from Him comes my salvation. He alone is my rock and my salvation, my fortress; I shall not be greatly shaken”** (vv. 1-2).

Often, we put trust in ourselves, our wavering faith, our strength, our works, our pleasures and desires, which always fall short of the glory of God. If we do not have the power, then who does? Well, the psalmist writes, **“Once God has spoken; twice have I heard this: that power belongs to God”** (v. 11). Yes!

God’s Word reveals this applies to Christ, **“For He who sanctifies and those who are sanctified all have one source . . . ‘I will put my trust in him’”** (Hebrews 2:11). So, let us rejoice and sing with the saints in the eternal Gospel of Christ, **‘Hallelujah! Salvation and glory and power belong to our God’** (Revelation 19:1).

In Christ alone, we have forgiveness of sins. We have stillness and silence trusting and resting in the power of God alone; **“Trust in Him at all times, O people; pour out your heart before Him; God is a refuge for us”** (v. 8).

Prayer - In You, God rests our salvation and hope. For, You are I AM, grant us rest and silence from temporal adversities, that we may trust in You at all times, for the sake of Your lovingkindness in Jesus Christ alone. Amen

Today’s Devotion was written by Pre-seminary Student Nathan Tritch

Friday October 9, 2020

Read Psalm 63

Hunger for God

The image that David uses in this Psalm over and over is hunger and thirst. There aren't many experiences that are as common to us as people as being hungry or thirsty. Even for those of us who have always had more than enough food and clean water on demand, we know the basic biological feeling of our body being in need.

We don't really have the choice of knowing when our body craves nourishment, but it may be harder to discern when we've been neglecting our spiritual needs. We're familiar with Jesus' rebuke to the devil's temptation: "**man does not live by bread alone, but by every word which proceeds from the mouth of the LORD.**" But how often do we remind ourselves just how reliant on God we are for our lives. As Paul said, "In Him we live and move and have our being." God is both our provision and our Provider.

In our nearsighted culture, we may feel proud that we are able to work and provide for ourselves and our families and there's nothing wrong with that, but even King David who had the wealth to provide for many reminds us that God is our true breadwinner. God not only gives us our daily bread for our physical health, but also has given to us the Living Bread for our spiritual health. Without Jesus, the Living Bread, we would starve "**as in a dry and weary land where there is no water**", our sins would overwhelm us and make us wither to nothing. But because Christ has come to us to be with us, our souls are "**satisfied as with fat and rich food**" and we have eternal life.

Prayer - Living Bread, we thank you that you provide us our daily bread to sustain our bodies. Teach our souls to long for You so that we might be sustained to eternal life. In the name of Christ, Amen.

Today's Devotion was written by Seminarian Case Farney

Saturday October 10

Read [Psalm 64](#)

“Marked”



Have you ever felt that, as a Christian, you have a big target painted on your back? That when you're in a large crowd of people, something just screams out to everyone that you alone are different and should be picked on? All the world knows that Christians are supposed to **“turn the other cheek”**, and some of them take advantage of this at every opportunity. Even friends and others who know you think of you as “Miss Goody Two-Shoes” and treat you differently.

Jesus Himself warns us that, in these Last Days, **“Indeed, the hour is coming when whoever kills you will think he is offering service to God.”** I doubt that any of us have encountered this degree of persecution, but we are marked as easy and deserving targets by some around us.

If you drive around town for a half hour, you will undoubtedly drive past at least one deer that met its end on the road. Like Christians, deer seem to have targets painted on them, daring drivers to “come and hit me!” This past week, during one of my COVID walks in the park, I discovered a pair of albino deer. From a hundred feet away, through the woods, these brilliant white animals shouted out for attention. The absence of all pigmentation creates a white that is absolutely un-natural.

If the fate of a normal deer is to be hit and killed on the road, what can an albino deer expect? Any predator can see it from a distance, its eyesight is probably diminished from that of a normal deer, and because of all this, it's going to be smaller and more vulnerable. So, what did God do for these two deer?

He gave them guardian angels. Two “normal” adult does, probably one of them the mother, are with the white deer all the time, caring and guiding them to food and safety. And, hunters – both human and animal – aren’t allowed in the Arnold City Park. These two beautiful, special creatures of God are perhaps more safe than are “normal” deer.

And how much more precious in His sight are God’s People? The Psalmist says of our enemies, **“But God shoots his arrow at them; they are wounded suddenly. They are brought to ruin, with their own tongues turned against them.”** Yes, we are “marked”. We are covered in the white robes of righteousness, given us by Jesus. We stand out from the darkness of the world because the light of Christ shines forth from us.

Prayer - Heavenly Father, as You guard and protect us, make all brothers and sisters in Christ stand out as beacons of Your Hope for the world. In Jesus Name, Amen.

Today’s Devotion was written by Pastor Jeff Nelson

Monday October 12, 2020

Read Psalm 65

Our Only Hope

We often speak about the large difference between Biblical hope and hope in the world around us. The world hopes the weather will be nice this upcoming weekend (so do I with outdoor confirmation on Sunday!). The world hopes the Cardinals will actually find a few more guys who can hit before next season. The world hopes for the right outcome in the election, and then hopes that the “right” choice actually helps. All these hopes are little more than wishes.

The Biblical hope is different. It is certainty in what will happen in the future for our good because it is based on Christ. He does not make campaign promises, He makes real ones, that is ones that will always come to pass. They are guarantees, not wishes.

David speaks of hope a little differently in Psalm 65. **“O God of our salvation, the hope of all the ends of the earth and of all the farthest seas.”** Hope is a person. All true hope is found in God. Think about that, **“the hope of all the ends of the earth.”** He is the hope of all humanity. Every other source of hope will be found wanting, will be insufficient, will let you down in one way or another.

Not so the Lord. He is your hope and the hope of all the ends of the earth. **“The one who by his strength established the mountains...who stills the roaring of the seas...(who stills) the tumult of the peoples...You crown the year with your bounty.”** David goes on and on as He sees all that is good coming from God. And where does this hope begin? **“When iniquities prevail against me, you atone for our transgressions.”** He is our hope, our only hope, because He alone forgives. He is **“God of our salvation.”**

We have hope (certainty in everlasting future of peace and joy) because God is our hope (the source and foundation of all we have in this life and forever).

Prayer – O God of our salvation, when I am tempted to put my hope in anything or anyone in this world, remind me that You are my only hope, and You are more than enough. Amen.

Today's Devotion was written by Pastor Jason

Tuesday October 13, 2020

Read Psalm 66

Praise the LORD!

Praise the LORD! Those words are easy to say - but harder to mean. I look around at my present condition; I find things to complain about - not just the virus, but I don't always get what I want; I suffer from loss of employment, from unfriendly clerks, and general loneliness. Yet it is true. Praise the LORD!

His past works are massive, documented, and visible. Consider the rescue from slavery in Egypt, a slavery of constantly increasing abuse, of attempted genocide. Yet God led the people out of there, a people without a military, families and goods fleeing. The sea dried up before them only to return following them to remove a pursuing army. Indeed, praise the LORD!

I forget about God's physical care for me. How He has provided food, clothing, shelter, etc. freely to me in past years. Summer and winter; spring and fall have cycled through my years, delighting and obstructing but giving me the security of consistency. How He maintains me, even when I fail to recognize His actions.

And I forget how evil has tempted and struggled to make me forget my baptism, to make me forget how Jesus died and rose, to save me from the evil that exists in my own nature. This is far more important than physical rescue or the good things I find in my life. God has made me His own. Now that deserves praise. Praise the LORD!

Prayer: LORD God: I thank You for my salvation. I thank You for continuing to guard and keep me even when I forget to appreciate and thank You for what You have done. Thank you for the uncounted daily gifts in this life you give me. Thank You. Praise the LORD!

Today's Devotion was written by Pastor Arthur Bolstad

Wednesday October 14, 2020

Read Psalm 67

May God's Face Shine on Us

The Psalms as some have noted before, are the songbook of the Old Testament. And this psalm as we read through it is obviously one of the psalms closest to a song. We can see the chorus in verses 3 and 5. And this psalm is a psalm of JOY!! May God be gracious to us and bless us and make his face shine upon us! This is an interesting way to speak, but also the common benediction that we hear on Sunday mornings.

But have you ever actually thought about it more than just a wonderful blessing at the end of a service? What does it mean that God is gracious and blesses us? What does it mean for him to have his face shining upon us?

Well the psalmist prays that God would be gracious and bless them through whatever they are going through. And we do that too! Whether it is something at work or something at school or at home, we always pray that God would be gracious to us.

Now for the stranger one, “**May his (God's) face shine upon us.**” There's a Hebrew idiom for anger, which is saying someone's nose is burning, they are burning with anger. And more than that, if someone is extremely mad, they just won't look at you. They will turn from you or have you leave their presence. Here, it is the opposite of that though. The psalmist, and we in turn, are asking that God would keep His face upon us and bless us. And with that, we rejoice, knowing that God hears our prayers, blesses us, and through Jesus, we have favor in His sight.

So let us do as the psalmist proclaims, Let us be glad and sing for joy, let us praise God, let all the peoples praise God! May we remember that God doesn't hide His face from us, but cares for and blesses us. And that fear that we have of him isn't a terror in the night fear, but a reverential, “**You are the Almighty,**” kind of fear.

Prayer—Gracious Lord, bless us and be gracious to us. Keep us in your favor, and help us to live our lives in your grace, sharing the Gospel message of Jesus our Lord. Amen.

Today's Devotion was written by Seminarian Chris Deneen

Thursday October 15, 2020

Read Psalm 68:1-18

The LORD Ascended On High

The psalmist writes beautifully and frighteningly of God's leading and dwelling with His people from Mount Sinai to Mount Zion to His Holy City and Temple in Jerusalem. The LORD'S glory and enthroned majesty, mercy, justice, and covenant promises are seen and given. Our sin is real and deadly, and this is an eternal problem. The wages of sin is death, separating all mankind from God. **"God shall arise, His enemies shall be scattered . . . as wax melts before fire, so the wicked shall perish before God!"** (v. 1-2).

Thankfully, the LORD makes His dwelling place in His temple with His people, Christ's Body, the Church. God's covenant promise of deliverance is eternally fulfilled in Christ Jesus, the Son of God. And for the sake of Christ, we are declared righteous, **"But the righteous shall be glad; they shall exult before God; they shall be jubilant with joy!"** (v. 3). He, JESUS, **"the LORD is salvation,"** is ascended on high and enthroned as Lord and King over all now and till the Last Day and forever!

Philip Melanchthon writes of our nature and Christ's power, "Human nature is far too weak to resist the devil by its own power. He holds captive everyone who has not been freed through faith. There is a need for Christ's power against the devil. For we know that for Christ's sake we are heard and have the promise . . . Psalm 68:18 teaches this very thing: 'You ascended on high, leading a host of captives in Your train and receiving gifts among men.' Christ has overcome the devil, and has given to us a promise and the Holy Spirit, in order that—by divine aid—we ourselves may also overcome" (Apology of the Augsburg Confession, Article V:17-18).

Prayer - LORD God. You give us gifts by Your Holy Spirit and feed us through Your Word through the care of pastors and teachers who faithfully teach and preach the Scriptures. Prepare our hearts and minds for works of service and growth in unity "of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God" (Eph. 4:13). To maturity in the fullness of Christ. Help us overcome trials and temptations as You dwell in us, and to share Your Gospel Truth to all people scattered abroad the earth. In Jesus Name. Amen

Today's Devotion was written by Pre-seminary student Nathan Tritch

Friday October 16, 2020

Read Psalm 68:19-35

Victory in Jesus

"Blessed be the Lord, who daily bears us up; God is our salvation!" Psalm 68 is a psalm of deliverance and victory. David declares the mighty deeds and power of our God, especially His mighty acts of salvation and deliverance. Now, unlike most of us, David was an ancient Jewish king. His definition of a victory and deliverance is quite a bit different than ours. He rejoices first of all that God gives him military victory and allows the people of Israel to live in relative peace.

When David says that to God belong deliverances from death, he is giving thanks that he was spared from the weapons of his foes. For most of us, spears and arrows aren't always at the front of our minds. But that doesn't render this psalm useless to us. To the contrary, our place in history allows us to know a deeper meaning to David's word. Truly our God is the God that saves us, not only from evil men who can seem so far off but from the sin that clings so tightly to us. In our sin, we come face to face with death but **"our God is a God of salvation."** He has delivered us from death with the forgiveness earned for us by Christ Jesus. Jesus has conquered death, and in Him we are more than conquerors. Since our mighty and powerful God is for us, no evil, even death itself, can stand against us.

Prayer - Lord God of power and might, we praise You that You conquer Your enemies and stamp out evil and unrighteousness. We thank you for giving us a share in the victory over evil, sin, suffering, and death that Jesus Christ has won. Teach us to call upon Your mighty power in all distress and to trust in Your abundant deliverance. Keep us and guard us in true faith that we may stand on the last day when You put a final end to death, the last enemy to be defeated. In the holy and precious name of Jesus. Amen.

Today's Devotion was written by Seminarian Case Farney

Saturday October 17

Read [Psalm 69](#)

“Imprecatory Psalms”

It’s easy to praise God when everything goes perfectly. When you wake up to some of the beautiful weather we’ve had lately; when your team not only wins - they stomp on their arch rival; when your day miraculously goes exactly the way you prayed it would go. Psalm 68 was like that. This isn’t Psalm 68.

In today’s Psalm, David has had many days that have been the exact opposite. Figuratively, he writes, **“I sink in deep mire”; “the flood sweeps over me”**. He’s got troubles: **“More in number than the hairs of my head are those who hate me without cause”**. You’ve heard these laments of his before – he complains about all his enemies, his woes, and his despair, but then is reminded of the Lord’s blessings and protection and is comforted.

Not in this Psalm. David complains. David confesses that he, too, is a sinner. He recounts all the suffering he’s received on account of worshipping God; at one point he almost sounds upset that God seemingly hasn’t noticed how he’s lost his family’s love due to his zeal for God. Then, it’s back to sinking in mire, and it just doesn’t get better. It seems like this time nothing he says or does helps.

Have you ever felt like that? When your favorite Bible verse just didn’t make you feel loved by God? Or a favorite Christian song didn’t get you out of your funk? David has reached that point. And that’s where this becomes an “imprecatory” Psalm: he starts praying for bad things to happen to his tormentors. **“Let their eyes be darkened, so that they cannot see”**. Although he just admitted he’s a sinner (like his enemies), he prays for God to **“Add to them punishment upon punishment; may they have no acquittal from you.”**

Not very Christian, right? But very human. That’s the ugly place you arrive at when you put too much trust in your prayer, your worship, or your sacrifices. When you expect God to fix what’s wrong on your timetable and in your way.

David’s joy returns, though, in the final verses as he looks to God’s deeds: **“For God will save Zion and build up the cities of Judah”**. God always saves you. And often that happens in ways far different than your best plans. It always turns out the same – God’s salvation is better than we can imagine. Remember that, and turn to Him.

Prayer - Gracious Father, when I suffer; strengthen me. Turn me from myself and toward Your mighty deeds and remind me of Your love. In Jesus Name, Amen.

Today’s Devotion was written by Pastor Jeff Nelson

Monday October 19

Read Psalm 70

Urgent!

There are few words in the world that will put us on edge quite like “urgent.” This is something that cannot wait. It must be addressed NOW! There is no time to lose. Granted, sometimes we act as though everything is urgent. (We want an answer now. We hate waiting.) This is really just a lack of patience.

But on occasion, life and death DO hang in the balance. Sometimes, the pain IS unbearable. We don’t know what David’s urgent situation was as he wrote Psalm 70, but it certainly sounds urgent. **“Make haste, O God, to deliver me! O Lord, make haste to help me!”** Hurry up, God!

Perhaps you know this prayer. “Hurry up, God! I need Your help. Certainly, You are able. I am eager for the day **when all who seek you rejoice and are glad in you. Those who love your salvation can constantly say, ‘God is great.’** But that’s not where I am today, Lord. **I am poor and needy; come quickly to me, O God. You are my help and my deliverer; O Lord do not delay!”**

And without fail, He answers. Some years ago, a wise pastor told me that God answers every prayer when a Christian asks for healing. And every prayer is answered with a yes. To the most urgent need, the care of our souls, we immediately receive healing, forgiveness and presence of God through Christ. To our need in the moment, Christ promises physical healing as well – sometimes immediately, sometimes eventually, always eternally. To this we can truly say evermore, “God is great!”

Prayer – Lord, in my time of urgent need, help me to cling in faith to You as I wait for healing immediately, eventually, but certainly eternally. Amen.

Today’s Devotion was written by Pastor Jason

Tuesday October 20

Read Psalm 71

He Never Fails

How often I agree with the Psalmist! How often it seems that the world is against me. Not only do people disagree with me, they are angry that I do agree with them! My existence is an affront to their peace! My very trust in God is what they hate; and the reason they attack me.

But I continue to trust in the God Who brought me this far. He is the one I trust and rely upon. He has never let me down. Let them rage, they cannot succeed. Let them plot against me - they really fight against God! And that always fails.

But I ignore their efforts. I put my trust in the One who sacrificed Himself for Me. I know that after doing that He will not abandon me to the wiles of the world; to the anguish of enemy attacks; to a betrayal of my own nature which listens to the world. He is the rock I rest on when it seems that nature is against me, when all else appears to be failing.

Jesus never fails! He gave me faith, He maintains that faith, so I know that I am always protected. The One who died for me, when I was yet attacking Him, will not lose me to such weak and self-promoting attacks. Yes, in Jesus is my strength. "Abide in Me" and I do. Let the rest rise or fall, I have all I need or want!

Prayer: Oh Jesus, the world is so overwhelming. Let me never lose sight of You and Your presence, protecting and supporting me in everything. Thank You for that assurance. Amen.

Today's Devotion was written by Pastor Art Bolstad

Wednesday October 21

Read Psalm 72

The True King

From the inscription at the beginning of the Psalm, we might think that this Psalm is about Solomon, the author. He is, after all, the first king of Israel who is a “**royal son**.” He asked God for wisdom to judge the people in righteousness and was granted that wisdom by God. But the psalm describes the king’s reign enduring “**throughout all generations**.” Solomon was wise enough to know His reign would not go on forever.

Solomon wasn’t the true King of Israel. Sure, he sat on the throne and everyone called him king, but the real King of Israel was God Himself. At his best, Solomon was only a pale imitation of the true King, and still his reputation spread to distant lands. Yet Solomon knew that one day one of his descendants would truly be endowed with God’s justice and righteousness, not because He was Solomon’s son, but because He was God’s Son.

This psalm ultimately points to the coming of Jesus who sits at the right hand of God, the Father Almighty, with “all authority in heaven and on earth.” Christ Jesus rules in righteousness and judges according to His great mercy so that all who believe in Him will live under Him in His kingdom in everlasting blessedness.

As we draw near to selecting new leaders in our nation, we should pray for wisdom. In all times, we should pray for our leaders (whether we vote for them or even agree with them). But our hope is in the Ruler who can fulfill the extraordinary description of Psalm 72. To this King, we pray:

Prayer: **Blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel, who alone does wondrous things. Blessed be his glorious name forever; may the whole earth be filled with his glory! Amen and Amen.**

Today’s Devotion was written by Pastor Jason

Thursday October 22, 2020

Read Psalm 73

Pure Hearts

If you have vision problems, you know it is difficult to see clearly without the help of eyeglasses or possible eye surgery. When ungodliness is praised, and shortcomings grip our hearts and fail us, how do we react? How can we see spiritually through such things as these?

Asaph confesses he is ravingly arrogant and enviously jealous when he sees the *shâlôm* prosperity and riches of the ungodly. Asaph also recognizes the goodness and love of God toward Israel: **“Truly God is good to Israel, to those who are pure in heart. But as for me, my feet had almost stumbled, my steps had nearly slipped. For I was envious of the arrogant when I saw the prosperity [*shâlôm*] of the wicked.”** (v. 1-3)

Our faith waivers in moments of weakness, and we cannot keep our hearts pure and clean from the sickness of sin. How can we see? We need spiritual minds for sight as Jesus clearly shows us we need pure hearts to see: **“Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God”** (Matthew 5:8), and **“Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. I came not to call the righteous, but sinners”** (Mark 2:17). The Holy Spirit works and creates faith in us through the Gospel of Christ. Through God’s Word, our Baptism in Christ, and Holy Supper, God gives us spiritual sight so we can gaze upon and behold the beauty of the Lord GOD in Christ revealed for us.

