

Saturday Cont.

Prayer

Dear God, Help me focus on being peaceful, caring and helpful. When I turn toward dazzling lights and noisy crowds, remind me that true glory comes in following the teachings of Jesus. Guide me through the day, so I may be your light and share mercy with others who struggle.

Action

Volunteer for an agency that helps others, such as a homeless shelter, a food pantry or a family services organization. Learn about the mission of the agency. Is there a way you can use your gifts and talents to support that agency?



GOBIN CHURCH
A United Methodist Community for All

Monday, June 15, 2020

1 Thessalonians 3:1-5

Taking a step back after finishing a project can give a wide-angle view of satisfaction and feeling a sense of accomplishment. Maybe you've planted a garden? Perhaps you finished power-washing and staining a porch? Maybe you washed a week's worth of laundry and now it's all folded and put away. Whatever the task, a goal has been reached and it's time for a rest. Soon, however, the garden will need weeding, the porch will need sweeping and the laundry will return to the hamper. Ongoing maintenance, my dad once said with a growl as he worked on a car, is the reward of purchase. Ongoing maintenance is important for other areas of our lives, not only for our possessions. Spiritual care of new Christians is the focus of Paul as he writes to the new Christian community at Thessalonica. Paul and his missionary co-workers had shared the Good News and converted many new followers of Jesus. But soon after, trouble arose causing Paul and the missionaries had to leave the new Christians. He worried about them, and he sent Timothy back to Thessalonica to strengthen their faith. Timothy found the community still strong in Christ and eager to learn more. Praise Be! In these past weeks, many Christian communities might have also felt a bit adrift as social distancing temporarily suspended in-person gatherings. While it's been convenient to "attend church" in our pajamas, being the church has always been about more than Sunday morning.

Like Paul, Timothy and the other missionaries knew, staying in touch and supporting one another is a vital part of our Christian journey. Our greatest motivation to care for others comes from the caring example of Jesus. He not only taught the Good News, he stayed connected as he traveled, healed and prayed for others. In these isolating times, let's continue to reach out to others to share our faith journey and provide spiritual care.

Prayer:

Dear God, I confess to slipping into some bad habits as these weeks of social distancing have disrupted the rhythm and flow of daily life. I've slept too much, eaten too much, watched too much television, and felt bored. Help me to get back on track where I've been sloppy. Keep me focused more on helping others who might be in the same situation. Let me feel your smile when you are pleased. Amen.

Action:

Contact a fellow Christian to share some Scripture verses. Talk about spiritual connection. Share areas of your lives needing prayer, and pray for one another.

Tuesday, June 16, 2020***2 Thessalonians 2:13 to 3:5***

The two-lane highway had become a parking lot as traffic waited for road construction ahead to move aside enough to allow vehicles through the work zone. My friend called me from her van, and I could hear the chatter of children in the background. She could see what was going on ahead as the road crew moved steel beams for the bridge. The kids with her were hungry, and they could see a restaurant sign ahead, which seemed to aggravate the growling tummies around her.

The young voices chattered. “How long are we going to be here?” “Why is it taking so long?” “Are we even still in Indiana?”

So many questions. The kind of questions that were circulating through the church at Thessalonica. Those folks were restless, too. Somewhere they got the idea that Jesus was returning tomorrow, so they got ready. Some sold their homes. Some quit their jobs. They were busy with waiting. Paul learns of this and writes them words of caution and encouragement. He urges them not to buy into the reports that the final days have already begun. He calls for patience while they stay alert and prayerful.

It is no easy task to be patient and stay alert at the same time. We can be so patient that we aren't alert, or so alert we aren't patient. The church may become a hybrid of the restless and the resting. Just like the inside of a van full of children stopped on a highway.

“Settle down,” I heard my friend say.

“We'll get moving soon.”

“Try to get along.”

Some of the same messages Paul was writing to the church at Thessalonica.

He remained prayerful. And he was thankful for the brothers and sisters who are loved by God. May the Lord lead all of our hearts to express God's love and Christ's endurance during times of waiting.

Prayer

Dear God, Sorting out fact from fiction these days can be a challenge. We want the world to be well, and we know there is much healing still to do. I am thankful to be among my brothers and sisters in Christ as your representative in a hurting world. I rest my trust and faith in you, eager to

continue the work of Jesus to spread love and hope as a healing balm. Amen.

Action

How would you feel if someone sent you a message thanking God for you, boasting of you, and telling you they were praying for you? We can all use this kind of encouragement. Write a letter of encouragement to someone this week.

Wednesday, June 17, 2020***Proverbs 4:10-27***

Learning wisdom is a journey full of twists and turns, obstacles and open doors, and good and bad choices. We learn from our experiences, and we often want to share what we learn with others so they don't make bad choices, too. In today's Scripture, God is sharing wisdom to teach his children how to act. On our Christian journey, walking wisely can keep us out of trouble, and lead us to help others.

