

The Little Church on the Prairie Lakewood Grace



*Lenten Devotional
Booklet
2021*

A Look Back To See Forward

Monday, March 22, 2021

MERCY: FAITHFULNESS TO GOD'S WILL

READ: Matthew 9:9-13; Hosea 6:6

OPENING PRAYER: Lord, I ask that you fully open my eyes to see others with God's mercy in my heart, mind, and actions. Amen.

MEDITATION: When Jesus "saw" Matthew, he knew the entirety of Matthew's past, present, and future being. He knew Matthew was a particularly accursed sinner as a loathed tax collector, despised by his own kinsmen in a profession characterized by greed, graft, and abuse.

Yet, he loved Matthew, asking him to "Follow me," and supped with him in a house filled with other sinners. The Pharisees, constrained by their rigid adherence to their doctrinal law, asked the disciples why their teacher would do this. While acknowledging Jesus as a teacher, they strove to divide the community by going to the disciples with their questions rather than directly to Jesus.

However, by example, Jesus was the teacher of mercy, showing mercy to sinners by going to where they were, by welcoming them into fellowship with himself, and by showing them God's love. Faithfulness to God's will is based on right conduct toward our fellowman: the act of mercy. No sacrificial offering apart from God's will is acceptable. How easy it is to hide behind a mask of indifference, bias, and ignorance when looking at others. I need to learn to see through Jesus' lens of mercy, and actively teach others by my example.

CLOSING PRAYER: Jesus, thank you for your mercy in loving us no matter how unworthy we may be. Thank you for asking us to join you, for teaching us by example, and for giving us the courage to lead others to you. May we go to them, show mercy to them where they are, and welcome them into God's company. Amen.

Sandi Rose

Tuesday, March 23, 2021

GOODNESS WINS

READ: Romans 12:17-21; Deuteronomy 32:35, Proverbs 25:21-22

OPENING PRAYER: Lord, open our hearts to hear and our lives to speak of your ways. Amen.

MEDITATION: We are called to a different standard of living. These verses call for a response to an enemy who doesn't come naturally. We may ask, who is our enemy? Perhaps our "enemy" is the party with whom we don't agree, someone disrespectful, mean-spirited, offensive, condescending, or dishonest. In this current political climate, there is so much that can upset us on both sides. How will we respond? Will we be kind and forgiving or pay one insulting comment with another?

Whether it's a family member, friend, politician, or neighbor who operates in a hurtful way, we have the choice to do likewise or to respond in a way that is Christlike. To follow Christ isn't the easy way, but one which requires us to call on the Holy Spirit to transform us into forgiving, kind people who allow us to live as people of peace.

Many friendships and marriages could be saved if we followed this recipe.

CLOSING PRAYER: Lord, this is a very challenging message for us. Yes, it's easy to be kind and at peace with one who is good, but to act in love toward the one who is unkind, that is difficult. Help us to put ourselves aside and allow the Holy Spirit to live this out in us. Amen.

Alyce Olsen

Wednesday, March 24, 2021

GIFTS FROM GOD

READ: Acts 15:7-21; Amos 9:11-12.

OPENING PRAYER: Thanks be to God and to those in centuries past, with help from Apostles, Christians, Jesus, gentiles, and all others who have worked so diligently to define and clarify laws required to make one worthy of becoming a member of God's family. Amen.

MEDITATION: As early as 760 BC (circa) through the mouth of the prophet Amos, God expressed his desire to receive gentiles into his family and church independently of Mosaic laws and observances. God gave this gift to gentiles by giving them the same Holy Spirit and purifying their hearts with faith the same as with Jews.

Disputes, discussions, and debates continued through the centuries but were never resolved. After the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, differences between Christianity and Mosaic laws appeared to become even stronger.

In approximately 63 AD, a group of men called the Council of Jerusalem, Jews and gentiles, gathered to discuss laws and other customs required for us to be saved. It was at this meeting that Peter pointed out that Jews were not justified and saved by laws, but like gentiles, were saved by the love of the Redeemer, who had been crucified and shared his blood on the cross for the sins of all people. Justification by faith and sanctification by the Holy Spirit cannot be separated. Both are gifts of God.

CLOSING PRAYER: Lord, never let me lose sight of your love for me. Keep my heart pure. Amen.

Shelly Shellabarger

Thursday, March 25, 2021

CHRIST'S BLOOD TAKES AWAY ALL OF OUR SIN

READ: Hebrews 9:6-14; Leviticus 16:3-14

OPENING PRAYER: Heavenly Father, we thank you for your Son's sacrifice for the world. Amen.

MEDITATION: Throughout the Old Testament we see the attempts of the priests to atone for their sins and for those of the Hebrew people. The rituals that were performed by the priests for the various sins were specific and precise. Only the priests and the high priest could absolve the people of their sins. The ritual sacrifice of the blood and body of the animals which were given for the absolution of the sins of the people had to be repeated over and over.