Although Asaph’s faith crumbles in weakness, just like ours, he is given pureness of heart in God alone. Yahweh is a Mighty Refuge and Rock of Strength for him, which is also ours in Christ alone: **“My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever”** (v. 26).

Prayer - Yahweh God, You alone are a Mighty Rock and Refuge for our impure hearts. You have made us partakers and children of promise because of Christ. Your wisdom and power given for us in Christ’s sufferings and death for our sin overcomes the power of sin, death, and all evil. Preserve us in Your righteousness **“that I may tell of all your works”** (v. 28) until we see You face to face in fullness on the Last Day in the goodness of Christ Jesus. Amen

Today’s Devotion was written by Pre-seminary Student Nathan Tritch

Friday October 23, 2020

Read Psalm 74

Is God Far Off?

"O God, why do you cast us off forever? Why does your anger smoke against the sheep of your pasture?" How often do we wonder of God why He allows such awful things to happen to His people? Why does it seem like God has left us to our own devices, to fend for ourselves? After all, we are His congregation, which He **"purchased of old"** and redeemed to be the tribe of His heritage. Has God forgotten His people? Surely not. Then why does God often seem so far off? There are hints of an answer throughout this psalm: God has purchased and redeemed us and dwelt with us (vs 2), He has worked salvation in the earth from of old by creating and sustaining His creation (vs. 12), He has made covenant with His people (vs. 20).

In so many ways, God has not abandoned us but quite the opposite. He has provided salvation to His people in so many ways that we lose sight of them. It is not that God is far off but so close to us that we cannot properly focus on Him. Still, we can and do join in the words of this psalm to call upon the Lord when we are troubled. We do not call upon God because his help is far away but because it is close enough to hear and touch and taste. In the words and sacraments that God has given to us, we perceive clearly the work that He has done for us.

Prayer: O Lord, we thank you that You hear us when we call upon Your Name. Pour out your salvation upon Your people and teach us to know the things You have continually done to uphold us from the beginning of creation that we might have patience to endure all things in You. Reveal Your work in our lives that we would every day see more clearly Jesus Christ, our Savior. See our hardships and remember Your people. Through Jesus Christ, our Lord, Amen.

Today's Devotion was written by Seminarian Case Farney

Saturday October 24

Read [Psalm 75](#)

“A Trusty Master”

The first time I got into a small airplane with the intent of learning how to fly, things might have gone quite differently. If the instructor had simply helped me start the engine, then got out and waved his hand, telling me to, “take off and head over there. Bring it back in an hour,” I might have never even started the first lesson. But no – for something like this you find someone with the right background, experience, and temperament to completely fill you with confidence. You want to know that you’ll come back safely, even though you’re just a novice. You want to be able to try new things, knowing that a master pilot is there at hand to save you when needed.

Our Psalm for today tells about Someone like this. Someone Who has everything under control; Who makes the difficult look easy. He writes, **“When the earth totters, and all its inhabitants, it is I who keep steady its pillars.”** You and I can navigate safely through our sometimes scary world, knowing God protects us.

When “the boastful” toot their own horns (the Psalmist obviously knew about our election system), God tells them when to “put a cork in it”. When you and I consider how to “help” God judge those wicked ones around us, we’re reminded that that’s not our job: **“it is God who executes judgment, putting down one and lifting up another.”**

We know this is the case when we remember His mighty deeds throughout the ages. His wondrous promises, His amazing fulfillment. We know He’s here with us, having placed His Name on us at baptism, placing His salvation into us at the Lord’s Supper, and having given us His Son, Immanuel – God With Us.

Prayer - **We give thanks to you, O God; we give thanks, for Your Name is near. We recount your wondrous deeds.** In Jesus Name, Amen.

Today’s Devotion was written by Pastor Jeff Nelson

Monday October 26, 2020

Read Psalm 76

Who Can Stand?

The word that comes to mind with this Psalm is intimidating. **“Who can stand before you once your anger is roused?”** The assumed answer is pretty clear: NO ONE.

After all, who is unable to stand before the righteous judgment of God? The warrior who had arrows, shield, and sword all broken by God. Who can't stand? The stouthearted who is able to face any obstacle has his spoil stripped before fading into the sleep of death. Who can't stand? The men of war whose hands were of no use before the Creator of the universe. Who can't stand? The chariot (the greatest military weapon of the time) as rider and horse lay stunned.

All of this should be intimidating to anyone. The psalm has just slashed down to the ground all of the strongest, toughest characters of the ancient world. These towers of strength have been melted down to sad little puddle. Today, this would be the baddest member of Seal Team 6 being turned into a whimpering three-year-old lying in the fetal position. Such is the holy and righteous fear that falls on one who foolishly believes he or she could stand before the glorious, majestic Lord.

If this is the state of those who are the strongest, what hope is there to stand before God? It makes me think of the exchange between Jesus and the disciples. The disciples were amazed that a rich young ruler would have a harder time entering the kingdom of God than to go through the eye of a needle. They ask the master, **“Who then can be saved?”** Jesus replied, **“For men it is impossible, but all things are possible with God.”** Even better, with Christ. We humbly bow before the glorious, majestic Lord of creation knowing we can not stand before Him. Yet we bow, taking the posture of a servant, the posture of Christ. We trust in Him knowing our everlasting enemies have been defeated in Him who **“saves all the humble of the earth.”**

Prayer – Dear Lord Jesus, grant to me humbly to faith to trust in you. For me salvation is impossible, but with You all things are possible. Amen.

Today's Devotion was written by Pastor Jason

Tuesday October 27, 2020
Read Psalm 77

He Listens *and* Acts

"I cried to God with my voice!" But how easy it is to forget that God wants to hear from us; how easy it is to be so wrapped up in our problems that we can't see beyond the end of our nose. When Jesus gave us the Lord's Prayer, He started us with "Our Father". Father's want to hear from their children. He wants them to pay attention to Him.

There are no topics forbidden to our conversation with God. There is sharing our life, thanksgiving for joys of success, or special blessings, of simply enjoying life. There is sharing our sorrows, our fears, and our troubles. Perhaps, the most important, and hardest to share, are our feelings of guilt, of incompetence, and of failures. That which we are most ashamed of, we hide. Remember Adam and Eve in the garden, how they immediately hid from God, ashamed of their disobedience.

But God doesn't just listen, He acts. Guilt is nailed to the cross where He paid for the sins of all, but especially for me! I am no longer guilty, I do not face punishment, exile, or other discipline (such as death) for what I have been and/or done. God forgives and He intervenes in our life to enable us to live in Him, a sharing, unselfish, good life.

The world, with its pressures on us has been defeated. Sometimes we are living in that knowledge; other times, we see God actively intervening in events - consider God's people trapped in Egypt, how God led them out using plagues, using the wind to clear the red seas for His people to cross - a trap for pursuers.

Talk with God, knowing that He cares and acts - for your benefit.

Prayer: Thank you, my God, for intervening in the World. Thank you for caring and listening to me. Thank you for your salvation and continued presence in my life. Thank you. Amen

Today's Devotion was written by Pastor Art Bolstad

Wednesday October 28, 2020

Psalm 78:1-31

Who We Want to Be

Do you ever try to place yourself in the psalm? Sometimes it is easier than others, but today's hits a little harder if you put yourself into it. Especially looking at verses 7-8. God has set His people, and they've been given the law of God. This is so that the next generation and then the next generation, and then the next generation may know God. But then in verse 8, there is this turn. Why should they hope in God and not forget his works? So that they aren't like their fathers, who were rebellious and stubborn. When we look at psalms like this, or readings that have a similar feel to it, and we try to put ourselves in it, we have to wonder, what generation are we? We know which generation we don't want to be, that's for sure! So we do what the psalmist writes, that we fear, love, and trust in God.

And why? Well take another look at verses 9-16. Look at all the Mighty wonders that are recounted of God. He performed wonders, divided the sea, led the people by night and by day, gave them water, what wondrous acts. Yet verse 17, they did not believe. They asked questions like those in verses 19 & 20.

Again, in verses 22-29, there is more of God taking care of His people, and how abundantly he did so. But then in verses 30-31, we read that the anger of God rose against them, that he killed the strongest of them and laid low the young men. What a turn of events. And now I'm sure you don't want to put yourself in the psalm at all! But you and I can know that we trust in God. That we try not to follow false gods or temptations. We strive to live as His people and live our lives for Him the best we can. So today, count the blessings God has given you. Something we often forget to do, especially in these trying times. And remember, that God cares and provides for you, because you are His people, YOU are His child.

Prayer-Heavenly Father, I so often fall astray. I do the things I want, and the things that may be against Your will. Help me to push those temptations to the side, avoid them, and live as Your child in all things. Thank you for all of the blessings in my life, and continue to hold me in Your hand. Amen.

Today's Devotion was written by Seminarian Chris Deneen

Thursday October 29, 2020

Read Psalm 78:32-72

What God Does For Us

God's grace and marvelous acts show His love, patience, and mercy toward His people. God remembers His covenant promise for us. Israel's rebellion and faithlessness displayed their need for God's deliverance and forgiveness. Asaph wrote, **"Their heart was not steadfast toward Him; they were not faithful to His covenant"** (v. 37).

We can see God's anger toward Israel's sin and God's love and mercy: **"Yet He, being compassionate, atoned for their iniquity and did not destroy them. He restrained his anger often and did not stir up all His wrath. He remembered that they were but flesh, a wind that passes and comes not again"** (v. 38-39). Today, our sinful flesh battles the Spirit living in us. Through the cross of Christ, God delivers us from this sin and strengthens us by grace.

Martin Luther cautioned those growing cold, eventually not desiring and despising the Lord's Supper:

*"I have found in my own experience, and as everyone will find in his own case: if a person withdraws like this from the Sacrament, he will daily become more and more callous and cold, and will at last disregard the Sacrament completely. To avoid this, we must examine our hearts and conscience (1 Corinthians 11:28; 2 Corinthians 13:5), and we must act like people who desire to be right with God (**Psalm 78:37**). The more this is done, the more the heart will be warmed and enkindled"* (Large Catechism, V:51-54).

Israel's faithlessness and sins are seen throughout generations, from slavery in Egypt to captivity in Babylon and beyond. By God's Word and power, they repented and trusted in the LORD'S covenant promises. The LORD God had delivered Israel from the house of slavery, and led them through the Red Sea on dry land like a Shepherd, **"He led out his people like sheep and guided them in the wilderness like a flock. He led them in safety, so that they were not afraid, but the sea overwhelmed their enemies. And He brought them to His holy land, to the mountain which his right hand had won"** (vs. 52-54). God delivers us from sin and evil for the sake of our Good Shepherd, Jesus Christ, given for us.

Prayer - O, LORD. Through Christ crucified and risen, our sins are atoned for. By what you have done for us and continue to do through the Body and Blood of Jesus. May we see the grace You have given us in community together in Christ, and grant us community for which we long for. Thank You for Resurrection hope we have now and forever through faith in Jesus Christ and in the age to come. Amen.

Today's Devotion was written by Pre-Seminary Student Nathan Tritch

Friday October 30, 2020
Read Psalm 79

True Mercy

There are two meanings of mercy that are discussed throughout Psalm 79. The first is the ongoing cry for mercy from the gruesome realities of God's wrath at the hands of the nations around Israel. The lives of the Israelites were being ravaged, their cities laid waste, and their reputation was slandered. Psalm 79 acknowledges that God is allowing these grave evils to befall His people because of their sins and idolatry.

The mercy from physical harm is attached to a deeper form of mercy: the forgiveness of sins. The refrain of verse 8 is a constant topic in all of Scripture and in the whole of our life as Christians. It says **"Do not remember against us our former iniquities; let your compassion come speedily to meet us, for we are brought very low."** Our God is not sadistic. He does not rejoice to see us suffer for our sins. Nevertheless, he works even through the sufferings we endure to show us mercy. We are "brought very low" by the cares and worries of the world and even more so by the internal guilt we bear because we know the weight of our sins. But as Paul says, **"for those who love God, all things work together for good"**.

When we are heavy-laden with the burdens of our everyday life, we are reminded of the mercy offered by God. He reminds us that he not only gives us our daily bread and provides for our temporal needs, but He also gives to us the Living Bread, Jesus Christ, Who is our ample provision for our spiritual needs. God gives worldly mercy to His people, but even more so He gives true mercy that leads to everlasting life.

Prayer:

Heavenly Father, we thank You that You are merciful to us. You provide for us in the midst of trouble, and daily give us all that we need both in body and in soul. Remind us in every trial to remember You, our Deliverer, and to call upon Your name for mercy which You give so abundantly. Teach us also to show Your mercy to those around us that we might fulfill Your holy will. We pray all these things through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

Today's Devotion was written by Seminarian Case Farney

Saturday October 31

Read [Psalm 80](#)

“Turn Us Again, Lord”

“Restore us, O Lord God of hosts! Let your face shine, that we may be saved!”

Again and again in this psalm, these words sound from the voice of God’s People. First of all, from refugees of the Northern Kingdom that are fleeing death and destruction at the hands of the invading Assyrians. They cry out to the **“Shepherd of Israel... enthroned upon the cherubim”**, “give ear to our prayer!” Their plight calls them back to the only One who can truly help them.

God’s People recall and take to heart that it was He that freed them from bondage in Egypt. He brought them out, drove out the nations that were in His promised land and He planted them there. It was He that cleared the ground, causing them to take deep root and fill that land. His kingdom spread to cover the mountains and stretch from the Mediterranean to the Euphrates.

But now, it lies in desolation. Its walls are broken down; anyone enters in and takes what they want. Even the wild boar (Assyria) ravages it, feeding on its former wealth. So what do God’s People say? **“Turn again, O God of hosts! Look down from heaven, and see”**. Where else could they turn, but to the Lord?

Individually, each of us is growing older. We’re experiencing life’s burdens dragging us down. Whether it’s cancer, “old age”, COVID worries, economics, or politics – the doings of mankind (and our sin) are behind all our troubles. While God uses people to help us (doctors, employers, even politicians!), it is only God that can help us.

This isn’t a psalm of despair. Yes, God’s People are despairing of their world around them and all they’ve accomplished on their own, but at the same time they’re filled with Hope. And, without even knowing what they were saying (I believe), they put their finger right on the reason for Hope. Thinking of themselves (I’m sure), they pray that the Seed that God planted in the Promised Land would take root. And, while that Offspring might be cut down, perish, and be forsaken by His Lord, they pray that God’s **“hand be on the Man of Your right hand”**, **“the Son of Man You have made strong for Yourself.”** Come, Lord Jesus!

Prayer - **Restore us, O Lord God of hosts! Let your face shine, that we may be saved!** In Jesus Name, Amen.

Today’s Devotion was written by Pastor Jeff Nelson

Monday November 2, 2020
Read Psalm 81

Trouble Listening

There's something about Psalm 81 that seems very familiar. It's hard to listen. We struggle to focus and pay attention. So did the people of Israel. Three different times in the Psalm, in one way or another the people of Israel are told by God to **"listen to Me."** It reminds me of the encouragement from Hebrews 2:1 that *"we must pay much closer attention to what we have heard, lest we drift away from it."* Yet our attention drifts. Easily. Often. Quickly.

Supposedly the average attention span today is down to 8 seconds, which is down from 12 seconds about 15 years ago. It's hard to pay attention. In fact, by now you want to zone out. FOCUS!!

If we struggle with focus in everything, certainly we will struggle to focus on Christ and His Word. Attention is drawn every other direction. We listen to other voices that quickly become our gods (that is our sources of meaning). Other voices captivate our attention. It is so easy to lose focus on the most important thing - God's gift of salvation in Christ.

Yet even as we lose focus, Christ remains laser focused on what we truly need. He was constantly focused on the prize of the cross - your eternal life with Him. The writer to the Hebrews tells us in Hebrews 12:1-2 that remembering the focus of Jesus, helps us to follow Him.

"Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God."

It is no simple thing to be focused, to run with endurance the race of faith. You will be distracted, but then come back and remember that nothing has distracted your Lord from caring for you, giving all for you. Let that be your encouragement in this short-attention span world.

Prayer – Dear Lord, help me to set distractions aside and hear Your Word and listen attentively to it. Amen.

Today's Devotion was written by Pastor Jason

Tuesday November 3, 2020

Read Psalm 82

God's Justice

Our God is a just God. He cares about justice. When He observes our earthly judges, people whom He has entrusted with using His wisdom to suppress evil doers and their actions, people who mis-judge, who pervert their decisions to favor friends or personal benefits, then He is stirred to action. He brings His justice to such unjust behavior.

The poor, the resourceless person, have a defender in God. They have the right and ability to call to Him for justice. He promises mercy to them and justice to those who misuse what God give to them, eventual justice in this world and in the next. But to those who come to Him, who judge for righteousness, who rely on Him and not on their own efforts, to them, God gives mercy, mercy that forgives them before His judgment. Mercy and a turning around of life for good.

It is true that people are in rebellion against God, and so people with power, with responsibility to judge conflicts, some of those people will misuse their position and power. Those who have a responsibility to judge the judges are told by God to do justice there, justice that will enable the poor to be supported. And God's people all can ask God to intervene, to bring that justice for the poor.

But it is not just others that we can talk to God about. Do we act ourselves in justice? Our calling from God is not to decide on the righteousness of others. No, we are called to judge ourselves. Do we share? Do we assist those needing help? Do we have an attitude like Jesus, to care more for others than for ourselves?

Yes, God will punish the wicked; He will bring their lives down to ruin - in His good time. God will! Not us. We have enough with our own sins, our own lacks. His mercy showers good upon us - forgiveness, love, protection, and more.

Prayer: Father in Heaven: Remind us of Your constant care, Give us that confidence that lets us turn the evil we see to your justice. Thank you for Your continual presence, punishing the wicked in their acts, but bringing mercy to us as we trust You. Amen.

Today's Devotion was written by Pastor Art Bolstad

Wednesday November 4, 2020

Read Psalm 83

Rest While We Wait

Well, as we await election results, we turn to the one true, eternal, and right thing in this world, our God, and the Holy Scriptures. Our psalm for today, psalm 83, you may read through and wonder, “What is going on??” Psalm 83 is a special type of psalm, it is imprecatory in nature. A psalm pleading to God to destroy the enemy of Israel, pleading with God not to be silent, but to make His voice be heard!

I pray on this Wednesday morning, November 4th that you find a time to rest in this psalm. Although it may not seem like a very peaceful or restful psalm, rest in God’s word. Rest in the fact that no matter what happens, no matter what takes place today or in the next several days, God is not silent. He is here in our midst. Many may look at the world and start to pray psalms like this. Maybe you’ve even felt like praying a psalm like this at times, “Lord, don’t be silent, be here in our midst, there are people against us, and we don’t know what to do. Please do something Lord. Something, Anything.”

We know that at the end of the day, at the end of time, God will have His judgement. He will take care of His enemies the way that He wills. All throughout this verse we read about how the psalmist asks God to destroy His enemies, and then we come back to the final two verses. The psalmist prays that they be but to shame, that they be dismayed forever, and why? Not for his own personal gain, not for his glory, but so that God may be known as Lord and the Most High over all. And that is what we pray for. We pray and live knowing that God is indeed the Most High, and He is our Lord. Ruler of all. ALL. Everything. So find your rest and hope in Him today and every day.

Prayer—Heavenly Father, Lord of Lords, King of Kings, remind us that no matter what is happening or going on in this world, that you are Ruler. That YOU hold us in your hands, and that YOU will care for us. Help us to live each day knowing YOU are in charge. Amen.

Today’s Devotion was written by Seminarian Chris Deneen

Thursday November 5, 2020

Read Psalm 84

The Courts of the LORD

In some places, upon entrance to a building, we are greeted with a valet or concierge at your service. Entering a church building with the communion of saints for Divine Service, we are greeted at the door along with those waiting for us. Together we dwell in Christ; Our hearts and flesh desire to be with the family of God in His courts, and to sing for joy to the crucified and risen Lord and Savior Jesus, our God and King. As God's people, we dwell together for the sake of Christ's body and blood given and shed for us on a tree for the forgiveness of sins.

The psalmist desires the LORD'S dwelling place at the temple with his entire being, **"My soul longs, yes, faints for the courts of the LORD; my heart and flesh sing for joy to the living God"** (v. 2). The Levitical priests were called to service and duties surrounding the temple of the LORD. Some as the keepers of the door. The psalmist desired to be a doorkeeper amongst the godlessness that surrounded him. He writes, **"For a day in Your courts is better than a thousand elsewhere. I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God than dwell in the tents of wickedness. For the LORD is a sun and a shield"** (v. 10, 11). Today, Jesus is our armor of light and life in this dark world. Our hearts long for the courts of the LORD amongst wickedness and sadness that surrounds us. Yet, we have been given His joy and presence as we gather together in Christ's precious Name, and to serve one another here and now in Christ's righteousness.