Max Lucado defines wisdom as the God-given ability to see life with rare objectivity and to handle life with rare stability. Whether we dip into an unexpected valley, or we soar to the pinnacle of prosperity, we can cope with both extremes when we employ the wisdom of objectivity and stability. I read a story recently about two rabbits who loved carrots. Both rabbits would examine the same carrots in the ground, but the wiser rabbit was always able to pull up the plumpest, tastiest carrots while the foolish rabbit unfortunately chose the smaller, less appealing carrots. One day the wiser rabbit again chose the better carrot, but turned and gave it to the foolish rabbit. “What good is good fortune if it cannot be shared with friends,” the wise rabbit asked.

The rabbit story illustrates that in our search for wisdom, we must also search for a way to help those around us with what we've learned.

The ancient Greek philosopher Epicurus said, “Of all the things which wisdom provides to make life entirely happy, much the greatest is the possession of friendship.”

God shared wisdom with us not only so we can live live well, but so we can help make the world a better place for others.

Prayer

Dear God, Your wisdom has been tested through the generations and helps us avoid evil. It also directs us to help our friends, and to share with others the love and hope of Jesus. Today, may I wisely help others so they will know your love. Amen.

Apply

Read through the Book of Proverbs and find some verses that apply to your current situation. Write down the verses on note cards and place the cards where you will see them often in the coming week. Read the verses daily, and think about what the message means for you.

Thursday, June 18, 2020

Hebrews 2:5-9

Jesus became human. Even though his authority surpassed any prophet or angel, he became human. Because of that, we know he understands our human frustrations. People who have been through tough times can better understand those times and help others navigate that part of their journey. Support groups for those with grief, addictions and mental health issues are usually led by someone who has already experienced the issues and learned to “live through” the difficulties.

Our sufferings may be hard to bear, but we can learn lessons which equip and enable us to help others. We can fulfill a ministry of comfort, as Jesus did. His experiences of pain and shame assure us that our path of discipleship, though filled with experiences of loss and suffering, will also lead us to recovery and glory.

Prayer

Dear God, Thank you for the experiences of this life, even the stresses and sorrows. In the depths of heart-ache, your love is a strengthening and stabilizing force to which I cling. Thank you for the example of your son Jesus, for his suffering, death and resurrection. Thank you for staying with me, God, on the journey ahead. Amen.

Action

Have a little talk with Jesus. He knows all about life on earth. Tell him what will be your biggest temptations and struggles today. Ask him to provide you with strength and encouragement.

Friday, June 19, 2020

Acts 5:17-26

Standing up for beliefs and values takes strength of character and determination. Nationwide in the past few weeks, thousands of people have stood up for equality and justice to end acts of police brutality and racism. The protesters have endured criticism and harsh backlash. Many people who have not personally experienced racism or prejudice don't understand why the issue is important. There is pressure to back off. There is pressure to move ahead.

The early apostles felt the same type of pressures during the early days of the church. The long-established leaders felt no problem with continuing traditions that enriched themselves and left others behind. Those leaders were jealous of the new Christian leaders rising in the community, and they took swift action to stop their preaching by locking them in prison.

Many people these days are comparing the current protests to those of the 1960s when civil rights leaders marched for justice and equality under the law. Peaceful acts of protest have long been part of the Christian narrative. Our Scripture reading for today shows that peaceful and radical action in support of justice and equality are not new, and God sends his help. Look for the angels among us who encourage, support and unlock the prison doors that would silence change.

Prayer

Dear God, Grant safety to everyone. To protesters. To the police. To the accused. To the guilty. To the innocent. To the watchers. Everyone, dear God, is worthy of safety. May the words of my mouth, and the meditations of my heart, promote safety and peace to everyone who hears the sound of my voice. Amen.

Action

Contact legislators – local, state and federal – and let them know you are opposed to laws that profile and work against justice for everyone. Join a peaceful demonstration that brings attention to social justice issues.

Saturday, June 20, 2020

Luke 11:53 to 12:3

Some people follow sports teams. Some follow bands or entertainers. The goal of some "influencers" is to gain as many followers as possible in order to profit, and their message changes to stay relevant in popular culture. Popularity was never the goal of Jesus. Today's Scripture says his message attracted so much attention the growing crowd was trampling one another as they tried to hear him. Some might think that situation was a good problem to have. The masses were interested in his message. But the challenge at this point in his ministry is nonchalant acceptance of his message. Jesus is not interested in people who merely hang around as part of the crowd without ever changing. Jesus warns his friends that the greatest threats to character are not physical hardships, but spiritual complacency. Making a trivial commitment does not allow the spirit to grow.

Think about the relationships in your life. How do you try to keep those relationships strong and healthy?