When Christ died on the cross we were cleansed of our sins once and for all. His blood shed for us was the perfect sacrifice. There is no longer a need for ritual cleansing as there is no need for a priest to offer sacrifices for our sins. Christ is our high priest. He intercedes for us and represents us to our Father in heaven. We have access to God because of the sacrificial work of Jesus, the Christ.

CLOSING PRAYER: During this time of Lent, we thank you, heavenly Father, for your Son's sacrifice for us. Because of Christ, your Son, our sins are forgiven. We confess our sins before you and know that we may approach your heavenly throne with confidence and the knowledge that we are your sons and daughters. Amen.

Sandy Noreen

Friday, March 26, 2021

THAT WAS THEN, THIS IS NOW

READ: John 12:12-16; Psalm 118:25-26, Zechariah 9:9

OPENING PRAYER: Dear heavenly Father, please give us the strength and faith to deal with the challenges facing our world in these difficult times. Be with those who are suffering and comfort those who grieve. We praise and thank you. Amen.

MEDITATION: As a child growing up in Tacoma, my only understanding of the story of Jesus' last week was the excitement of waving palm branches on Palm Sunday. In my mind, it was much like our annual Daffodil Parade. As I have aged, however, I now have a greater understanding of Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem. It started as a day of joy and adulation, but was soon followed by betrayal, arrest, trial, and Jesus' crucifixion.

That was then, this is now. As we read the story of Jesus' entry into Jerusalem generations later, the Bible gives us the **WHOLE** story. In the time of Jesus, his followers did not have the whole story. Instead, the Jewish leaders and priests were jealous and suspicious, and rejected Jesus. His disciples did not understand the prophecies of the Old Testament. And the people were hoping for a leader who would restore their nation to its former glory. When they saw he was not going to fulfill these expectations, many of the people turned against him.

Because we do have the Bible, we must read it carefully to better understand its history and story. This will guide us on our faith journey.

CLOSING THOUGHT: "And these things are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life, in his name" (John: 20:31). We are blessed!

Joan Jackson

Saturday, March 27, 2021

ACCEPTANCE

READ: Romans 15:7-13; 2 Samuel 22:50, Psalm 18:49, Deuteronomy 32:43

OPENING PRAYER: Lord, during this Lenten season I pray for guidance, that you would help me to become the disciple you want me to be. Help me to learn the ways of acceptance that you model for me daily, and to embrace the people around me who are different, yet the same as I am: a beloved child of God. Amen.

MEDITATION: I find this passage from Romans completely relevant to what is happening in our nation and all over the world at this time, nearly two-thousand years after Paul wrote these words to the Christians in Rome. We live in a culture where we find fault and tear each other down, rather than building each other up and valuing our differences. We struggle with accepting our neighbors, friends, even family members, who are different from us. We allow our differences, political, racial, social, and economic, as well as differences in sexual orientation and life style to come between us. We pass judgment without stopping to ask ourselves, "How would Jesus want me to treat this individual who is so different from me?"

Paul's words from Romans 15 are what I refer to as "mandates" to live by. Jesus, the man who ate with tax collectors and healed all who came to him regardless of their "differences", must be our example to live by. When we come to the point where we can love those who are different, treat them with kindness and respect, and build them up rather than judge them, then we will become a better nation. Paul sets a high standard, and we are called to strive to meet that standard, to be better examples of Christ's love for all.

CLOSING PRAYER: Lord Jesus, help me to follow your command to love and accept those around me. Help me to be a better example of your love for your people. Help me to see them through your eyes, and to remember that you love and accept them, even as you do me. Amen.

Mary Church

Palm Sunday, March 28, 2021

PRAY IT FORWARD

READ: Hebrews 13:1-8; Deuteronomy 31:6, Psalm 118:6-7

OPENING PRAYER: Heavenly Father, thank you for all you have given us. We dwell in the peace of the security of your presence and freedom from fear. Amen.

MEDITATION: “Never will I leave you; Never will I forsake you”
“the Lord is my helper; I will not be afraid.”

Take these words into your heart and silently share them with someone:

A five second prayer at the red light for the people in front of you.
For the clerk in the grocery store.
For a child in the park.

When you're waiting in the dentist's office, there is a receptionist who needs your prayer: “The Lord is my helper; I will not be afraid.”

When you are making a sandwich for lunch, share your heart and these words toward the farmers who grew the wheat. You don't have to know them, for they are, as you are, the children of God. Pray it forward.

CLOSING PRAYER: Heavenly Father, please help us to share your comfort of warmth and peace. Thank you for giving us the opportunity every day to be a light. Amen.

Luci Wickliffe

THE CHARGE TO EACH OTHER

Go out into the world in peace;

have courage;

hold on to what is good;

return no one evil for evil;

strengthen the fainthearted;

support the weak, and help the suffering;

honor all people;

***love and serve the Lord,
rejoicing in the power of the Holy Spirit.***

From the Book of Common Worship