John writes of the Holy City of God in the new heaven and new earth to come: **"And its temple is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb. And the city has no need of sun or moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and its lamp is the Lamb . . . and its gates will never be shut by day—and there will be no night there"** (Revelation 21:22-23, 25). Until then, here and now, we have hope, light, joy, forgiveness, and peace with God for the sake of Christ to wait in love and serve one another in the house of God in the world.

Prayer - LORD, **"For a day in Your courts is better than a thousand elsewhere."** Calm our fears and anxieties that burden our hearts today. Thank You for Your grace and everlasting righteousness we have now and forever in Christ Jesus. Amen.

Today's Devotion was written by Pre-seminary Student Nathan Tritch

Friday November 6, 2020
Read Psalm 85

Remembering the Faithfulness of our God

I have to admit, this Psalm is a bit overwhelming. It's hard to pick out a particular verse or phrase to focus on because everywhere you look, the psalmist is heaping up praise and remembrance of God's great mercy. It seems to me that this is no accident.

In the first place, the psalm is certainly asking God to remember His overwhelming, steadfast love that He has shown to His people, asking Him to once again bring us His generous gifts and once again forgive our sins. At the same time, when we read this psalm we too are called to remember what God has done for us. The psalmist himself wants to hear all of this again. **"Let me hear what God the LORD will speak, for he will speak peace to his people, to his saints; but let them not turn back to folly."**

No matter how often we hear the promises of our ever-faithful God, we long to hear them again. To set aside the words of life that God has given us would be to **"turn back to folly."** As we meditate on the God's word, we should be reminded of Jesus Christ, the Word Incarnate. In Him, **"steadfast love and faithfulness meet; righteousness and peace kiss each other."** Jesus Christ is living proof that God does not forget his people, but shows us steadfast love and grants us salvation.

Prayer - Heavenly Father, Who in ancient days delivered Your people from all their sins and trespasses, remember Your steadfast love and deliver us also today. We long to hear Your Word, to hear of the peace that You grant Your saints. Give us peace and teach us to remember Your salvation accomplished in Your Son, Jesus Christ, the full embodiment of faithfulness and the Prince of Peace. It is in His holy name we pray, Amen.

Today's Devotion was written by Seminarian Case Farney

Saturday November 7

Read [Psalm 86](#)

“Prayer”

This is a Psalm in which David puts the Christian life into words. He describes a beautiful dance between himself, his troubles, his enemies, and his fears – and with God, his Lord, who leads him through this dance of life. A multitude of short prayers begins each move:

“Incline your ear, O LORD”

“Preserve my life”

“Be gracious to me”

“Gladden the soul of your servant”

And, at every prayer, God answers:

“You, O LORD, are good and forgiving”

“You answer me”

“You are great and do wondrous things”

“Great is your steadfast love toward me”

“You have delivered my soul from the depths of Sheol”

This is the Christian life – a continuous, back and forth dialogue between God’s servant: David, you, or me; and our Lord God. He walks with us through life, He lifts us when we fall, He sings with us when we rejoice. And, like David, you and I talk with God. This is life; this is prayer – our “dance” with God.

This prayer is the highest form of worship – to speak with God as His children. We praise Him, beseech Him, implore of Him, and turn to Him. For those of us without the ability to dance, His Spirit lifts our feet and moves us in ways of grace.

David’s poetic description of his life with God can teach us to dance like he did: following our Lord’s lead, looking to Him for direction, and receiving His inspiration and gifts to perform before others.

Prayer - Heavenly Father, fill us with Your Spirit to dance the Christian life as did your servant, David. For Jesus sake, Amen.

Today’s Devotion was written by Pastor Jeff Nelson

Monday November 9, 2020

Read Psalm 87

The Adoption Song

There is a song for almost everything. If you look online, you can find “The Happy Song” and “The Sad Song.” You can easily find “The Happy Birthday Song.” And, if you wish to torture yourself, you can find “The Gummy Bear Song.” (Save yourself the pain and don’t look it up.) The more you look, you can find a song for everything.

The song of Psalm 87 could easily be called “The Adoption Song.” Now maybe you didn’t catch it because the word “adoption” never appears in Psalm 87, but the idea is all over the place. The adoption story really begins in verse 4 after three verses of praise. There are people who know the Lord from **“Rahab and Babylon; behold Philistia and Tyre, with Cush.”** Peoples of various ethnic backgrounds, languages and nations, but they are all made part of God’s family. How? **“The Lord records as he registers the peoples, ‘This one was born there (Zion).’”**

The Lord changes the birth certificates of people from far and wide to make them part of His people Israel. As the Lord claims people as His own, they share in all of the promises of Israel. That’s why every promise of God through all the Scriptures belongs to you. Through Christ, your birth certificate has been changed too. Oh, you may have one in the closet that says you were born in St. Louis, St. Paul or Spain. But your adoption papers have changed your true citizenship. You belong to the family of God through baptism into the death and resurrection of Jesus. As surely as Christ is God’s Son, you share in His family completely. You are part of the New Zion, the New Jerusalem. By faith, **“you were born there”** as you have been born again in Jesus. And now, as Paul says in Philippians 3, **“our citizenship is in heaven.”** Could there be any better reason to sing?

Prayer – Dear Father in heaven, I rejoice that you have adopted me as Your child through Jesus. Amen.

Today’s Devotion was written by Pastor Jason

Tuesday November 10,2020
Read Psalm 88

Even Now, He Cares

Times come when everything seems to go wrong, to fall apart. My dreams are not only not fulfilled, they seem now to have been mistaken in the first place. My efforts are not appreciated by others. Truly I feel alone in the world.

And then my self-considerations lead me to question, to question even my God. How could He, I think, how could He care about such a miserable failure as me. Me, who I can see, has sinned, has offended God greatly. I am so consumed with my self-loathing that I can't see Him or His grace at all.

This is a time for prayer, a time to talk to God and cry on His Shoulder, so to speak. He tells me He wants to hear from me, so I give Him just what He asked for - my deep despair, my sad story of how I not only have sinned, but how much I am sure that He could not want me or care for me now.

But God does care for me! He cared so much that He went through what makes my sorrows seem easy. Life, emptied from realized Godness, suffering from betrayal, abandonment, torture, and death itself. All to conquer, to destroy the power of death, to destroy even the power of our self-knowledge of despair. He loves us, in spite of the true depth of our unworthiness. All this for us.

It is in these times of loss of everything that we truly come to see and understand that God is our support. Our efforts are good, but it is our trust in God that accomplishes it all. He is there always, the more you see your need, the more you can lean on Him - and the more you will see Him save you!

Prayer: Our Lord, I know my failures and my sins. I know that I deserve nothing. But I know also that you are saving me, bringing me through it all behind the scenes, where I can observe nothing. Thank you, O Lord. Jesus, I continue to rest in You. Amen.

Today's Devotion was written by Pastor Art Bolstad

Wednesday November 11, 2020

Read Psalm 89:1-18

True Power

What do you think of when you think of power? Majesty? Maybe you think of kings of old in Medieval Times. Someone with a big army, someone with a lot of land that they control. Even if you could think of the most powerful person in the world right now, they would fall in comparison with God.

Usually when we think of people with great power, there isn't much compassion that goes along with it. They usually gain their power by this way or that way, usually through force or by a military defeat. But looking at what the Psalmist writes here, it is quite obvious, that while yes God is powerful, there is a different reason for why he proclaims the wonder of the Lord.

In verse 1, "I will sing of the steadfast love of the Lord, forever." This isn't something new or rare to us. The Hebrew word here pops up quite a bit, and it can be translated several ways. The one I'd like to look at today is "**covenant faithfulness**." Which sounds odd doesn't it? But it is what makes God, well, God. If we look at verse 3, we see that God made a covenant with David, to establish his offspring forever and to build his throne for all generations.

This steadfast love, this covenant faithfulness means that God will do what He says He will do. He won't waver, he will indeed do what He says.

As we walk through the rest of the first 18 verses of psalm 89, it is obvious that God is powerful beyond compare. The psalmist speaks of all the greatness of God. Who in the skies can be compared to him? Who is mighty like you O Lord? You rule the sea. The heavens and the earth are yours.

Remember all of the promises that God has put before us. That we, who are indeed His people can look forward to. Although we may forget his promises at times, **God never does**. He will hold to His covenant faithfulness, to keep His word. Which we see in Jesus, the ultimate fulfillment of His promises.

Prayer—Heavenly Father, Gracious Lord, Almighty God. You are faithful to your covenants, and for that we thank and praise you. Although we at times waver and fall, you are there to pick us up. Grant us your strength all of our days. Thank you, for being You, for being faithful to your covenants. Thank You, for sending Your son for our sins. Amen.

Today's Devotion was written by Seminarian Chris Deneen

Thursday November 12, 2020

Read Psalm 89:19-52

Messianic Fulfillment

Who could plan and contain such beautiful, intricate and wonderful, infinite and eternal words of truth and promise which completes, interprets, and in perfection, fulfills all promises entirely in and of itself: and always, pointing us to our Lord and Savior Messiah Jesus; who, infinitely suffered, bled, and paid for all of our sins, and the sins of mankind, and rose from the dead on the third day!? No human mind, strength or will could accomplish this perfection.

This excellency and holiness are only revealed by the will and grace of the “LORD GOD ALMIGHTY” (see Revelation 4:8; 11:17). Father, Son, and Holy Spirit; the Name in which we are forever created anew in Baptism on account of Christ crucified and risen for us! **“Blessed be the LORD forever! Amen and Amen”** (v. 52).

God’s firm and secure loving-kindness and promises of old are wonderfully seen all over this psalm. He declares, **“My faithfulness and My steadfast love shall be with him, and in My name shall his horn be exalted”** (v. 24). God’s promises, His steadfast love are painted across all of Scripture.

So the Psalmist declares, **“Of old You spoke in a vision to Your godly one, and said: ‘I have granted help to one who is mighty; I have exalted one chosen from the people. I have found David, My servant; with My holy oil I have anointed him . . . I will establish his offspring forever and his throne as the days of the heavens.’”** (vv. 19-20, 29; see I Sam. 13:14; 16:11-13; II Sam. 7:12-29).

Fittingly, Luke the physician writes of Paul preaching at the synagogue in Antioch in Pisidia: **“And when He [God] had removed him [King Saul], He raised up David to be their king, of whom He testified and said, ‘I have found in David the son of Jesse a man after My heart, who will do all My will.’ Of this man's offspring God has brought to Israel a Savior, Jesus, as He promised . . . And we bring you the good news that what God promised to the fathers, this He has fulfilled to us their children by raising Jesus”** (Acts 13:22-23, 32, 33).

Prayer - Abba! Father! Blessed LORD and Mighty God. We give thanks: for promise and forgiveness of sins fulfilled in only Messiah Jesus, in and through and with and in His Name we pray; **“You are my Father, and my God, and the Rock of my salvation”** (v. 26). Forever and ever. Amen and Amen.

Today’s Devotion was written by Pre-seminary Student Nathan Tritch

Friday November 13, 2020
Read Psalm 90

A Heart of Wisdom

This psalm of Moses is one of my favorite psalms for its stark contrast between God and man and that beautiful verse, "**teach us to number our days that we might get a heart of wisdom.**" Moses praises God as the everlasting Creator. He has been God before even the mountains and the whole world, indeed He is the Creator of even the most seemingly permanent fixtures of our world.

In comparison to God, our whole lives are but the blink of an eye or a dream. In comparison to the God that is the Creator and Sustainer of all reality, we are like an illusion. We live for seventy years or eighty if we are particularly vigorous. In the eyes of God, there is no reason for our lives to be significant at all. Even if we live influential lives and make a great difference in the world, our lives are like a sigh. What a humbling thought! When we are so often tempted to put ourselves in the place of God and think that our thoughts and judgments are worth more than His, He reminds us that when we compare ourselves to Him we find that we are nothing.

At the end of the psalm, Moses turns to ask a blessing on us in light of this understanding. He asks God to bless the work of our hands. For "**unless the LORD builds a house, those who build it labor in vain.**" This passage from Psalm 127 sheds light on Psalm 90. We ask God to teach us to know the insignificance of our lives so we have the wisdom to know that all of our lives and works are meaningless without God but of ultimate significance when they are focused on God. True wisdom is to know that God is God and we are not.

Prayer: Everlasting God, teach us to number our days that we may gain a heart of wisdom. Humble us to know that we are temporary so that we might better know Your everlasting mercy. Bless the work of our hands, for without Your help we can do nothing. Show us Your Son who became subject to death so that we may at last join Him in everlasting life. We ask all these things through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

Today's Devotion was written by Seminarian Case Farney

Saturday November 14

Read [Psalm 91](#)

Hear it sung: [On Eagle's Wings](#)

"My Refuge and My Fortress"

The Psalmist has a lot of bad days. He's surrounded by people wanting to kill him all too frequently. His bones creak, and he cries out to the Lord all day, most days of the week. He's a lot like us, in our own ways. But occasionally, he takes a step back and sees his life from the outside. Kind of an out-of-body experience, he observes all the evil surrounding him in his life, but is relieved by the overwhelming protection of God over every bad thing. This psalm is like that.

He's speaking to those who **"dwell in the shelter of the Most High"**. Believers. You know, those who say to the LORD, **"My refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust."** And what he describes is absolutely unbelievable: nothing can touch these people! Not fowler (bird catcher), pestilence, terror of night, not even arrows. Thousands may fall at the side of a believer – even 10,000! But that believer walks away, unscathed.

But, "wait", you say, "that's not how it works." You and I know that bad things happen to good people. And for Jesus' disciples – even worse happens (it seems). Yes, I think the Psalmist knew that. Remember all the other psalms? What he was saying was that when these things happen, God is there.

In His own words, God says:

**"Because he (the believer) holds fast to Me in love, I will deliver him;
I will protect him, because he knows My Name.
When he calls to Me, I will answer him;
I will be with him in trouble;
I will rescue him and honor him.
With long life I will satisfy him
and show him My salvation."**

Most High God, Almighty Lord, thank you for being my refuge, my fortress. When the world overwhelms me, hide me in Your shadow. In Jesus Name, Amen.

Today's Devotion was written by Pastor Jeff Nelson

Monday November 16, 2020

Read Psalm 92

Rest

Do you need some rest? Without question the answer is yes. Now you may want some rest because you are weary from the heightened stress of the time we are living in. You may want some rest because you are working hard and there is no opportunity for a vacation on the horizon. You may want some rest because the weight of many years is heavy on your shoulders. You may want some rest because you just can't seem to get the sleep you would like.

You might want rest for all these reasons. You need rest because you've been created to need rest. That rest your God knows that you need includes a break, but it's more than just getting a respite from work or some time away. Psalm 92 is subtitled, **"a song for the sabbath."** It is the only Psalm with that designation. Sabbath means rest. This Psalm shows us the shape of the rest that we need.

What does this rest look like? **"Give thanks to the Lord...sing praises to your name."** When? We **"declare your steadfast love in the morning and your faithfulness at night."** That pretty much covers the whole day. Why? **"For you, O Lord, have made me glad by your work; at the works of your hands I sing for joy. How great are your works, O Lord."**

We tend to think of rest as needing to take it easy because we've been working so hard. This Psalm reminds us that the Lord wants us to stop our work, to take Sabbath rest and consider how hard He has been working in all things for us. We always need such rest, but especially now. As the weight of our work and worry burdens us, we are invited to true rest in Christ. He has provided all that we have. He has carried every burden of our sin and sorrow. With eyes focused on His works, we have relief from feeling the need to carry the weight of the world. He already has and He always does for us.

Prayer – Lord Jesus, let me find true Sabbath rest in You. Amen.

Today's Devotion was written by Pastor Jason Wagner

Tuesday November 17, 2020

Read Psalm 93

God's Moving Flood of Mercy

God sustains, guards, and guides the universe! There is nothing hid from Him - He rules everything, unlike the fake gods - those imaginary beings whom are said to be around but have no control, no reality.

Whenever anyone starts to admire those imaginary beings, then when God actually is visible in His acts, when the world shakes and waters flow - then reality strikes us as well. Our God acts, our God moves the world. Unlike those imaginary beings, the Real God moves the world.

The earth appears to solid - until we see waters flowing rapidly. Water carries away the dirt, flooding fields, breaking down dams. All who go to the seashore can sense this restless water, gnawing away at the land. There move God, there God demonstrates His superiority, there God reminds us that He has always been in charge, that He is superior to all.

So, what about His Words, His witnesses in the language of men? Because they are God's, they continue to show forth His truth. Here too, we see the power and nature of God, His being the superior one. That Word of God, the Bible, changes our hearts, directs our attention away from ourselves to Him.

There too we see our eternal salvation in the One who was, and is, and will sacrifice for all, more particularly for me. The One who rules over all, is the same one who defeated death itself, dying and rising from death for me, and all. The floods are an earthly reminder of the truth, that God has washed away my sins, making righteous before Him. Praise the Lord!

Prayer: I thank you Lord for reminding me in the events of this life, that You are one who governs all. Thank you for the gift of your paying for my sins, for building faith to guide me to trusting You for all. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Today's Devotion was written by Pastor Art Bolstad

Wednesday November 18, 2020

Read Psalm 94

God's Judgments

“How long, Lord, will the wicked, how long will the wicked be jubilant?” Have you ever wondered and asked that question? Maybe too often in your life you see those who are ‘wicked’ prospering. Getting what they want, having whatever they want because they do whatever they have to, not worrying about others. Verses 4-7, you read what they do. They pour out arrogant words. They boast. They crush the Lord’s people. They slay others, and they believe that God won’t notice.

Yet in verse 8, the psalmist says, **“Take notice you foolish ones! When will you become wise?”** Even though it seems like they prosper, verse 11 shows what God knows. HE knows all human plans and the plans are futile.

So God knows all things and will judge according to His will, we aren’t to try and make our own judgments, because God will make His judgments in His time.

But while we are here on the earth, remember what the psalmist writes in verses 16-19. **“Who will rise up for me against the wicked? Who will stand against the evildoers for me?...When I said ‘my foot is slipping,’ your unfailing love, Lord, supported me. When anxiety was great within me, your consolation brought me joy.”**

These verses show us the comfort that God gives to us. When times are anxious around us, when we slip and fall, He stands before us. He stands for us. He stands with us. As the psalmist writes in verse 22, the Lord has become his fortress and the rock in whom we take refuge. Take refuge in the Lord. He is the fortress that we cling to, and the judge who will judge on the last day.

Take heart O, you His people. You will not be left on the outside looking in. For what Christ has done for you, has made you righteous, not wicked, before the Lord.

Prayer—Gracious God, even when it seems like evil and darkness are running rampant in this land, remind us, that you are our God. You are the judge. You protect and save your people. Watch over us, defend us from all harm, and continue to guide us in your ways to paths of light. Amen.

Today’s Devotion was written by Seminarian Chris Deneen

Thursday November 19, 2020

Read Psalm 95

Come Into His Presence

“Let us come into His presence with thanksgiving; let us make a joyful noise to Him with songs of praise!” (v. 2). We may find setting aside time each day hard to thank, praise, and sing to the LORD. At various times, difficulties may harden our hearts: pandemic adjustments, political unrest, unsureness of tomorrow, or other trials that keep coming at us. The weakness of our sinful flesh battles the Holy Spirit living in us. In the temporal realm—Christ’s Kingdom here on earth—the Holy Spirit points to our High Priest, Jesus, the Son of God, the Christ:

Scripture reveals: **“Therefore, as the Holy Spirit says, “Today, if you hear His voice, do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion, on the day of testing in the wilderness . . . for whoever has entered God’s rest has also rested from his works as God did from His. Let us therefore strive to enter that rest, so that no one may fall by the same sort of disobedience . . . For we do not have a High Priest [Jesus] who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.”** (Hebr 3: 7-8; 4:10-11, 15-16).

The Reformers confess God’s will, power, and grace through means of the Word of Christ by declaring: “It is God’s will that His Word should be heard and that a person’s ears not be closed (Psalm 95:8). With this Word the Holy Spirit is present and opens hearts.” (*The Formula of Concord, Epitome*, Article II:5, see Article II:1-18).

Through the gift of faith in Christ Jesus alone, we have the forgiveness of sins, we trust God in our weakness; Trusting He takes care of all our needs and gives us rest, grace, and mercy, in times of need. Jesus calls us to come to Him, **“Come to Me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest”** (Matthew 11:27-28). Resting in Christ, there is always reason for thanks and praise!

Prayer. Lord Jesus, teach us to profit by warning examples of others. So govern us that we do not harden our hearts, as did those at Meribah. Incline our hearts to Your Gospel, and enable us by Your good Spirit to receive with meekness the engrafted Word that is able to save the soul. Suffer us not O Lord, to fall from You, neither in life nor in death. Amen. (Prayer from, *Reading the Psalms with Luther*)



Albrecht Dürer - Christ on the Cross with Three Angels

“Without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins” (Hebrews 9:22)

Today’s Devotion was written by Pre-seminary Student Nathan Tritch

Friday November 20, 2020

Read Psalm 96

Sing to the Lord!

Psalm 96 is an outstanding example of a song of praise. The psalmist expounds on the mighty works of God: His mighty works of salvation, His glorious creation, and His continual reign as God of the universe. On the one hand, we could profitably spend some time meditating on the truth of the psalm and the greatness of our God, but we would be missing a big part of what this psalm is about.

Over and over again throughout the psalm, the psalm does not just remind us about God but gives us commands. Sing to the Lord! Bless His name! Tell of His salvation! Declare His glory! It is good to know that God is our Creator and Redeemer, but it is even better to proclaim the good news about who He is and what He does for us. We live in a world that does not know God. **"Say among the nations, 'The LORD reigns!'"** Psalm 96 calls us to live our beliefs and to share what we know to be true.

In a world that is constantly proclaiming idols to us, we are called to proclaim the truth about God both in our actions and in our words. The psalm concludes with a beautiful thought. When we say that all the earth will praise the Lord, we mean the whole creation. The heavens and earth know their Creator and the beauty of nature is a testimony to the glory of God. Our lives and words are also to be a testimony to the God we know.

Prayer: Almighty God, we know that you are Lord of lords and God of gods, Creator of all things. Teach us to better know Your great glory, seeing in our daily lives the richness of Your blessings. Lead us in Your ways so that our lives testify to Your goodness. Give us words to speak so that we might proclaim You to those who still do not know You as their Creator and Redeemer. Keep us always in Your mercy that we would always remember Your greatest work of salvation accomplished for us in Jesus Christ, in Whose holy and precious name we pray. Amen.

Today's Devotion was written by Seminarian Case Farney

Saturday November 21

Read [Psalm 97](#)

“The Lord Reigns (Thank God!)”

In [1 Samuel 8](#), the people of Israel demanded that Samuel appoint them a king to “rule over them and lead them into battle”. Their true King, the Lord God, reluctantly acceded to their wish only after He had Samuel warn them of the down side. A human king would take their sons and put them in his army. He’d take their lands and crops for his own purposes. He’d take their daughters to be laborers for him. Ultimately, **“you shall be his slaves”**.

This, of course, wasn’t anything new. All peoples of all times who have lived under human “kings” (or Presidents, Prime Ministers, etc.) have been forced to endure the same. Taxation, regulation, eminent domain, and mandatory government service (not to mention corruption and worse) are part of daily life under a human “king”. The root of the sin here is: **“they have rejected Me from being king over them.”**

Just 2 ½ weeks ago we held our elections. And still, votes are being counted, both parties have claimed victory, and court fights are beginning to form. It’s obvious that before it’s all over there will be division, hurt, and pain spread everywhere. And the root of the sin is the same.

But that’s where Psalm 97 brings good news: **“The Lord reigns, let the earth rejoice!”** Choosing earthly kings or presidents doesn’t change the fact that **“righteousness and justice are the foundation of His throne.”**

Some of what is described won’t occur before the Last Day (like the worshippers of false gods being **“put to shame”**), but **“Zion hears and is glad”** today and every day. Zion is Jerusalem – the Church – and has seen and experiences God’s righteousness, **“exalting Him far above all gods”**. Before the beginning of time, God elected Himself LORD over everything (on a “one God/one vote” basis), and one of His first acts was to elect His only Son to live and die to pay the price for our sins. And so, **“He preserves the lives of His saints; He delivers them from the hand of the wicked.”** He creates salvation **“for the righteous and joy for the upright in heart.”**

Prayer - Heavenly Father, Lord of Life, teach us to rejoice under Your rule and to give thanks to Your Holy Name. In Jesus Name, Amen.

Today’s Devotion is from Pastor Jeff Nelson

Monday November 23, 2020
Read Psalm 98

Remember – We Win

As I read Psalm 98, it felt like a Psalm for a different time. There is joy and confidence and celebration. It is a victory song that spreads from “**the house of Israel**” to “**all the earth**” to the sea, the rivers, and the hills. Israel rejoices. The whole world celebrates. Even the creation itself roars and claps and sings at the salvation of God.

Watch any two minutes of the news and you will not feel like there is a reason for the people of God, all of humanity, and the creation itself to roar, clap and sing. There’s a lot of bad news. This song doesn’t seem to fit the moment. Maybe that’s why it is perfect. Stuck in the darkness of the moment, we can despair. Stuck in the darkness of the moment, we forget the bigger story.

In April with the sports world shut down, the go to programming for many channels was to re-air classic games. In this town, that meant a regular showing of game 6 of the 2011 World Series. The drama is still thick while the home team is down to their last out...and then to their last strike. But the drama is different. We know how it is going to end. And the end is something to celebrate. You can watch and get swept up into the emotion, even when things don’t look good and remember – we win.

On a much grander and eternally consequential scale, this Psalm reminds us of the end of the story. And remember – we win. “**For (the Lord) has done marvelous things.**” Christ has died and risen. The victory is won. “**The Lord has made known his salvation.**” To you! This victory is yours by faith. Things will often look dark in this sin stained world. But you know that no matter how dark things may get. The enemies of God and His people (sin, death, the devil) war against us. But to borrow from Martin Luther, “*were they to take our house, goods, honor, child, or spouse, though life be wrenched away, they cannot win the day. The Kingdom’s ours forever!*” In your dark hour, remember that through Christ – we win.

Prayer – Dear Jesus, lead me to face even my dark hours in the knowledge that the eternal victory is mine through You. Amen.

Today’s Devotion was written by Pastor Jason

Tuesday November 23, 2020

Read Psalm 99

Good News in Troubled Times

We are living in troubled times! Excited commentary and worried messages bombard us on every hand. We are so easily distracted by the world!

God reigns over all. Those troubles I hear about, the difficulties I experience are all under His control. He has reasons for letting me see/hear/experience them and His reasons are not my reasons. He holds back the impact and extent of troubles; He extinguishes many I never knew of! He supports His people through flickers and flares of the world's attacks.

God supports the right, He hates those doing wickedness, who damage others, who steal, who kill, who kill and damage the helpless. His righteousness will prevail! His Word will penetrate - to save some among those most opposed, to blind the wicked as they demonstrate their total lack of honesty.

You have His Word telling of His activities in history - How he supported Moses through the desert, fending off repeated attacks by those around them; How He supported Samuel from childhood, using Samuel to save His people, multiple times; How Isaiah and Daniel spoke to His people, saving their words for us too.

Think how He let Himself, His own Son, die to save us from the power of wickedness. Think how His ultimate power was revealed in the Resurrection of Jesus, showing that we too have been rescued from death.

Why do I think He will quit now? Why do I let the noise and presence of this world's distractions blind me to His authority (which shows that He wins always). Forget the irrelevancies and look at the true reality, GOD RULES!

Prayer: Thank you God for reminding me that You are in control. When I let the local flashes begin to overwhelm me, please, bring Your love and presence to my mind and set me at ease. In the name of Jesus, Amen.

Today's Devotion was written by Pastor Art Bolstad

Wednesday November 25, 2020

Read Psalm 100

A Thanksgiving List

What a fitting psalm we have with Thanksgiving being tomorrow! Even though it may look different than normal, even though you may have to alter your plans, or aren't able to see all of your loved ones this Thanksgiving, we still give thanks.

Verses 1 and 2 are the verses that we find out what we are to do! Make that joyful noise! Serve God with gladness! Come into his presence with singing! It is a joyous occasion! We know that God has made us, and that we are His sheep, we are his people! We can come into His presence with thanksgiving and praise! Thanking Him and blessing His name!

These verses set us up perfectly for Thanksgiving tomorrow. Have your plans been changed by COVID-19? I'm guessing that in some way shape or form they have. Maybe you aren't able to see those people that you were really looking forward to seeing. But tomorrow isn't a day where we just sit around and mope and be sad that our days are gloomy and sad. Why? Because of all the things we can still be thankful for!

When I was younger, we used to do a Thanksgiving list. You would write down the 10 things you were most thankful for. As a kid, 10 seems like the longest list ever. You sit there struggling to think, "How in the world can I get up to 10???"

And this year it may seem like that as well. But as you go into Thanksgiving, try that this year. Write down 10 things you are thankful for! Even amidst a world where we are living in a pandemic, we can be thankful for so much!

And right at the top of that list? God. Remember verse 5, write it down, put it somewhere where you can see it.

"For the Lord is good; His steadfast love endures forever, and his faithfulness to all generations." Even in a world where it is can be tough to think of things to be thankful for, remember that God keeps his promises, and he is faithful. His love endures forever, amidst all kinds of trials and temptations that we may face. So as you prepare for Thanksgiving, prepare with a joyful heart, knowing that God is always with you, and that His love endures all things, and endures forever.

Prayer—Gracious God, even in this strange world we are in, help us to remember that you are faithful. That even amidst a pandemic, we can still be thankful for everything you have blessed us with. Remind us of those things, and give us Your goodness and mercy. Thank you Lord for all you bless us with. Amen.

Today's Devotion was written by Seminarian Chris Deneen

Thursday November 26, 2020
Read Psalm 101

Mercy and Justice

Today, Thanksgiving might look like: gathering and feasting joyfully in the presence of family (physically and digitally), participating in traditions, conversations, turkey and pumpkin pie, etc.; And maybe sharing each other's thankfulness for _____. We may be or isolated due to precaution, illness, or happenstance. In joy and suffering, are we thankful to God, and does our Lord Jesus Christ make the list?

One might reflect on highs and lows of American history: colonization, pilgrims and Native Americans, divisions, indivisibility, bloodshed, battles, wars, losses, victories, efforts of peace, justice, injustice, oppression, civil war, to today's pestilence and continuous prosperity. We also might reflect in thankfulness to God for freedom to worship Jesus.

David desired the LORD'S presence among Israel in the LORD'S city. **"I will sing of steadfast love and justice; to You, O LORD, I will make music. I will ponder the way that is blameless. Oh when will You come to me?"** (vv. 1-2). David's song gives a reason to pause and give thanks for God's justice—punishing the ungodly, and God's mercy and grace toward us in Christ. God's mercy and justice are carried out through governing leaders here and now, and eternally through Christ's death for our sins, bringing the gift of eternal life, salvation, and redemption.

God's Word says we are justified by faith and have peace with God through Christ: **"Through Him [Jesus] we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God. Not only that, but we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us. For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly"** (Romans 5:2-6).

For the sake of Christ crucified and risen for you and me, we thankfully sing and join in David's song through the Holy Spirit residing in our hearts, **"I will walk with integrity of heart within my house"** (v. 2) and give thanks to the LORD!

Have a Blessed Thanksgiving—All blessing, glory, wisdom, thanksgiving, honor, power, and might belongs to God and the Lamb: who gave everything for you and me!

Prayer - Heavenly Father. Thank You for everything we have, and need, now and forever through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

Today's Devotion was written by Pre-seminary Student Nathan Tritch

Friday November 27, 2020
Read Psalm 102

Keeping our focus on God

The subtitle of Psalm 102 is "**A prayer of one afflicted, when he is faint and pours out his complaint before the Lord.**" After reading the first half of the psalm, this description may even be a little tame. The psalmist's lament is forceful. The description of his suffering rivals most any modern poet. The common theme is distress and our temporary nature. Life is not long, and often it is not pleasant.

I hope that none of us have been as afflicted as the psalmist, but the reality of our fallen world is that this is so often the state of God's people. The wicked prosper and the righteous suffer. But the psalmist does not stop after verse 11, instead he takes his focus off of his own suffering and turns his eyes toward the Lord. He contrasts the suffering of this life with the great mercy of God, our ephemeral nature with God's eternal nature.

In the midst of his distress, the psalmist remembers the God who will surely bring an end to all distress and have pity on His people. Then just as vividly as he lamented his anguish, the psalmist expounds the might of the Creator. He boldly proclaims the God who will hear His people and deliver them from their burdens. Focusing now on the Lord, the psalmist says no more about his own struggles and instead calls for the name of the Lord to be remembered and praised by generations to come.

What do we make of the contrasting halves of this psalm? In the first half, the psalmist focused on himself and his own struggles as he cried out to God. In the second, he praised God in the certainty that God hears His people's prayers. The beauty of this psalm is that it acknowledges fully the reality of our suffering. It does not give us a false picture of an easy life as God's people. At the same time, it handles our distress in the only truly effective way: the psalmist turns his focus to the Lord who hears our prayers and one day will give us freedom from all evil.

Prayer: Almighty Creator, we thank you for Your good creation. Guide us to turn our eyes to You in every affliction, knowing that You are our only hope. Teach us to live this hope as we carry out the work you have set before us each day. Help us to focus on the resurrection of Your Beloved Son, Jesus Christ, our sure and certain hope of a life to come when all anguish will cease and we are freed to praise You eternally. Through Jesus Christ, Who is Himself our hope and our freedom. Amen.

Today's Devotion was written by Seminarian Case Farney

Saturday November 28

Read [Psalm 103](#)

“Bless the LORD, O My Soul”

What a Psalm to wrap up Thanksgiving week: **“Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless his holy name!”** However, like all the devotions this week have mentioned, you may not feel you have much “within you” with which to “bless God’s holy name”. My two-week experience with COVID is just beginning to loosen its grip on me and I don’t think I’ve ever felt less like standing up to cheer God. Even if the pandemic hasn’t touched you directly, it probably has isolated you from others, trimmed your holiday plans, and is already throwing a shadow over Christmas plans.

But that’s why we open God’s Word. King David had plenty of trials, hardships, and tribulation to bring him to despair. And we’ve heard all of it many times now in his psalms. But every time, when he turned his eyes to God’s mighty deeds for His People in the past, the blessings and benefits poured out on David himself, and God’s promises and qualities – every time David’s despair returned to hope.

This is God: **“who forgives all your iniquity, who heals all your diseases, who redeems your life from the pit, who crowns you with steadfast love and mercy, who satisfies you with good so that your youth is renewed like the eagle’s.”** This is God, who redeemed His People from slavery in Egypt, who gave them the Law and Prophets, who fed them with manna and quail in the desert, and who **“is merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.”** He doesn’t judge us based on our sins, but loves us as a compassionate Father.

In today’s world, God is exactly like that. And he’s showed it to me and to you through our worship services, Bible studies, confirmation classes, and youth activities. He shows it through cards, prayers, and calls from fellow believers. He shows it through caring acts of mercy by those around us – like my crazy wife fixing a 25 lb. turkey and 10+ dishes for just four of us and a congregation member bringing some to my son on the other side of town.

And so, as David said it best:

“Bless the LORD, O you his angels, you mighty ones who do his word, obeying the voice of his word! Bless the LORD, all his hosts, his ministers, who do his will! Bless the LORD, all his works, in all places of his dominion. Bless the LORD, O my soul!” Amen.

Today’s Devotion was written by Pastor Jeff Nelson

Monday January 4, 2021
Read Psalm 104

“These All Look to You”

A very happy and blessed New Year to you! What a beautiful way to begin this New Year. The psalmist marvels at the power of God over His creation. The clouds are his chariot. The mountains rise and sink according to His direction. But more than that, He does not merely make things. He is the source of life – at the beginning and through every day. **“You cause the grass to grow for the livestock and plants for man to cultivate.” “The trees of the LORD are watered abundantly.”** He gives homes to the birds, the storks, the wild goats and rock badgers. He sets time by the moon and the sun. He provides the cover of night for lions to hunt. Every intricacy of creation speaks of the design of God, but more than that, the care and provision of God.

This all leads the Psalmist to conclude, **“O LORD, how manifold are your works! In wisdom have you made them all; the earth is full of your creatures...These all look to you, to give them their food in due season. When you give it to them, they gather it up; when you open your hand, they are filled with good things.”**

How have you been filled with good things from your God? The litany of gifts would stretch far longer than the 35 verses of the psalm. In fact, I have a New Year’s resolution worth keeping. Many people will resolve to exercise more, read more, eat less, etc. Psalm 104 invites us to something better – gratitude. Whatever good that we have is from the hand of our gracious God – forgiveness, breath, food, home, family, our church. As people who recognize that all things are given by the hand of God, we have endless reasons for gratitude. Perhaps a worthy resolution would be to write down one new reason to thank God each day. After all if “these all look to you” in grateful expectation, so should we.

Prayer – Thank you Lord, for all of your many blessings. Help me to look to you as the giver of all gifts to me and all creatures. In Jesus name. Amen.

Today’s Devotion was written by Pastor Jason

Tuesday January 5, 2021
Read Psalm 105

Praise the Lord

When I felt discouraged, when all seemed lost, and I see no future - then I finally stop looking at myself and my failures. Then I look around and seek help. And I find that Help is there! God moves while I am self-centeredly looking at my troubles. Before I even ask, He works and prepares my salvation.

God came to me when I was eagerly participating in rebellion against Him. He never ignored my true needs nor my left me to my own efforts. Jesus came - lived, died, and rose again while I and everyone else were busy generating new proofs that we needed Him. God has been acting throughout history to make salvation free and available to all.

Praise the Lord! He has saved me, paid off my sinfulness, given me entry into Jesus, into heaven itself. And thankfulness marvelously overwhelms me. I talk to God, personally, telling Him "thank you". But thankfulness doesn't stop there, it overwhelms my speech, entering my conversation, sharing with others what God has done. For all the years He has been demonstrating His love and saving nature to those who love Him, those who He has claimed as His.

He saved His people - Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Israelites, Me - we are all one unending procession of His people. Those whom God has given His Grace to, those to whom He continues to promise that Grace. Praise the Lord, telling those around us of His marvelous saving nature - those gifts that continue to the end. Praise The Lord!

Prayer: Heavenly Father, I thank you for what You have done through the years, for the fact that your kindness back then, shows that your kindness has continued through today, that as You never change, Your kindness will continue through all ages. Thank you, LORD. Amen

Today's Devotion was written by Pastor Art Bolstad

Wednesday January 6, 2021
Read Psalm 106

Out of the Rut

Have you ever been stuck in that proverbial rut? That déjà vu feeling? That “Groundhog Day” scenario? This psalm shows us the rut that the people of God were in.

The people of God, fall away from God, they sin against him, they forget about all of the things that God had already done for them. The psalmist shows us Egypt, where the people forget God, yet God saved them! He helped them through the Red Sea, and saved His people.

But then they forgot about it. Out in the wilderness they tested God, and yet God gave them what they asked, but then a disease was almost sent among them.

There’s the golden calf episode, they forgot God, they turned away from Him, yet God didn’t destroy them.

Have you found the cycle yet? The people turn away from God, they repent, and return to God. God brings them back.

Have you ever been stuck in that proverbial rut? That déjà vu feeling? It’s easy to get stuck in the rut in our lives. Whether it is the day-to-day work rut, or even the rut of sins over and over again, we can easily get stuck in a rut.

You probably have that sin that you know that you fall into time and time again.

But just like the people of God, that isn’t the end of the story. Your sins are forgiven. And that isn’t a rut you are stuck in, that is the righteousness of God. As Christ came into this world, he knows your struggles, your temptations. But your sins are forgiven! God saves his people, and you are His people. So let us say with the psalmist verse 48 as our prayer.

Prayer—Blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel, from everlasting to everlasting! And let all the people say, “Amen!” Praise the Lord!

Today’s Devotion was written by Seminarian Chris Deneen

Thursday January 7, 2021
Read Psalm 107

The LORD's Mercy Endures Forever

Psalm 107 is an exhortation and calling to Israel. A call to give thanks and praise to the LORD's beautiful and eternal lovingkindness toward them. A call to the redeemed for His unfailing love, deliverance, and redemption from distress, trouble, and oppression of their enemies. The LORD heard the cries of those who had rebelled foolishly against Him. **"Some were fools through their sinful ways, and because of their iniquities suffered affliction; they loathed any kind of food, and they drew near to the gates of death. Then they cried to the LORD in their trouble, and He delivered them from their distress. He sent out His word and healed them, and delivered them from their destruction"** (v. 17-20).

Who is wise and sees; **"Whoever is wise, let him attend to these things; let them consider the steadfast love of the LORD"** (v. 43). God's mercy toward Israel is fulfilled in Jesus Christ given for all mankind for repentance and faith; to be changed and renewed by His grace, trusting and depending on God through faith in Christ.

The LORD God is eternally good and merciful toward you and me. Through the means of grace in Word and Sacrament. The LORD brings faith, life, and forgiveness in Christ Jesus crucified and risen from the dead on the third day for us; Redeemed and declared righteous on account of Christ. The wise-hearted have been called and redeemed beholding the steadfast love of the LORD and confess; **"Oh give thanks to the LORD, for he is good, for his steadfast love [mercy] endures forever!"** (v. 1)

Reflecting on God's Word in this psalm and confusion in the world. We are given the words and promise of Jesus for His disciples and for us, **"In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world"** (John 16:33). Peace with God is restored only through faith in Jesus Christ. In His life, death for our sins and resurrection from the dead for our justification, our sins are forgiven. **"Tell of His deeds in songs of joy!"** (v. 22).

Prayer – LORD God of eternal beauty and mercy. You have redeemed us from sin, death, and Satan through Jesus Christ crucified and risen for our sins and redemption. You satisfy our hunger and needs. Grant us faith to see, to give thanks and praise to You always. Hear our cries for mercy and help our unbelief to trust in Your eternal Word, unfailing love, and deliverance from all evil through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

Today's Devotion was written by Pre-seminary Student Nathan Tritch

Friday January 8, 2021
Read Psalm 108

God's Eternal Faithfulness

I have to admit that when I'm reading the Psalms, it's not always easy to reconcile how a song of conquest and battle applies to me. Surely, God was the strength of Israel and fulfilled His promises to them by helping them conquer the land, and surely He protects us from our enemies even now. But I still can't always figure out what it means for me to ask God to go out with my army and bring me to the fortified city.

When I look at a psalm like this that seems so foreign to me, I am struck by the things that aren't hard to deal with, those words and phrases that seem to perfectly describe my experience and relationship with God. **"Your steadfast love is great above the heavens; your faithfulness reaches to the clouds...Give salvation by your right hand and answer me!...Grant us help against the foe, for vain is the salvation of man!"** Even separated by millennia and speaking in a completely different context, David's words perfectly reflect the God Who is the same yesterday, today, and forever. The steadfast love of our God is still great, His faithfulness still reaches to the clouds. He has given salvation by His right hand even more abundantly than David likely knew: Jesus Christ, Who is seated at the right hand of the Father in glory, has answered our cries for salvation even before we were created, He has granted us not only help against the foe of sin and Satan but in Him we have become more than conquerors. Because man's salvation is vain, God became the salvation of man for us.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, teach us to see your eternal steadfastness everywhere we look. Help us also to proclaim your saving work in every aspect of our life so that Your mighty acts can be known by all those around us. We pray that you would give us protection from all our enemies spiritual and temporal, and that You would finally give us the victory over death so that we might live forever to the praise of Your holy name. Amen.

Today's Devotion was written by Seminarian Case Farney

Saturday January 9th

Read [Psalm 109](#)

“Curses”

“May my enemy die! May his children have to beg from strangers amidst the ruins of their father’s former home! May his father and mother be condemned to hell! May his curses be turned upon him and cover him completely!” I’m paraphrasing, but that’s essentially for what King David was praying to the LORD. When faced with unrepentant, faithless people, obsessed with bringing about your destruction and death, what’s a Christian to do?

This week our country took a large step toward increased division and chaos, with public displays of malice, hatred, and unwillingness to listen to one another. But this isn’t completely new. When Cain killed his brother Abel, he was just selfishly putting his own will before that of God, just as he was taught by his parents, Adam and Eve. Sin – it goes back a long way. But what’s a Christian to do?

David’s example for us, demonstrated here in his deeply heart-felt prayer, shows us how we might act when we find ourselves in a similar position. His first reaction is spot on – he comes before God, praying on his knees. Turning anywhere else will always go badly. He puts his troubles before God and begs for salvation. Again – perfect response.

He’s tried the “ordinary” Christian response – to pray for his enemies, to show them love, to be a good neighbor. But he’s been shot down every time. **“In return for my love they accuse me... they reward me evil for good, and hatred for my love.”** His prayers have been heard by God, but his enemies’ hearts are hard. So, instead of praying for their repentance and their salvation, he now prays for their utter obliteration.

“Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us”. This is the Law – when we withhold forgiveness from our enemies, God withholds His forgiveness from us. Listening only to the Law, in this case, may lead us to begrudgingly “forgive” our neighbor because we have to (but we still really hate him and want him gone!).

The Gospel is what sets Christians apart. Read it as, “Help me to forgive, love, help, and pray for my (truly rotten-to-the-core) neighbor, because You have shown me Your infinite love by sending Your Son into my world to die for me to save me.” When we look at our completely fallen and hopeless condition before Christ, and the robes of righteousness we now wear solely by His grace, it becomes our natural, Christian response to truly love and forgive our neighbor, too.

This is a time, difficult but full of opportunity, in which our Christian presence in our community shows the light of God’s love to a world increasingly darkened by sin and despair. God will judge those who remain in unrepentance, but even those who seem to have “hearts of stone” are worthy of our prayer and love – because God is love.

Prayer - Gracious God, strengthen me when it’s hard to love my neighbor. Bring him or her to repentance and protect me from all harm. In Jesus’ holy Name, Amen.

Today’s Devotion was written by Pastor Jeff Nelson

Monday January 11, 2021
Read Psalm 110

King of Kings

The Psalms are full of familiar passages. “The Lord is My Shepherd.” “Thy Word is a lamp to my feet.” “The Lord is my light and my salvation. Whom shall I fear?” You may have collected some new favorites as we have read through the Psalms.

Yet here is some trivia to stump your friends: what Psalm is quoted most often in the New Testament? You can probably guess that it is Psalm 110. That got me to wondering – why?

Psalm 110 speaks in striking ways about Jesus. While He is a descendent of the great King David, He is also David’s Lord. Not only this, the LORD (Yahweh) tells Jesus for Him to sit at the right of God. This is David’s way of saying, King Jesus is equal to the Father. He shares His authority. He is pictured as defeating and ruling over all of the enemies of God’s people and reign over every king. Yet He is also a king like Melchizedek, the briefly appearing man from the book of Genesis who is both king and priest. This means that the great King Jesus not only rules over all, but also makes a sacrifice for His people to make them holy.

All of this is packed into these seven verses. You can see why it is quoted so often in the New Testament. And these words are good for us to hear. We have a King who will reign over every earthly power. We have a King who is mighty in power and in mercy, for as our eternal priest the sacrifice He offered was His very life. Yet risen from the dead, He sits at the right hand of God ruling His church in mercy until every enemy is placed under His feet and He returns in glory.

Prayer - Rule now, Lord Jesus, in Your Kingdom of Grace so that one day we might enjoy Your rule in Kingdom of Glory. Amen.

Today’s Devotion was written by Pastor Jason

Tuesday January 12, 2021
Read Psalm 111

Look to Him

In the midst of turmoil and excitement, when things in the world are going well or going bad, while all this demands my attention, still there is something more attention drawing, more worthy of my joy and thoughts: God's activities are much stronger than any of the world's kerfuffles, more worthy of appreciation, more soundly based for the future.

God brought the Israelites out of Egypt, without any assistance from them. He brought the plagues, He guarded them on their exit and led them through the sea - before letting it wash away their evil pursuers. God is acting today, He makes the opponents, those who love wrong doing, to over-reach bringing their own destruction on themselves.

God speaks with His Word always, bringing faith to the fore, bringing the offer of salvation to all. He punishes the wrongdoer, His Word clearly broadcasting their evil. God doesn't spend His time on those evil ones, He speaks to His chosen, to those who trust Him, telling them He loves them, and He is always with them.

Peace comes with God. Conflict quails before Him, losing and being smothered. God's Word justifies, bringing faith, showing forth the rightness of God and His ways. Yes, we are presented with evil choices by the world, but our God shows them up, guiding, comforting, enlightening, and preserving us, we who trust His salvation in Jesus Christ. Look to Him, throwing off the world, look to Him whose Word, whose actions, whose trustworthiness sustains us all.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, You have showed forth your might and power, you have shown you wisdom and goodness in Your Word. Please teach and lead me. Guard me with your Grace and Favor. In Jesus name, Amen.

Today's Devotion was written by Pastor Art Bolstad

Wednesday January 13, 2021
Read Psalm 112

Fear God

What does it mean to fear God? Have you ever really thought about that? In this psalm, we read that the one who fears the Lord is blessed, and this is one who delights in the Lord's commandments. As you read through the rest of the psalm, it sounds pretty amazing to be this one who is blessed!

Wealth and riches, light dawning in the darkness, not afraid of bad news because of their trust in the Lord, a steady heart, no fear.

So, what does it mean to fear the Lord? Does it mean that we are shaking in our boots, cowering in the corner, hoping that he does not see us or find us?

NO! Absolutely not! What it means is a reverential fear, an honoring, knowing that he is the ALMIGHTY, ALL-POWERFUL, Creator of the Universe!

Now we see all of these amazing things, and maybe you look around and think, "Well I don't like bad news. I don't feel like I have wealth and riches."

But zero in on verse 6. **"For the righteousness will never be moved; he will be remembered forever."**

That verse right there, read it again, read it again, and take it to heart. It is not because of what you have done that makes you righteous, but in what God has done, in trusting Him, in fearing him, delighting in His commandments.

And he will not forget you. In a world where people can move on from others so quickly, God will never forget you. He will remember you forever, and will hold you righteous in His eyes, because of what Christ did for you.

Prayer—Gracious, Almighty, Wondrous God, grant us your righteousness. That righteousness that you give to us through what Christ did for us. Continue to watch over us, and we know you will remember us forever. Grant us that hope, faith, trust, and peace that only you can give us. In the name of your beloved son Jesus. Amen.

Today's Devotion was written by Seminarian Chris Deneen

Thursday January 14, 2021
Read Psalm 113

Who Is Like The LORD Our God

This rich psalm is the beginning of what is often referred to as the “Egyptian Hallel” (Psalms 113-118). *Hallel* means “to praise.” It is believed to have been sung by Israel before, during, and after Jewish feasts going up to Jerusalem - at the Temple and probably synagogues - recalling God’s saving works of deliverance worshiping and praising the name of Yahweh. Notably, this psalm was sung by Israel celebrating appointed feasts such as the Passover. This psalm (hymn) is believed to have been sung by Jesus and His disciples after celebrating the Passover meal and Jesus’ institution of the Lord’s Supper (Matt 26:30; Mark 14:26).

This psalm also echoes Hannah’s prayer **“He raises up the poor from the dust; he lifts the needy from the ash heap to make them sit with princes and inherit a seat of honor. For the pillars of the earth are the LORD's, and on them he has set the world”** (2 Sam 2:8; Psalm 113:7-8a; see 1 Samuel 2:1-10); **“Who is like the LORD our God, who is seated on high, who looks far down on the heavens and the earth?”** (Psalm 113:5-6).

Martin Luther writes, “The 113th psalm is a prophecy of the kingdom of Christ, which from the rising of the sun to its setting shall extend over all the nations. This psalm calls on all nations to praise God and proclaim His grace. He is a God of the poor and the troubled, a delightful God and worthy of our grace, who sits on high and loves and exalts the humble. This is Christ’s office and work in His kingdom: to humble the exalted, to make foolish the wise, to damn the holy, to wither the fruitful, and on the other hand to exalt the humble, to make holy the sinner, and to make the barren into a joyful mother of children” (*Reading the Psalms with Luther*, Psalm 113, p. 272).

Christ’s church sings the Magnificat, **“My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior . . . He has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts; He has brought down the mighty from their thrones and exalted those of humble estate; He has filled the hungry with good things, and the rich He has sent away empty. He has helped His servant Israel, in remembrance of His mercy”** (Luke 1:51b-54; see Luke 1:46-55; *Lutheran Service Book* p. 248-49). God’s mercy is given for you and me in Christ crucified and risen for our redemption.

Prayer – O LORD. You are high above all things in heaven and earth and all the nations. Your name is Blessed, and Your Kingdom is forever through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Today’s Devotion was written by Pre-seminary Student Nathan Tritch

Friday January 15, 2021
Read Psalm 114

A Mighty God on Our Side

Imagine a presence so imposing, so overwhelming that the seas and rivers flee and the mountains and rivers skip away like sheep. In this psalm, the glory of our God is so transcendent and powerful that the creation itself learns to fear Him. Not only do peoples get weak at the knees, but the rocks themselves lose composure and turn to water. It would surely be the work of a lifetime to meditate only on the infinite majesty of the Creator but the author of this Psalm remembers God for something else. He remembers this great and powerful Creator as the One who brought Israel out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery. The fearsome God who created all things is the same God who saw His people's affliction and had mercy on them and delivered them.

This psalmist must have been a good student of Luther's Small Catechism, for in this short psalm, we have bold statements that remind us both to fear and to love God. The same God who created the heavens and earth is the God who delivers us from all evil, who leads us out of our slavery to sin. If even the seas and mountains tremble at the sight of our Lord, who can stand against Him to do us harm? With such a mighty God on our side, we can be bold to obey Him and to proclaim the salvation that He has worked on our behalf.

Prayer: Mighty God, Lord of all creation, we give You thanks that You have delivered us from our slavery to sin, and that You continually protect us from those who would enslave us again. Show us Your majesty as Your Son, Jesus, did when he commanded the sea to be calm and it turned back at His command. Teach us to rightly recognize Your glory, especially as Your Son, Jesus Christ, did when He died for us on the cross and the whole earth trembled at His presence. Give us faith so that we both fear and love You in every way. Amen.

Today's Devotion was written by Seminarian Case Farney

Saturday January 16th

Read [Psalm 115](#)

"Praise the Lord!"



Psalm 115 was likely written after the children of Israel had returned from their exile in Babylon. They came home to an empty land – filled with rubble, desolation, and mere remnants of the former Promised Land. And the people around them worshipped gods like those pictured above – Asherah, the goddess of fertility and El, another popular god.

You and I today look at these creations and laugh at the thought that anyone would bow down to them and worship them. Even coated in gold (like El), it's obvious that their rich luster is only skin deep, as three thousand years have peeled away his glory. And Asherah? What were they thinking?!

The Psalmist writes about how, although they have eyes, ears, mouths, hands, and feet; they cannot see, hear, speak, feel, or walk. After all – they're only creations of their human makers! He writes, **"Those who make them become like them; so do all who trust in them."** While we scoff at the idea of worshipping idols such as these, how many of our own creations do we adore? Kids? Family? Work? Celebrities?

But this isn't a Psalm of the Law. This is a song of praise for our infinitely greater God. Our Triune God became human and walked and talked. He saw, felt, heard, and spoke. He died for us and rose from the dead and He lives! And His glory doesn't peel and break, or get scratched, buried and forgotten. His glory is the salvation He won for all mankind, and is the righteousness that you and I wear today.

And so, the Psalmist urges us to trust in the Lord. Our lives, our land, and the world around us may look bleak and empty. But, **"the Lord is our help and our shield"**. Just as He *has* remembered us, He *will* bless us. We don't worship the flawed and failing works of our own hands; we worship the Creator and Sustainer of the Universe!

Prayer: May the LORD give me increase, me and my children! May I be blessed by the LORD, who made heaven and earth! Help me to bless the LORD from this time forth and forevermore. Praise the LORD! In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Today's Devotion was written by Pastor Jeff Nelson

Monday January 18, 2021
Read Psalm 116

What Can I Give?

What do you give to the one who has it all...literally? This is the question of Psalm 116:12. **“What shall I render to the LORD for all his benefits to me?”** In response to the unending mercy from God, what can I possibly return to Him?

Martin Luther commented on this question saying, *“We can return nothing to God except the vows of praise and confession, for we have all things from Him and He needs nothing of our goods.”* Very true. Whatever we could give, God doesn’t need. He gave us everything that we have. He not only has it all, He has given all we have.

So what does the Psalmist decide to do? What should we decide alongside him?

“I will lift up the cup of salvation.” This is possibly a reference to one of the cups received in Passover meal. In other words, the first thing the Psalmist will do in thanks is to graciously receive God’s gifts. Instead of ungratefully turning up his nose at what God wants to give, we receive His Word and Sacraments and through them forgiveness, life and salvation.

“I will call on the name of the LORD.” We will join in prayer. Giving God thanks. Asking Him for our needs. Offering praise. If we understand that any offering is simply returning something to God that He has first given to us, prayer makes perfect sense. He gives us the gift of prayer in order to speak back to Him.

“I will pay my vows to the LORD in the presence of all his people.” The Psalmist leads us to consider that gathering for worship is the natural “thank you” in light of all the gifts that God gives to us.

None of this is to say that we shouldn’t give of our time, our gifts, and our finances. Elsewhere in Scripture, we are encouraged to give of these freely in service to Christ’s Church and those around us. Yet of first priority is hear the Word, receive the Lord’s Supper, pray, and worship **“in the presence of all his people.”** All of these are the basic expressions of where the Psalm begins. **“I love the Lord, because he has heard my voice and my plea for mercy.”** In Christ, the same is true for you. So, what can you give to the One who has it all? Thankful worship.

Prayer – Lord Jesus, You have given me all things for this life and life eternal. Lead me every moment to gratefully receive Your gifts, offer You praise, and use well all You have given. Amen.

Today’s Devotion was written by Pastor Jason

Tuesday January 19, 2021
Read Psalm 117

Kindness and Mercy

How hard it is to praise God when I look at myself, when I worry about my future. I am not in control of the world, or even myself. How then could I expect good things to come? But the world is not in control of itself, evil continues to destroy its own aims by its very nature. God destroys evil even as it thinks it has succeeded in its actions. So, it is different when I look at God! Then I see what He has done, how He saves me, guards me, and cares for me and my life.

I didn't deserve his goodness. Jesus came to save me, while I was still in opposition to Him, while I was actively doing wrong. That is merciful. That has saved me from condemnation. But even more than that, He has given me a place at His side, status as His, Jesus', brother. To be merciful is wonderful, to be kind in addition to that is overwhelming!

Evil is known for its love of falsehood. It began in the garden of Eden with lies, it continues to promise good while giving evil to day. But God's truth, the fact of rightness, the truth about the world and God stands against evil, continuing to destroy falsehoods, revealing God and bringing life to anyone everywhere in the world.

So praise Him! Tell about His goodness, share the good news of His love and presence not just me, not just a few here and there, but all. His love, his mercy is for all! Praise Him all peoples!

Prayer: Heavenly Father, You are so wonderful - You have not only conquered evil, you have deigned to rescue us, who were so opposed to You. Thank you! You demonstrate love, You demonstrate mercy. You make kindness real in my life. Thank you again. Amen

Today's Devotion was written by Pastor Art Bolstad

Wednesday January 20, 2021

Psalm 118

Covenant Faithfulness

“Chesed” is the Hebrew word that appears quite a bit in this psalm. We see it as “steadfast love.”

But another translation of that, is “covenant faithfulness.” The covenant faithfulness of the Lord endures forever.

This may not seem like a huge difference in a translation, but what comes to mind when you hear the covenant faithfulness? What is the covenant that God has given to His people? That he would send a Savior to save them from their sins and eternal damnation.

So look again at some of what the Psalmist writes. Verses 5 and 6, “Out of distress I called on the Lord; the Lord answered me and set me free. The Lord is on my side; I will not fear.” The psalmist knows that God is truly on His side.

And in verses 10-13, the psalmist is encompassed, surrounded, but the Lord helped him.

We hear more about the great works of God. And the Lord continues to watch over His people. And the psalm ends the same way it begins, which is a great way for us to start and end our days. Because of the reminder of God’s faithfulness.

His “covenant faithfulness” endures forever. He will always stick to His promises, He will NEVER forget, and that is beyond words. Because even though we might not always stick to our promises, or the things that we say we will do, but God will always stick to His promises and his faithfulness and love will endure forever.

And thanks be to God for that. No matter what we face in life, whatever surrounds us and starts to bring us down, we can know that our God is always there, and His faithfulness endures forever.

Prayer—Heavenly Father, we know that we are not always faithful to our words, but we thank You for your faithfulness. Thank You for continuing to hold to your promises, and thank you for Your Son, the fulfillment of Your promises. Amen.

Today’s Devotion was written by Seminarian Chris Deneen

Thursday January 21, 2021

Read Psalm 119:1-32

Blessed Are Those Whose Way is Blameless

Psalm 119 is wonderfully sectioned by the twenty-two letters of the Hebrew alphabet - Aleph through Taw - eight lines each. And, throughout this psalm section, Aleph—Daleth, God's Word consumes and comforts the believer in the LORD's covenant promises and commands. Reading this meditation, one might wonder:

Whose way is *blameless*?

Who walks in the law of the LORD?

Who keeps His testimonies?

Who seeks Him with his whole heart?

Who does no wrong?

The Word of God shows sinful hearts, **"no one does good"** (Romans 3:12; see Psalm 14:1-3; 53:1-3; Ecclesiastes 7:20), and the entire person (body and soul) needs life according to the Word of the LORD. The psalmist pleads, **"My soul clings to the dust; give me life according to Your word!"** (v. 25).

The psalmist continues: **"Deal bountifully with Your servant, that I may live and keep Your word. Open my eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of Your law. . . . Your testimonies are my delight; they are my counselors"** (vv. 17-18, 24). Saint Paul describes the struggle and delight we share with the psalmist for the LORD's Word. **"For I delight in the law of God, in my inner being, but I see in my members another law waging war against the law of my mind and making me captive to the law of sin that dwells in my members. Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, I myself serve the law of God with my mind, but with my flesh I serve the law of sin"** (Romans 7:22-25).

The LORD has dealt bountifully with us by grace through faith in Jesus Christ crucified and risen for you and me. **"And you, who once were alienated and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds, He has now reconciled in His body of flesh by His death, in order to present you holy and *blameless* and above reproach before Him"** (Colossians 1:20-22). It is the LORD, whose way is *blameless*, who does no wrong, and gives His life and righteousness to us through Christ alone.

Prayer – Lord, our God, teach us to know and remember how frail we are, that we do not lean on our own understanding, nor depend on our own wisdom and skill, but seek our true wisdom in Your Word. Let Your statutes enlighten our eyes, that we behold Your wondrous counsel for the salvation of our souls in Jesus Christ. Amen. *(Reading the Psalms with Luther, p. 287)*

Today's Devotion was written by Pre-seminary Student Nathan Tritch

Friday January 22, 2021

Read Psalm 119:33-72

The Word of the Lord Endures Forever

Psalm 119 is best known for its great length. Even breaking it up over a couple days leaves us with sections longer than most psalms. Now most bibles indicate that this is an acrostic psalm, beginning each section with successive letters of the Hebrew alphabet. That's one reason for the seemingly endless length of this psalm, but I think it also serves as a reflection of the content: the Word and the steadfast love of God. Just as this psalm seems to go on forever, the Word of the Lord has no end. His steadfast love lasts forever.

The psalmist rejoices at this reality and longs to know God's teaching. He delights in the law and the promises of God (this is proof that the psalmists were, of course, very Lutheran), for it is by the Word of the Lord that we come into life. As verse 40 says, **"I long for your precepts; in your righteousness give me life!"** and verse 50 **"your promise gives me life."**

It is not only that God's Word is true and certain, many things are true and certain. God's Word is more: it is eternal and life-giving. And we know that the Word of God is not only ink and paper, but it has become flesh and dwelt among us. All of the teachings of God that the psalmist celebrates and finds life in find their fullest expression in the person of Jesus Christ. In Him we have all good things and have obtained eternal life. Like the psalmist, we love all the precepts and commandments of God because they point us to Christ in Whom we have everlasting life.

Prayer: We thank you, God, for the great blessings you have given us in your word. We pray that you would never cease to teach us your precepts and promises so that we might see more clearly Your Son, the Word made Flesh. Join us ever closer to Him that we might have abundant and eternal life in and with Him. Amen.

Today's Devotion was written by Seminarian Case Farney

Saturday January 23rd

Read [Psalm 119:73-104](#)

“J, K, L, M” or “Guaranteed”

A few weeks ago, we had our car in the shop and got an estimate on some brake work. The repair was going to run about \$450, but the good news was that if we brought it in soon, it would be less than a year since the last job and would be fully covered by warranty. So, this week we called to schedule the work, only to be told that we’d been informed wrong – that it was 12 months *and* 12,000 miles – we’re over mileage and we’d have to pay.

“Full Lifetime Guarantee”. “No Strings Attached”. “Everything’s Covered”. “Read My Lips: No New Taxes”. We’re used to guarantees like these – there’s always fine print. Businesses need to make a profit and write these “Unconditional Warranties” with enough clauses to ensure they still make money. And other times, they’re human and may just decide to not honor their word, or they go out of business, or...

But not God. It’s hard for us to even grasp the perfection of His Word, but it is simple: it is righteous, faithful, steadfast, and true. The Word that created the universe you live in, including you yourself, is eternal and unchanging. When God speaks, His Word delivers. His Promises are His Name, His covenant with you and me. 100%, every time, complete. Not just “lifetime” but eternal!

And the Psalmist holds onto this as his *certain* hope, his peace, his salvation. He may question *when* God will deliver him from his affliction, but he knows that God will deliver him. **“My eyes long for your promise; I ask, “When will you comfort me?”** “When”, not “if”.

While the faithless around him attack him with falsehood, persecution, and traps; God’s Word stands firm and true. **“Your faithfulness endures to all generations; you have established the earth, and it stands fast.”** Even the ground you stand on testifies to the longevity of His Promises. **“I will never forget your precepts, for by them you have given me life.”** Even I was given life by Your Word, breathed into me, and this allows me to pray, **“I am yours; save me!”**

And, by Jesus, His Word made flesh, He has, does, and always will.

Prayer: Eternal Father, Everlasting Hope, send Your Spirit to me when I’m weak and afraid. Turn me to Your true and perfect Word to strengthen me during affliction and suffering. According to Jesus Your Word, Amen.

Today’s Devotion was written by Pastor Jeff Nelson

Monday January 25, 2021
Read Psalm 119:105-144

Light

“Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.” The words are familiar and yet incredibly profound. How lost would we be apart from having the word as our light?

Relegated to darkness, we would still fumble around. We would even imagine ourselves to be wise and enlightened. After all, **“every way of a man is right in his own eyes,”** Solomon reminds us in Proverbs 21:2. You and I are no different. Apart from the helpful correction and rebuke of God’s Word, we would certainly endorse all sorts of things that would lead us far from life with God.

At times, the light shines in places where I don’t want to see, but that doesn’t mean it isn’t needed. The lamp of God’s Word has a tendency of exposing my blemishes that darkness would conceal. Yet without seeing my sin, I would certainly only hold on to it. We need it to be brought into the light of day, even if it makes us squirm.

Yet the lamp of God’s Word not only shines light on our darkness, but brings God’s Light who gives life. Jesus said, **“I am the Light of the world whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life”** (John 8:12) Enlightened by the forgiveness of Jesus, I want to **“walk in the light as He is in the light”** (1 John 1:7).

Prayer – Lord Jesus, Light of the World, enlighten my Your Word. Reveal my sin, shine on my with Your mercy and guide my feet to walk in Your ways. Amen.

Today’s Devotion was written by Pastor Jason

Tuesday January 26, 2021
Read Psalm 119:145-176

His Word

The Bible is God's Word! There I find my sources of knowledge and happiness. When I look elsewhere, I find discouragement, I find negativity; but in His Word, I find positivity, there I find salvation - How Jesus carried my sin on Calvary, burying in the grave, leaving it there, so I can rejoice in God my Savior. There in God's Word I find the reminders of His continual care, so nobody and nothing can tear me away from Him.

God's power exists in and through His Word. Are we not told that His Word was there in the beginning - creating all things? Of course, we were, John and Moses. God's speech does what God intends - it never fails or falls short. And so God's Word, the Bible, also does His work.

Faith comes from His Word, we are told by Paul, who knows from glorious experience. My faith did not come by my works or my hard studies, rather my faith was generated by God Himself through His Word, spoken to me, even when I was not listening to Him. He still speaks to us, to each of us, building that faith that He has given us, building our confidence that those many worries of the world buffeting us, they cannot possess us.

I thank you my God for your Word. Thank for the Bible, for the many places therein where you tell me, remind me, and convince me that You are my friend, my Savior, and Protector. Amen, Praise The Lord!

Prayer: Almighty Father, You have greatly favored me by sharing with me Your speech, by acting in and on me, to give me salvation and a continued reality of Your acting in my life. Thank You!

Today's Devotion was written by Pastor Art Bolstad

Wednesday January 27, 2021

Read Psalm 120

Deliver Me, O Lord

A song of the ascents. This is a psalm that many people, Israelites, would have prayed on their way up to Jerusalem, mostly for festival days.

When I was in Israel, it was an amazing opportunity as we were driving up to Jerusalem, that our bus was silent, and we read some of these psalms of ascent. It was a very powerful moment. Today reread this psalm a couple of times, and slow down, and read it in silence. And think to what the people going up to Jerusalem would have thought as well. And read it again.

“In my distress I called to the Lord, and he answered me. Deliver me, O Lord, from lying lips, from a deceitful tongue.”

How often have you felt like this? You have some kind of distress in your life, and it is all you can do to muster up the words to cry out to God! We may not have the enemies like the psalmist here, but he speaks of people against God, and against His people. And we see quickly the end result for these people who speak against God’s people.

What shall be done to the false and lying tongue? **“A warrior’s sharp arrows, with glowing coals of the broom tree.”** This is not a good end, as it is the psalmist’s beautiful way of saying that those tongues that loosed their arrows of lies would soon meet a downfall much worse than simple lies.

Those against the psalmist were all around him. Meshech was a place off in a distant land, not in the Promised Land. Kedar was an area synonymous with the nomadic tribes around Israel.

And maybe you have felt the way the psalmist has before. **“Too long have I dwelt with those who hate peace. I am for peace, but when I speak, they are for war.”** Being in the midst of those who are not for you, or not for God can be challenging. BUT, remember, that we have the ultimate one for peace, the one who calms all fears, wars, and has power over all. Christ our Lord. We call out to the Lord, and even in the hardest and darkest of times, he answers you.

Prayer—Gracious Prince of Peace. In a world that is so full of hate, anger, frustrations, and doubts, let your love, peace, and joy that surpass all understanding rule and guide our hearts. Amen.

Today’s Devotion was written by Seminarian Chris Deneen

Thursday, January 28, 2021

Read Psalm 121

The LORD Is Your *Keeper*

It's easy not to take account of all that helps and *protects* us today. Many things and other people help and *keep* us from potential harm and danger: seatbelts, airbags, bars and railings (on walkways and stairs), safety nets, harnesses, PPE, sanitizer, cleansers, facemasks, vaccines, meds, treatments, our bodies, clothes, governing authorities, police, military, father and mother, family, friends, forgiving and loving words, etc. All of these things, and others (including ourselves), will fail at one point or another in the temporal world. Sin and death, evil and darkness, brokenness and rebellion plague the world and everyone in various distresses of day and night. The LORD helps and *protects* us in all this, right?

Yes! The One True Eternal God, Yahweh, has given His eternal Word and promise to you and me amid temporal distress. So, the psalmist writes, **"I lift up my eyes to the hills. From where does my help come? My help comes from the LORD, who made heaven and earth"** (vv. 1-2). The LORD, who made heaven and earth, does not sleep or remain silent in our lives. The LORD helps, *protects*, *keeps*, *guards*, and provides a *hedge of protection* around us (*as with thorns—shâmar*) from day and night distresses, *protecting* us from all evil, *keeping* our souls, and our going out and coming in forevermore.

Psalm 121 is a comforting and assuring Word of God and promise in all areas and aspects of life for those who trust in Christ, the One crucified and risen for the forgiveness of our sins and redemption. Culminated and fulfilled in Jesus Christ, the Son of God, given for you and me, our sins are washed away forever. Christ's righteousness is imputed to us by grace: Forever clothed in white robes in the blood of the Lamb (see Revelation 7:9-17).

Jesus wore a crown of *thorns*: suffered and died for our sake, taking the punishment of our sin upon Himself, and rising from the dead on the third day; so that through faith in Him, we have the LORD's eternal help and *preservation* forever; And His *protection* here and now in this temporal world. We *look* to the hill of Calvary where Jesus bled and died for us. God's Word of promise comforts and assures us He will never leave us or forsake us till the end of the age on the Last Day Resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. God is with us!

Prayer – Thank You, LORD of all creation, for Your eternal help and *protection* given for us. Thank You for *attending to* us and *keeping watch* on us, *preserving* us in Your righteousness forevermore through Jesus Christ. Amen.

Today's Devotion was written by Pre-seminary Student Nathan Tritch

Friday, January 29, 2021
Read Psalm 122

I was glad when they said to me, "Let us go to the house of the Lord!"

"I was glad when they said to me, 'Let us go to the house of the LORD!'" As a prospective church worker, I hope that this is a common feeling among my fellow Christians. Many weekends, though, I wish it were a more common feeling in my heart. In this psalm, David writes of one of the most wonderful feelings: when we are so full of joy that we are excited to go to church to give thanks to our God.

Now, from what we know about David's life, he experienced no lack of highs and lows. But for the more even-tempered of us, the doldrums of daily life don't always inspire us to be so glad when they say "Let us go to the house of the Lord!" Often, we're more likely to say "five more minutes." I would venture to say that the difference between days where we're excited to worship our God and when we do so begrudgingly has a lot more to do with us than with Him.

Even when we lose sight of all the great blessings we have, all the reasons to be glad to go to the house of the Lord, even then He provides us all the things we need. As Paul puts it, **"even if we are unfaithful, He is faithful, for He cannot deny Himself."** We often fall short of giving God proper thanks for all He has done, but He never fails to give. He even gives us the Holy Spirit so that we can see His blessings and be glad to worship and thank Him.

Prayer: Lord, we thank you for all the blessings that You give to us day by day. Make us glad to go to Your house. Give us eyes to see Your Son as the new and greater temple, and teach us to come to Him. Put peace in our hearts so that we remember all the reasons that we are glad to worship You, Amen!

Today's Devotion was written by Seminarian Case Farney

Saturday, January 30, 2021
Read Psalm 123

"Look to the Lord"

If you're the sort of person who's reading a devotion on a Saturday when you could be doing so many other things, this Psalm is for you. It's written from the perspective of someone who is totally, absolutely convinced that Jesus is the Way, the Truth, and the Life. That the LORD reigns from the heavens over His creation, filling it with life and sustenance and caring for it in every way. There's not a doubt in your mind, so you ascend to Him in worship and devotion and attempt to live according to His will.

The Psalmist illustrates this using the work of a servant (or maidservant). He's not comparing us to this sort of lowly laborer to trivialize or demean our relationship with our heavenly Father, rather he's admiring their attentiveness to their master. Most of us don't have firsthand knowledge of the life of a servant, but if you're like me you've seen them portrayed in film and stories. A servant stands, patiently, constantly looking to the master for a sign that he or she wants something. When his hand moves, a servant notices and will jump to fulfill his master's will.

Similarly, **"to You (we) lift up (our) eyes, O You who are enthroned in the heavens!"** We study His Word and participate in public worship to know and do His will with our lives. Although imperfectly, we attempt to live God-pleasing lives using the gifts we've been given. **"Our eyes look to the Lord our God, till he has mercy upon us."** We know *for a fact* that He loves us and will show us His mercy.

But we're puzzled and frustrated by the world's reaction to this. Much of the world around us laughs at us for reading a devotion on a Saturday, or at "wasting" a few hours at church on Sundays; at giving thanks before eating a meal; at turning the other cheek when wronged; at showing love to the disadvantaged. As obvious to you and me that this is the Way that God would have us live, we're hurt by their contempt and scorn. Our soul itself hurts.

And so, we pray for them and continue to show them the love and mercy that God shows us.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, continue to show us Your will and Your mercy. Fill us with the Good News of Your Son, that through our lives we might show that to Your world. In Jesus Name, Amen.

Today's Devotion was written by Pastor Jeff Nelson

Monday, February 1, 2021
Read Psalm 124

Keeping His Mercy in View

“This could have been so much worse.” This is a common refrain when a family escapes their burning home or a tornado just misses a highly populated area. Yes, there has been difficulty and loss, but also a sense of gratitude that our worst fears have been avoided.

David is recognizing such a reality in Psalm 124. Things could have been so much worse. This could have **“swallowed us up alive,” “the flood would have swept us away,”** and **“the torrent would have gone over us.”** Clearly, David is relieved after a coming army (maybe the Philistines) had come, but had not completely consumed David and the people of Israel. Things could have been so much worse, if not for one significant truth. **“If it had not been the LORD who was on our side,”** things WOULD have been so much worse.

How true! People will often ask, “why do bad things happen to good people?” It is an impossible thing for us to understand why tragedy befalls one person and not another, such knowledge is left to God. Yet the question is flawed. If we take sin and the scriptures seriously, we are reminded that **“there is no one righteous, not even one”** (Romans 3:10).

The better question is “why do good things happen to sinful people?” Here is the answer is clear: only by the grace and mercy of God. Or as David puts it, **“our help is in the name of LORD, who made heaven and earth.”** Our help comes from the Creator of all things, who in mercy does not give us what our sin deserves – immediate punishment. Instead, He mercifully provides for His rebellious creation, even more, has provided a Savior to restore us as His new creation in Christ. Time and time and time again **“if it had not been the LORD on our side,”** things could have been so much worse. Yet since He is on our side, we receive each moment from now to forever as a gift from **“the Lord, who made heaven and earth.”**

Prayer: Lord, when difficulty comes, help me to keep Your mercy in view. Let me be daily astonished at the promise that through faith, You are by my side. In Jesus Name, Amen.

Today's Devotion was written by Pastor Jason

Tuesday, February 2, 2021
Read Psalm 125

Surrounded by His Goodness

God stiffens my resolve and guards me against temptation. How pleasing that fact is! For I need a lot of help. Temptations come, some openly calling, others sneaking in around my desires, hiding from my consciousness for all of which I need that fact that God surrounds to protect me. And He does. Jesus lives in me, making me a new creation. That means that the Old Adam, the sinful nature I inherited from him, is now longer really me. He has been replaced by Christ!

The goodness that is God has become part of me - I can look to do good, not relying on myself to gain as it would be under sin. I am surrounded by goodness, it blots out the temptations brought to me, so that often I don't even notice them - which makes them not be temptations! Thank you, God!

I rest in Him! My efforts, on my own, fail - But when I follow His ways, when I do things His way, I see success, sometimes even in spite of my efforts; because He takes over the results. How they shine with His goodness! So I rest, not lazy, not doing nothing, but resting in the knowledge that He takes my activities, uses them for His purposes, and LO! They show His goodness for all.

There are those who listen to the world, in panic, in greed they leave our LORD wondering why what they grasped after, slips through their hands and leaves them nothing! Such folks get neither the imagined benefits they wanted nor do they have life with our God. But I rest in the One who surrounds me with love and care. I succeed in Him.

Prayer: Thank you, O God! I see you in my life and I know that is a gift from You. I Thank You because You are visible in goodness, visible in the beauty of life, visible in all. Thank you! Amen

Today's Devotion was written by Pastor Art Bolstad

Wednesday, February 3, 2021
Read Psalm 126

Dreaming

Have you ever had that “Pinch me I must be dreaming” feeling? A feeling that things are just so wonderful, that something incredible happened, that you are in this state of wondering how this could be! How could this such amazing thing be happening?

This Psalm is much like that feeling. “When the Lord restored the fortunes of Zion, we were like those who dream.”

Not only were they like those who dream, but they were filled with laughter, shouts of joy! And they remembered all the great things the Lord had done for them and are glad! They are genuinely happy! And in your life, maybe you can think of a time like that. Where everything was wonderful, you had that pinch me feeling, you had that this is the best feeling. Remember a time like that and find joy in that today.

But then the second half of this relatively short psalm, we see that those who are praying this psalm, are actually not in such a great place. Maybe this is much easier to relate to during this time. They ask God to restore their fortunes. They currently are struggling, not sure what to think or do.

BUT! They know that those who sow in tears shall reap shouts of joy! Those that go out weeping shall come home with shouts of joy; their fortune being restored.

Now here on earth we may not see this grand prosperity. We may not have the wondrous fortunes like God’s people of old.

But what we do have, is a place firmly set-in heaven. A place where no matter how much sorrow or pain we face in this life, **we will reap shouts of joy! And our mouths and tongues will once again be filled with laughter and shouts of joy!**

In this sinful world our fortunes may seem bleak, but take heart, knowing that the Lord will restore each of us one day, in a place with no tears or pain.

So today, take some time to laugh, to smile, to cry. It was Jim Valvano in his memorable speech while battling cancer stated to do three things every day.

Laugh. Think. Cry. These can all be joy, especially when we find them in Christ.

Prayer—Gracious God, even when we walk through times of life that seem troubling, you are there with us. Remind us of those times in our lives that we were overflowing with joy. And in our hurt and desperation, remind us of your care, love, and joy that you bring to us, and the hope that we have in you through your Son, Our Lord. Amen.

Today’s Devotion was written by Seminarian Chris Deneen

Thursday, February 4, 2021
Read Psalm 127

Unless

It is an ominous word. Unless...

It causes us to stop in our tracks and pay attention. Unless...

To call it a threat is too strong. Better to call it a warning. Unless...

“Unless the LORD builds the house, those who build it labor in vain.”

“Unless the LORD watches over the city, the watchman stays awake in vain.”

Unless...

From the formation of our families to the protection of our homes to the results of our work, we often believe that we are the rulers of our domain. We delude ourselves into thinking that every achievement is ours, that all things depend upon us.

Then the warning comes, unless...

Apart from the gracious hand of the LORD, we have nothing. Apart from His care, all of our plans and efforts come to nothing. This means the flipside is true. Whatever fruits our labors produce, it is because the LORD has blessed our work. Whatever protection we grant our families, it is because the LORD has given it.

None of this is to say that we shouldn't work hard, keep watch, or plan. Those are all good things IF they are done in faith. In work, in our families, in all things, we work with the energy and ability God has given, but the results are in His hands. For we are in His hands. And this is the best place to be. For our own efforts are vanity, but in Him, we work and need not worry for **“he gives to his beloved sleep.”**

Prayer—O Lord, through Your Son, You give all good things – in this life and for life eternal. Help me to see the vanity of trusting merely in myself and my efforts. Let me entrust my family, my nation, myself to you, knowing all the while your patient and forgiving love in Christ. Give me peace rest in Christ, even in the midst of my labors. Amen.

Today's Devotion was written by Pastor Jason

Friday, February 5, 2021
Read Psalm 128

Blessed is everyone who fears the Lord, who walks in his ways!

There are many today who think that the blessings of God are a nice car and a comfortable retirement. Even those of us who know better than to listen to the false prophets of the so-called "prosperity gospel" sometimes fall prey to thinking that the wealthy and prosperous are blessed by God. Truly every good thing in this life is a blessing from God, but these things pale in comparison to the blessings that God showers upon those who fear Him. He promises a life of honest work and fruitful labor. He promises to bless us with a family to enjoy His blessings with.

These are the worst kind of promises though, because we don't always see them come true, at least not in the ways we expect. Some people are cheated out of the fruit of their labor, many Christians don't have a family or have not been blessed with children. We might despair and think that we have not feared the Lord rightly so He has cursed us. We have turned aside from His ways and done evil so we will not be blessed by Him!

But all of this is to forget just what a gracious God we have. Even though we have not feared Him rightly or walked in His ways at all times, He is faithful to His promises. All of the blessings that are withheld from us now will surely not be so forever. Indeed, He is preparing for us an eternal feast, **a feast of rich food, a feast of well-aged wine** (Is 25:6) and He is gathering us into an eternal family, adopting us as His own children (Rom 8:15). We will see **the prosperity of Jerusalem** not as an earthly city but as the heavenly New Jerusalem where God will dwell with His people (Rev 21:2-3) and we will surely **see our children's children** because Christ has defeated death for us.

If we see any of these things in this life, it is a sign that we are already blessed by God and will come fully into that blessing in due time. And if we do not, we do not lack anything for we know that the promises of God are sure and never changing, **for all the promises of God find their "Yes" in Him** (2 Cor 1), that is, Christ Jesus Who has begun to bring us all good things by His death and resurrection and will never cease to work for our good.

Prayer: Lord God, Giver of all good things, we thank You for all the various blessings that You have given to us in our earthly life. Help us to see them as a foretaste of the greater blessings that You have in store for us. We thank You also for those blessings You have withheld from us both to humble us and to give us hunger for the time when you fulfill all things. Teach us to hold fast to Your perfect promises by which we are never disappointed. We pray all this in the name of the Promised One, Who is the greatest blessing we have from You. Amen!

Today's Devotion was written by Seminarian Case Farney

Saturday, February 6, 2021
Read Psalm 129

Bless You

What do you say when someone sneezes? “Bless you.” What does Pastor say at the end of a service? **“The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you; the Lord lift up his countenance upon you and give you peace.”** Those aren’t just nice things to say to someone – those are serious words of Promise (as you heard in yesterday’s devotion).

In today’s Psalm, the worship leader says, **“Greatly have they afflicted me from my youth”**, then he has the congregation repeat those exact words after him. For most of us, that’s a lot of affliction! But the Good News immediately follows: **“yet they have not prevailed against me.”** Despite all the affliction of a lifetime, despite the scars, bruises, and disabilities we’ve accumulated; our righteous LORD has kept us standing. He’s **“cut the cords of the wicked”** (the figurative ropes with which they’ve “plowed our backs”). They’ve inflicted deep wounds on us, but God has saved us.

Those who afflict God’s Family have been **“put to shame and turned back.”** They’ll be like grains of grass that take root in a crack in a parking lot, only to be burned to a crisp by the hot sun. But worst of all, no one will walk by and say to them, **“The blessing of the Lord be upon you! We bless you in the name of the Lord!”** How awful!

But those are the words of Hope that our LORD says to all those who believe in Him.

Prayer: Lord God, bless me and keep me in You. Shine Your face upon me and show me Your Grace. Raise up Your face in approval of me, because of Your Son, and give me eternal Peace. Amen.

Today’s Devotion was written by Pastor Jeff Nelson

Monday, February 8, 2021
Read Psalm 130

The Watchmen

“My soul waits for the Lord more than watchmen for the morning...more than watchmen for the morning.”

There may not be a better picture of Christian hope in all the Scriptures than the watchman. I can't imagine having that job. Every night staying awake. Perched on the city walls. Looking for any sign of danger.

The watchman is in darkness, which can be an uneasy thing, a scary thing, like being handed grief, dealing with death. If all the watchman knows is the darkness it would become overwhelming, as grief so easily can become.

But the watchman knows something. His whole life is defined by waiting for the morning. He does nothing to bring it, but his whole life is lived waiting for it. And he knows with absolute certainty, it is coming.

That's the hope of the Christian. Certain, guaranteed by the One who makes the sun rise every day, promised by Son of God who rose from death to assure our rising. We're just waiting for that glorious morning.

“O Israel, hope in the LORD! For with the LORD there is steadfast love, and with him is plentiful redemption. And he will redeem Israel from all his iniquities.”

Prayer—O Lord, through Your Son, You bring certain hope – the promise of redemption and life when new heavens and earth dawn. Strengthen me in the midst of this life in Your forgiveness and love, as I wait. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Today's Devotion was written by Pastor Jason

Tuesday, February 9, 2021
Read Psalm 131

I Remember Your Love

Lord, I'm so glad that You take care of things for me. I could worry, complain, and fuss - but why? You are there! Those things are just froth on life. My heart rests in your care - I look to you and my troubles fade out. When the world stews and yells at me, I turn it over to You, successfully. I know it all works out.

There are sorrows I can't handle, losses I can't replace - but instead of despair, I remember Your love - that can't be lost. Your promises remain and never fail. Thank you, LORD. Thank you for peace as well as succor.

I have found that reading Your Word, that thinking about how You have cared for Your people over the centuries, How You have made and kept promises galore, well, then I forget my insecurities, I let the news and the fearful reports go by. I turn back to Your ways and relax. Thank You for that Word, for those promises and using that Word for me.

My sins are forgiven, my hopes are aligned with His Will. The Apostle Paul is content as he sees a chance to go home to be with Christ. I, too, look to Him. I, too, rest knowing that I will be joining him in heaven with our Lord. More thanks to God.

Prayer: Thank you LORD. Thank you for your patience and willingness to put up with me. Thank you that I know that I am safe with You. Thank you for peace of mind, even in a troubled world. Thank you! Amen.

Today's Devotion was written by Pastor Art Bolstad

Wednesday, February 10, 2021

Read Psalm 132

Remember Your People, O God

Have you ever wondered what it means to tell God to remember? We see it in the Psalms and Old Testament, **“Remember Your people O God!” “Remember, O Lord, in David’s favor...”**

This doesn’t mean that God forgot or is somehow in need of being reminded of these things. What it means is more of a “think back to this” type of idea. God doesn’t forget, yet the psalmists pray this out to remind themselves that God will never forget.

In our psalm for today, we hear of the works of David. How he vowed to find a place for the Lord to dwell, how they heard of it from far away. Now the temple was built for God, but in what Jesus did, coming to this earth, his dwelling place wasn’t simply the temple, but with us, in us. And that leads into the oath that He swore with David and his sons.

One of David’s sons will sit on the throne. If they keep the covenant and the testimonies that God teaches them, they’ll forever sit on the throne.

It’s easy to forget, as sinful human beings, that God is in charge. That He has it all in control. Whether it is His resting place, or where we look to lay our heads, or where we might be in the next couple of weeks, months, or years, God is in control.

And God controls ALL and makes them prosper. Just as He speaks about choosing Zion as His dwelling place forever, we can be assured, that as His people, His CHOSEN people, that He will care for us. And that is something He will never forget, and I pray that YOU never forget.

Prayer—Gracious God, Almighty Father, remember us in Your Kingdom. You have written our names in the Book of Life through the waters of Baptism. Watch over us, be with us, bless us. Remind us, that your love never fails, and that your promises are sure and true. Amen.

Today’s Devotion was written by Seminarian Chris Deneen

Thursday, February 11, 2021

Read Psalm 133

Unity and Life Forevermore

The Word of God says, “**Behold, how good and pleasant it is when brothers dwell in unity!**” (v. 1). God’s people should be unified, continuing in brotherly togetherness. Unity is described as beautiful and delightful worship to God. Israel worshiped and offered sacrifices to YHWH, receiving God's blessings and celebrating God's acts of deliverance. Dwelling in unity together at the tabernacle/temple mount at the LORD's feasts in Zion. Daily the Levitical priesthood was to administer and practice right teaching and offer sacrifices on behalf of the people and themselves to God.

Often, we see disunity among God’s people. Errors and false teaching, unloving actions, bitter disagreements in the church and in the world. Unity sounds good and should be maintained in the body of Christ. We cannot keep unity by our own efforts and striving: Disagreements and discord reveal our sin, yet the Word and unity of the Spirit, the Gospel of Christ crucified for our sins and risen from the dead on the third day, is the eternal blessing which redeemed and unifies sinners.

We see the LORD’s Word of command and promise, blessing and eternal life proclaimed from Jerusalem, “**the mountains of Zion!**” (v.3). This mountain range (Zion), referring to and surrounding Jerusalem. The “**dew** of [snowy Mt] **Hermon**” from the north would fall on Jerusalem’s dry land bringing much-needed moisture. We also see: God’s promise fulfilled on Mt. Calvary, outside the city walls where the eternal sacrifice, our Savior Christ Jesus, died and paid for our sins, bringing us much needed living water - forgiveness of sins and deliverance from the dry land of death (the wages of our sins) to life forevermore in Jesus blood, and in our Baptism.

The Apostle Paul implored Ephesus: “**to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called . . . with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call—one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.**” (Ephesians 4:1, 2-6)

Prayer – Lord Jesus, You who are our Peace with the Father, because by Your blood you have reconciled us to Him, grant and preserve peace in Church and State, and teach us who dwell under the same roof to be of one heart and one mind. Remove from us all envy and strife, and let Your peace dwell in our hearts that we may live and die in peace. Amen.

(Prayer from *Reading the Psalms with Luther*, Psalm 133)

Today’s Devotion was written by Pre-seminary Student Nathan Tritich

Friday, February 12, 2021

Read Psalm 134

Bless the Lord

Wait, that's it? That's the whole psalm? Clocking in at a meager three verse, Psalm 134 one of the shortest of the Psalter. It stands to reason then, that there wouldn't be much content in it. This proves true and even still, there is perfectly enough. This psalm (short enough to memorize easily) gives us enough instruction to meditate over for a lifetime. What is the work of a Christian except to **bless the Lord**, to be counted among the **servants of the Lord**, to **stand by night in the house of the Lord**?

God does not call us all to complicated matters of discerning His wisdom or personally administering care to the needy or composing beautiful art to His glory. All of these are good and necessary things that we can and should support, but each person has been given their own gift of service by the Spirit. The gift that we have in common is worshiping our God, blessing His name, and lifting up our hands in prayer and worship. **He who made heaven and earth** blesses us from Zion, and in His careful oversight He has not neglected to give us all, from the least to the greatest, means to worship and serve Him.

Psalm 134 is not the most renowned among the psalms, yet God has caused it to be included among His Scriptures so that generations may use it to praise Him. This humble psalm reminds us what is the distillation of all the psalms: bless the Lord!

Prayer: Blessed be You Who made heaven and earth! Give us minds that are ever focused on blessing You and serving You. We thank You that You have created us with various gifts and talents but have not neglected to give us each some way to praise You. Be with us and bless us that we may never lose sight of You. Amen!

Today's Devotion was written by Seminarian Case Farney

Saturday, February 13, 2021

Read Psalm 135

God's Eye View

There are many Psalms in which the writer wallows in the depths of despair. Life for a believer is often like that – surrounded by sin, injustice, and death. These Psalms always end with the Psalmist finally looking to God and finding righteousness, justice, and life.

Many other Psalms revolve around prayer, praise, and worship. These portray the “ordinary” life of a child of God – living under His rule, enjoying the fellowship of His family, and gathering together to bless God and be blessed by Him. Only a few Psalms raise your perspective to offer a brief glimpse of our world from God's Eye.

You've probably experienced this a time or two – an incredible sunset revealing the artistic majesty of God's Creation. Maybe it was an experience – the birth of a child and seeing the miraculous creation of a new life, surrounded by joy-filled parents and family. Or a worship service that just “clicks” with you somehow – music, message, emotion, and the Word coming together to fill your heart and soul with God's Love and Grace.

This Psalm invites all **“who stand in the house of our God”** to join together to **“Praise the LORD, for the LORD is good”**. He has chosen us for Himself. This God that **“makes the clouds rise at the end of the earth”**, **“who makes lightnings for the rain”**, is our God.

He defeated all the enemies of His People in the past and gave us a place in which to live. On the other hand, the false gods around us are blind, deaf, and mute; and make their followers similarly senseless. But the LORD lives and will endure forever. From God's Eye's view, He has already created the universe, defeated death, the devil, and our sinful flesh through His Son, and even now is ruling over His Kingdom.

So come, **“O house of Israel, bless the LORD!” “You who fear the LORD (that's you and me), bless the LORD!”**

Prayer: Lord God, who dwells in Jerusalem and in my heart, bless me and all Your world. Praise be to You for bringing me into Your Kingdom through Jesus, Your Son. Amen.

Today's Devotion was written by Pastor Jeff Nelson

Monday, February 15, 2021

Read Psalm 136

His Steadfast Love Endures Forever

“Give thanks to the LORD, for He is good, for his steadfast love endures forever.”

26 times we are reminded of this. More often than once for every hour of the day, the Psalmist declares that “his steadfast love endures forever.”

It is written into Creation. His steadfast love extends to everything that He has made. **“He gives food to all flesh.”** He made the **“sun to rule over the day”** and **“the stars and moon to rule over the night.”** In every time and in every location, His love extends there also.

Across the eons of time, His love extends as well in order to bring salvation to His people. The Psalmist recounts God’s rescue and victories on behalf of Israel – the plagues culminating in the Passover, the crossing of the Red Sea, the defeats of various kings who attacked His people, and the giving of the land.

“It is he who remembered us in our low estate...and rescued us from our foes.” The same is true for us. His steadfast love endures forever as Christ, the expression of God’s love in human flesh came. He remembered us in our low estate, captive to sin, death, and the devil. By His coming, He has vanquished our foes. He remembers us now in our low estate – continually forgiving our sin as we continue to fall, strengthening us by His mercy, walking with us by His Spirit in every time and in every location.

Whatever situation you are currently enduring, know that the steadfast love of Christ extends there also **“for His steadfast love endures forever.”**

Prayer: Lord God, we give You thanks that Your love extends across all time and space through Your Son Jesus Christ. Comfort and strengthen me today by Your steadfast love. Amen.

Today’s Devotion was written by Pastor Jason

Tuesday, February 16, 2021

Read Psalm 137

His Steadfast Love Endures Forever

“How can we sing the Lord’s song in a strange land?” We have many songs that praise God that tell of His work in our lives; that tell how He has rescued us from sin, death, and the devil. Yes, we have that which is the Lord’s song. Sometimes, the song is sung with notes, sometimes with words, and sometimes with a cheerful heart.

But we are in “a strange land”. The world is infected with sin, with wrongness. The world keeps trying to make our songs a topic of derision and infantile jokes. This land is strange. Temptations keep coming: temptations to lust, temptations to selfish anger, temptations to fight back, to hurt those who toy with us. Yet...thus they did to our Lord. As He was tortured on the cross, onlookers were busy mocking Him, tempting Him to “show” them. If the world does that to HIM, we can be sure that it will do more to us, who are so much less than Him.

But we are not alone. We have Jesus with us. When we keep our eyes on Him, then the Lord’s song is easy. Yes, we are singing it in a strange land, but we are singing it with our Savior.

Sing then with a cheerful heart, let them mock or taunt, or steal, or ... We have a friend who is worth more than they, who is always with us, Jesus is our song, and Jesus is the subject of our words, our heart, our music!

Prayer: Lord God, thank you for giving me that song. Help me to sing it out, where ever I am. Be in my heart, and my mind. Be the rescue of my life, so that always only I notice You leaving the “strange land” to its own problems.

Today’s Devotion was written by Pastor Art Bolstad

Wednesday, February 17, 2021
Read Psalm 138

As Lent Begins...

Today is Ash Wednesday. It may seem crazy to think of, but today is the beginning of Lent. A time to turn back to God, to really take an introspective look, and maybe give something up, maybe add something, a devotional or a period of prayer or fasting, to help grow during this Lenten season. Continuing with the daily devotionals is one way to do that!

Today we are reading through psalm 138. This Psalm was written by David, and it is a psalm about the praise he gives to God. How God answered him when he called, and how God strengthened him.

This isn't simply just praise from David, but also declares how there will be praise from all the kings of the earth. They will sing of His ways. Because he regards the lowly. Even though He is the Almighty Lord, he doesn't disregard even the lowest of the low.

Verse 7 is a verse that should be read, reread, and taken to heart. "Though I walk in the midst of trouble, **You preserve my life;**" What a beautiful illustration of how God cares for each one of us.

And we know the Lord will fulfill His promises from verse 8, and that his love endures forever.

Especially during this Lenten season and today on Ash Wednesday, pay close attention to the very last line of this psalm.

"Do not forsake the work of your hands."

Yes, we may be sinful. Yes, we disobey our God. But we are still the work of His hands. He made us from dust, and to dust we shall return. But our God will not forsake us, because of His promises, because of what we look forward to at the end of Lent, the death and resurrection of Jesus.

God is with you. You are His handiwork. Prepare your hearts and mind for a journey through lent, turning back to God, and growing in Him.

Prayer—Dearest God, Father of all, thank you for your steadfast love, your promises that never fail, and being with me. Continue to watch over me, preserve my life, and keep Your hand of peace and comfort with me as we enter Lent. In Your Son's name. AMEN.

Today's Devotion was written by Seminarian Chris Deneen

Thursday, February 18, 2021
Read Psalm 139

All-Knowing, All-Present, All-Powerful

The Word of God teaches the LORD is omniscient (all-knowing), omnipresent (all-present), and omnipotent (all-powerful, almighty).

Wouldn't we like to know everything? Or how about; being everywhere in, beyond, and above time and space? This seems impossible and unattainable and certainly is for sinful humankind. One might wonder: "How can this be? What does this mean? Or what is this?"

David says of the LORD's omniscience (all-knowing); **"Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high; I cannot attain it . . . O LORD, you have searched me and known me!"** (v. 6, 1). The Apostle Paul agreed with David, **"Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and how inscrutable His ways!"** (Romans 11:33). David also writes of the LORD's omnipresence (all-present) and creative omnipotence (all-powerful), **"Where shall I go from Your Spirit? Or where shall I flee from Your presence? If I ascend to heaven, You are there! If I make my bed in Sheol, You are there! . . . I praise You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are Your works; my soul knows it very well . . . Your eyes saw my unformed substance; in Your book were written, every one of them, the days that were formed for me, when as yet there was none of them"** (v. 7, 8, 14, 16).

We read in *The Book of Concord*: "God sees and knows everything that is or will be, everything that happens or will happen, whether it is good or evil, because all things exist in the presence of God, whether they are past or future, and nothing is hidden from him" (*Solid Declaration, Article XI: Election*).

For the eternal and uncreated Holy Trinity, the LORD of all creation, **"all things are possible."** The dead are raised by His Word and power bringing faith and life in His name to sinners. God is Almighty, HE knows all things, and is everywhere! God's Word can bring great terror to a guilty conscience, and God's Word also brings great comfort and grace to a terrified conscience on account of Christ crucified for our sins and risen from the dead. And by the power of God: we are forgiven and justified by grace through faith for the sake of Christ Jesus, our Lord, our God, and our Savior. **"For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him be glory forever. Amen"** (Romans 11:36).

Prayer – Almighty and gracious LORD, You know and see all things, grant us faith to see Your love given for us in Jesus Christ always. For You have forgiven us all our sins for His name's sake. Amen.

Today's Devotion was written by Pre-seminary Student Nathan Tritch

Friday, February 19, 2021
Read Psalm 140

Deliver Me

Deliver me, O Lord, from evil men. I've always read that the world we live in is the least violent, least murderous world that humanity has ever had. This may well be true, but it is cold comfort in light of the news. Wars still rage, there is worldwide unrest, violent men gain power. If these are the best things have ever been, it is because the past was so very bad. In the face of such terrors in the world, we turn to the only One who can protect us.

Our Lord is a God of deliverance who delights in saving His people. Though the wicked plot against us, though even demons seek our harm, we know that God is stronger than they are. He is mighty to save. As often as we see the wicked and violent do harm and evil in the world, so often is it returned on their own heads. God will bring the violent to a violent end, but the righteous He upholds, the afflicted He maintains, and He gives justice to the needy.

God not only keeps the balance over sinners, but He has brought sin itself to an end. Even as Satan desires death for we who are God's people, God has desired death for death itself. By raising Jesus from the dead, God has assured defeat for all sin, death, and suffering. In Jesus, we have a foretaste of the world that will certainly come to pass: a world where the righteous give thanks to God without fear and the upright dwell in His presence forever. In the latter days, we will live a life where there are no violent men, where even violence itself is forgotten completely.

Prayer: Deliver us from evil, O Lord. Grant that we might see peace in our days, and be a refuge for those who cannot escape wickedness in this age. Give us eyes to see that the plans of evildoers will eventually be brought to nothing and hearts to accept the One who has brought an end to death itself. Help us to remember in the midst of a tumultuous world that You are in control, and ultimately none can resist You. We pray this all in the name of Jesus, our protector and our hope. Amen.

Today's Devotion was written by Seminarian Case Farney

Saturday, February 20, 2021
Read Psalm 141

The Good Old Days

When we look at the world around us and witness all the sin, injustice, and death that seems to be everywhere, we may wish we could be transported back to the “good old days”. No, not the 80s. Definitely not the 70s! Not even the 50s. I mean, back to when David was King over Israel. *Those good ol’ days.*

Remember, King David was a “man after the heart of God”. All of God’s Chosen People happily lived together in a united kingdom under God’s rule. God’s People had perfectly done God’s Will and had eradicated all pagan gods and their worshippers from the land and now everyone whole-heartedly worshipped only the one, true God. Those good old days! ...But if that were true, then why does David constantly pray for deliverance from his enemies? Why did he have to admit that yes, he was “that man that deserved death” for his own sins? In today’s Psalm, why does he pray, **“Do not let my heart incline to any evil, to busy myself with wicked deeds in company with men who work iniquity”**?

No, I don’t believe the “good old days” were really any better than today. The Children of Israel hadn’t followed God’s Will. They worshipped other gods. Their hearts were filled with dark, sinful thoughts and desires. They tempted one another! Really no better (or worse) than people today.

But, just like happens today, the Holy Spirit changed David’s heart. He repented of his sins and asked for God’s help in amending his ways – **“Set a guard, O Lord, over my mouth; keep watch over the door of my lips!”** David invited **“righteous men”** around him to rebuke him or to even strike him when he was tempted! And he kept his eyes on God, Who would one day send His Son to pay with His life for his sins, buying him back from death.

Throughout all times, God has always kept a faithful remnant. His People remain the “Salt of the World”, both to save the world from immediate judgement and to show Jesus – the “Light of the World” – to those in darkness around us.

Prayer: O Lord, because You baptized me, I call upon you; hasten to me! Keep me in Your care when tempted, when I’m weak, and when the world needs to see Your love in person. In Jesus’ Name, Amen.

Today’s Devotion was written by Pastor Jeff Nelson

Monday, February 22, 2021
Read Psalm 142

A Prayer

As we approach the end of the book of Psalms, I am drawn to the title of this one. First it is called a “Maskil of David.” To be honest with you, no one really knows what a “maskil” is. It might be a musical term, but we’re not sure. Of course, we know David – the One who trusted the Lord against Goliath, who penned many of the Psalms, who became King of Israel, fell into sin with Bathsheba, yet repented and was described as a “man after God’s own heart.”

This Maskil of David was written or remembers “when he was in the cave.” On the run from King Saul, David hid in a cave. Though a warrior who fought bravely in battle, he also wouldn’t kill the king whom God had anointed before him. So even when Saul sought to kill David, David would not kill Saul. This meant living in hiding for some time. You may not immediately relate to hiding out in a cave, but every Christian knows the spiritual struggle of being in the dark with an enemy (Satan) seeking to bring about our injury, our demise.

And so the final words of the title seem most striking. It is called “a prayer.” Many psalms are prayers, but uniquely this Psalm is titled as a prayer. It is a prayer we can borrow in our times “in the cave,” when under assault from the devil, the world and our sinful flesh. **“I cry to you, O Lord; I say, ‘You are my refuge, my portion in the land of the living.’ Attend to my cry, for I am brought very low! Deliver me from my persecutors, for they are too strong for me! Bring me out of my prison, that I may give thanks to your name!”**

This is a prayer to be on our lips everyday in this world. Satan is too strong for us. Our sinful nature and this broken world are too much for us, but not for our God. We give thanks to his name continually, for He has conquered every foe that would leave us in the darkness of sin and everlasting death. In your time in darkness, “in the cave,” return to the prayer of this Psalm knowing the Lord is your refuge.

Prayer – Lord Jesus, Light of the World, when the darkness of the devil, the world and my sinful nature engulf me, rescue me and strengthen me by Your word of promise. Amen.

Today’s Devotion was written by Pastor Jason

Tuesday, February 23, 2021
Read Psalm 143

Reality

Why do I let the World begin to overwhelm me? Why does life seem so dark? Surely my God is there for me always. Surely, His Salvation saves me and supports me; so why do I let my troubles overshadow His presence, concern, and faithfulness? Peter seeing Jesus walking on the water, immediately with faith and trust asked, and was invited to walk also. Yet as soon as he walked, he began to sink. Jesus didn't fail him, he looked at what was happening and refused to believe it, and then refused to trust Jesus, even looking right at Him. So, I too - I trust my LORD, I trust that He has saved me, will continue to save me - but I look at the world and allow it to overwhelm my thinking. When I take my eyes off of Jesus - then all I see is my troubles in this life and my lack of power to solve them. My focus fails me!

So often my body attacks me, myself. My chemistry loads my feelings, my body aches, hunger strikes, a fever brings me down! Would my body lie to me? Is it possible that my feelings don't represent the truth?! But of course, it is possible! Bodies are subject to ills and problems, they are designed to be uncomfortable then so that you will fix them - but that uncomfortableness is temporary, not a picture of the reality of life. Feelings are so imbalanced they never reflect a true picture of the situation.

Yes, reality comes with Jesus Christ All that hopelessness is a falsehood. I want to keep looking to Jesus, not to that which seems to surround me. There is a Joy that comes with Him, a Joy that points past today, that that keeps like on its central keel. Yes, Keep Your Eyes on Jesus!

Prayer: Lord, when I'm down, shine on my eyes so that I keep looking to You. Blind me to the so-called terrors of life. Thank you for Salvation - and for being with me through it all! Amen

Today's Devotion was written by Pastor Art Bolstad

Wednesday, February 24, 2021
Read Psalm 144

Our Refuge

Maybe it's the worship class that I am currently in, but this psalm, although not the specific one that it is based off of, but this psalm makes me think of "A Mighty Fortress is our God." The first two verses lend themselves to it! He is our fortress, our stronghold, our deliverer.

But then in just the next verse, we're reminded of our frailty, of our brevity. That man is like a breath to God, that our days are like a passing shadow, **yet in our Lord, we take refuge.**

The next several verses, 5-8, show this plea that David has to God! To rescue him! Do whatever it is O God but deliver me! Save me!! Save me from these evildoers who surround me. **In you O God I will take refuge!**

Verses 9-11 show this rescue. David singing a new song of the God who grants victory and saves. He saves David from those who had encircled him and had him in their grasp. **In God he took refuge.**

The final verses are David asking God that he grant them blessings, that they would be considered rich before the other nations, that they would be blessed beyond measure, **blessed by the God in whom they take refuge.**

While many may know the hymn, and we know we take our refuge in God, what does that actually mean? What does it mean for God to be our fortress and our strength? What it means is that we are in a war. A war against Satan, against his powers, against his temptations, against the evil one. And many times, we will fall, we will fail, we will give into his lies and deceit.

BUT WE WILL NOT LOSE THE WAR! No matter what happens, our fortress is stronger. Our fortress is bigger. Our fortress will not let us be defeated. God, our refuge, and strength will deliver us from the hands of evildoers around us. A mighty and ultimate fortress is our God, and in **HIM we take our refuge.**

Prayer—Almighty and Powerful God, while we look around and feel evildoers encroaching upon us, remind us that you are our refuge and strength. That you hold us in your hands, just as you held your servant David, and keep us safe, and bring us to that heavenly home with you when our time comes. In the name of Jesus your Son and our Savior. Amen.

Today's Devotion was written by Seminarian Chris Deneen

Thursday, February 25, 2021
Read Psalm 145

The LORD's Hand is Open For You

“They shall speak of the glory of Your kingdom and tell of Your power...My mouth will speak the praise of the LORD, and let all flesh bless His holy name forever and ever” (v. 11, 21)

David's psalm of praise to the LORD is one to be memorized, read, and, proclaimed over and over (as are all the other psalms), right? Yahweh's eternal Word in Christ for the forgiveness of sins should be received reverently and joyfully and examined closely throughout all ages.

Saint John Chrysostom wrote around the fourth/fifth century A.D. of this psalm recited at the Lord's Supper. The early medieval (Middle Ages) church proclaimed “these words, which are always said by those who are always under the word; [**The eyes of all things hope for You, and give them their food in good time**”] (v. 15). Today, we (The Lutheran church) often sing and recite before the Sacrament:

**Holy, holy, holy Lord God of power and might:
Heaven and earth are full of Your glory. Hosanna. Hosanna. Hosanna in the highest.
Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest.**
(LSB 161: see Isaiah 6:3; Matthew 21:9)

The LORD's mercy and grace, power and might, in Christ JESUS brought the deadness of our sinful hearts to life once and for all in His body and blood shed for our sins on the cross, and His rising from the dead on the third day for us. And Yahweh continues to feed us with His Word and Sacrament. JESUS is the Blessed One who comes in the name of the LORD to us. The LORD satisfies us not only with food on the earth; He has given us everlasting heavenly food on account of Christ given for you and me. The Kingdom of God is at hand for you now and forever in Christ's glorious crucifixion, resurrection, ascension, and promised return on the Last Day. God's power for salvation to everyone who believes!

One might also recognize verse fifteen as one of Luther's instructions at mealtime, as “*the head of the house is to teach members of the household . . . [The table blessing]*” in the *Small Catechism*:

“The children and the members of the household are to come devoutly to the table, fold their hands, and recite:

[‘The eyes of all wait upon You, O LORD, and You give their food at the proper time. You open Your hand and satisfy all living things with delight.’] . . . (v. 15, 16)

Then they are to recite the Lord's Prayer and the following prayer:

Prayer - ‘LORD God, heavenly Father, bless us and these your gifts, which we receive from your bountiful goodness through Jesus Christ our LORD. Amen.’”

Today's Devotion was written by Pre-seminary Student Nathan Tritch

Friday, February 26, 2021
Read Psalm 146

The LORD will Reign Forever

This Psalm looks like it could have been written today. Our nation and our world are torn apart by various political leaders stirring people up against one another. Households and families are divided based on their ideas of proper governance. Perhaps there is good reason for this: after all, the governments of the world have been appointed by God to uphold order, to bring about justice for the oppressed, to minister to the hungry. All of these things are good and righteous activities for us to be concerned about.

Where we go astray is when we believe that men can accomplish any of this on his own. If only our party had power, if only the other guys weren't ruining everything, if only everyone listened to me, then things would be good and justice and equity would prevail in the land. But God does not share our viewpoint. This psalm reminds us that no matter who holds any earthly office, all power still resides with the God who is enthroned forever on high. He is the one who **watches over the sojourners, who upholds the widow and the fatherless, who brings the way of the wicked to ruin.**

Every success of any government is solely the work of our God. It is He who **will reign forever.** With such a great God on our side, we are fools to trust in princes who cannot fulfill their earthly duties of proper governance and help of the helpless much less bring us salvation. Instead we ought to trust in the Prince of Peace, Jesus our true King of kings. When politicians die, **they return to the earth; on that very day their plans perish.** When Jesus died, the earth could not hold Him; on that very day His plan was accomplished. By His victory over death, Jesus will one day also overthrow every tyrant of poverty and injustice and rule with righteousness. Knowing that He will reign forever, we should dwell on whom we vote for far less than Whom we pray to.

Prayer: King of kings, help us to Your reign in all things. Give wisdom to all our leaders to do Your will and work of establishing justice and peace, and help them in their task, for without You they can do nothing. Teach us to keep our focus not on earthly rulers but on You, Who will reign forever. Come quickly, Lord Jesus. Amen.

Today's Devotion was written by Seminarian Case Farney

Saturday, February 27, 2021
Read Psalm 147

“Praise the Lord! (but fearfully)”

(Shhh. Don’t tell Pastor – these last five Psalms are filled with “**Praise the Lord!**” or, as said in earlier times, “Hallelujah!” For the next few days this can just be our secret, Lenten, guilty pleasure.)

This Psalm goes everywhere – from a weather forecast of last week’s snowstorm (“**He hurls down His crystals of ice like crumbs; who can stand before His cold?**”), to the subsequent “heat wave” (“**He makes his wind blow and the waters flow**”), to a description of the *real* “International Star Registry” (“**He determines the number of the stars; He gives to all of them their names**”).

The reason for this verbal cornucopia of God’s marvelous deeds is that the Jewish exiles have returned from Babylon! They’re no longer slaves in a foreign land, seemingly abandoned by their God. No! By *His* grace they’ve rebuilt a new Jerusalem, have restored the Temple, and are now overflowing with joy to be able to sing the glories of the Lord!

Their thanks and praise are directed solely toward the Provider of this Promised Land: “**The Lord builds up Jerusalem; he gathers the outcasts of Israel. He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds.**” They loudly proclaim that God blesses their unborn children, strengthens their city’s gates, creates peace in the land, and fills them with the best food.

In the spirit of Lent, though, we should ponder this thought: while He is *not* impressed with either the strongest horse or the fastest runner, “**the Lord takes pleasure in those who fear Him, in those who hope in His steadfast love.**” This fear doesn’t mean to be afraid of God (although the power He’s demonstrated by all the described actions *should* make His *enemies* afraid). Those who fear God are the people in this Psalm who sing His praises. They’re those who worship Him and pray to Him today. And they’re those who reflect on their sinful condition to better cherish the gift of forgiveness they’ve received from Jesus.

Prayer: Almighty Heavenly Father, Praise to You! Thank You for Your gift of a new life in Your Kingdom, through Jesus’ precious blood and death. Amen.

Today’s Devotion was written by Pastor Jeff Nelson

Monday, March 1, 2021
Read Psalm 148

A Psalm for Spring

For those who are very concerned about precision, Spring begins Saturday, March 20th at 4:37am. In my mind, when the calendar turns to March, we have reached the beginning of Spring. The same thought has occurred to the birds. You've probably heard them in abundance over the last few mornings since we left the February deep freeze of 10 days ago. Our hyacinths also have decided that Spring has arrived as they have begun to pop up through the mulch, and some are too tall to cover them back over any longer.

As I read Psalm 148, it seems the perfect words to describe the world outside of your door. Mountains and hills and trees and birds and animals all give praise to the Lord. As the world springs to life out of its winter slumber every corner and inhabitant of creation gives praise to God in their being.

This rhythm of creation echoes the Church Year. As the light grows day by day during the advance of Spring, creation springs forth in new life. In these same days, the church walks through the sorrowful season of Lent in repentance, yet in confident expectation of the resurrection of Christ, and the new life He brings to us.

As the grass begins to green, flowers spring up, and leaves reappear, let the sights and sounds of the creation all around encourage you in the truth that in Christ the God of all Creation has gone through the slumber and darkness of death, and yet sprung to life to bring renewal and recreation.

Prayer – **Let (all) praise the name of the Lord for his name alone is exalted; his majesty is above earth and heaven.** Amen.

Today's Devotion was written by Pastor Jason

Tuesday, March 2, 2021
Read Psalm 149

The Privilege of Praise

Praise the Lord! What a privilege we have. God does not accept the compliments of evil, remember how Jesus always shut up the demons when they would speak about Him? But we are asked to praise the Lord! He has accepted us, given us faith, made us righteous, and now gives us the privilege of praising Him.

Praise is words of appreciation expressed to others and to Him Himself. Words that tell of His actions; words that tell of our joy in the fact of those actions; words that show our attitudes. Praise words co-exist with actions reinforcing the words - music expressed in song and instruments, music that is joyful. Music expresses mood, but music can also create mood, so praise music both expresses our joy and generates/improves our joyful attitudes.

Praise expresses itself in actions, actions besides voice. Dance, expressive movement, comes compelled by an inner attitude. Sometimes totally spontaneous jumps and leaps (think of the lamb man healed by Peter's words in Acts 3), sometimes there are formal movements expressing an overwhelming attitude. Praise the Lord, let all your abilities praise the Lord.

Praise is expressed in quiet sharing, where one person explains to another the joy they have in an experience, teaching how to share that joy. Here the promise that God wants us to praise Him, also implies that He is present in that sharing. He provides the impact, the appreciation by the listener of what is heard. Yes, Praise the Lord - in all ways, in all times, in all places. Yes! Praise the Lord.

Prayer: Lord Jesus, I thank you for your salvation, for your presence in my life. I thank you that it was given in spite of my unworthiness. Thank you, Thank you. You are wonderful and precious to me! Amen.

Today's Devotion was written by Pastor Art Bolstad

Wednesday, March 3, 2021
Read Psalm 150

A Joyful Ending

We've done it! We made it to Psalm 150. We are at the last psalm. And Psalm 150 is one of my favorites. Why? It is such a joyous psalm!

13 times. In just 6 verses, we hear the word praise 13 times. This is a wondrous reminder that no matter what is going on in our lives, we should praise the Lord!

Praise God where He is. Praise God for what He has done. Praise Him with instruments, with loud noises. Let everything with breath praise the Lord!

It isn't always easy to do, is it? It's easy in life to get down in the dumps, it's easy to get in a rut, and it's easy to get discouraged in this life. When we look around our lives, when we look around the world, it doesn't always seem like something we are joyful about. More often than not, it almost seems like we are stuck in lament psalms about our world, worrying and asking God how He could let certain things happen.

Yet we Praise the LORD!! It doesn't always seem right, does it? But yet, we know that God is in control of all things. God has your life, my life, all of our lives in His hands. We may not always understand why certain things happen, **but God's plan and will always shine through.** That is worth rejoicing in. That is worth praising the Lord.

This Lord who sent His Son. This Lord saved you and me from sin, death, and the devil. This Lord who had YOUR name written in His book of life for eternity through what Christ did for you. So, while things around us may not always seem joyful and praiseworthy, **look to the Lord, look to Christ, and praise the Lord!** Because He is worthy of our thanks and praise. So today, take an extra sip of coffee, take a deep breath, look at what Christ has done for you, and **PRAISE THE LORD!!**

Prayer—Almighty God, Thank You. Thank You for being who You are. While this world may seem troubling and challenging at times, remind us that You are in control. We give You all of our thanks and adoration and ask that You would be with us. In the name of Your blessed son Jesus. PRAISE BE TO YOU!! AMEN.

Today's Devotion was written by Seminarian Chris Deneen