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**August 2, 2021**  
**Defining Salvation**

Readings for today: [Psalms 53-58](#), [Acts 27:27-28:10](#)

What is salvation? Is it just fire insurance? A “Get out of Hell” free card? Getting our ticket punched to heaven? Is it raising a hand in a worship service? Is it walking the sawdust trail to pray the sinner’s prayer? Is it being baptized? What does it mean to be saved? What are we saved from? What are we saved for?

The Bible defines salvation as a wholistic, transformative experience whereby we are delivered from death and delivered to new life. We are delivered from slavery and we are delivered into a life of freedom. We are delivered from the kingdom of darkness and delivered into a kingdom of light. It’s literally a new birth. We are literally given a new heart. Our feet are literally set on a new path. Listen to how the Psalmist describes it from our reading today...“For you have delivered my soul from death, yes, my feet from falling, that I may walk before God in the light of life.” (Psalm 56:13)

Salvation, according to Scripture, is far more than simply securing our eternal destiny. It is far more than raising our hand or praying a prayer. It is far more than any sacramental act we participate in. It is nothing short of God miraculously interceding in human history to claim yet another soul for His very own. It is nothing short of God graciously choosing to adopt a new son or daughter into His family. It is nothing short of God expanding His Kingdom, one subject at a time. There is no such thing as being “called” without become His child. There is no such thing as being “delivered” without becoming His disciple. There is no such thing as being “saved” without becoming His subject. Jesus is either BOTH Lord and Savior or He is neither of those things.

Sadly, too many people believe they can experience deliverance without obedience. They naively believe they can be saved from bondage into some kind of neutral territory where they don’t have to be subject to God or the devil. They believe God will set them free but make no further claim on their lives. They want all the privileges that come with being a child of the King without any of the responsibilities. It’s why so many self-identified Christians live lives that look no different from their unbelieving neighbors. And it’s why the unbelieving world finds the Christian faith unbelievable.

The Psalmist teaches us a different way. Yes, God delivers our souls from death. Just as He did for Adam and Eve. Just as He did for Noah and his family. Just as He did for Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Just as He did for Israel in Egypt. God is a God of deliverance. God is a God of salvation. God specializes in setting His people free from bondage to sin and death. But that’s only half the salvation equation. God not only delivers us from death and keeps our feet from falling, He does these things so we might walk in newness of life. He saves us so that we might walk before Him in the light of new life. Not only that but God saves us so our lives might become a credible testimony to the transforming power of the gospel to those around us. God’s great desire is that all should be saved. All should be delivered from death. All should have their feet kept from falling. All should walk before Him in newness of life. You and I are therefore called to live out our faith in very public ways so that those around us who do not yet believe might see and experience the difference salvation makes in a person’s life.

Friends, God desires a relationship with us. A deep, intimate walk with us. Just like He had with Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. Just as He will one day again have when New Jerusalem descends to

earth. One of the many reasons why the gospel is “good news” is we don’t have to wait! We can begin this walk with God today. All we have to do is open the door of our hearts and let Him in.

Readings for tomorrow: Psalms 59-61, Acts 28:11-31

August 3, 2021

**Poured Out**

Readings for today: [Psalms 59-61, Acts 28:11-31](#)

The Apostle Paul is one of my heroes. From the time he met the Risen Christ outside of Damascus until his death in Rome many years later, he never stopped preaching Christ. Never stopped proclaiming the gospel. It didn't matter whether people agreed with him or not. Stones did not stop him. Riots didn't stop him. Death threats didn't stop him. Opponents from within the church didn't stop him. Imprisonment didn't stop him. Poverty, shipwreck, pain, suffering...none of it got in his way. He simply took each and every opportunity in each and every city he went to share Jesus with those who did not yet know him. Even at the end of his life here in Acts 28, we see him using his imprisonment and impending martyrdom to teach people about the Kingdom of God.

“He lived there two whole years at his own expense, and welcomed all who came to him, proclaiming the kingdom of God and teaching about the Lord Jesus Christ with all boldness and without hindrance.” (Acts 28:30-31)

It's a powerful testimony to the strength and resilience of Paul's faith. He never seemed to waver. Never seemed to doubt. Never seemed to question. Once he met the Risen Christ, it was like something clicked in Paul's Pharisee brain. The hope of Israel had come. By raising Jesus from the dead, God had placed His divine stamp of approval on His life and ministry and mission. The vindication that Paul himself expected to receive at the end of time through resurrection had broken into history in the Person of Jesus. It was mind-blowing and life-altering and Paul never looked back. He devoted the rest of his life to sharing this good news with the world. Jew and Gentile alike. Any who would come and listen.

Perhaps you wonder about Paul's state of mind here at the end of his life? Perhaps you wonder as death approached if he ever caved into fear or anxiety? Perhaps you wonder how he faced his death with such courage? Listen to the words he wrote to his young protege, Timothy, while he was imprisoned in Rome. “For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure has come. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award to me on that day, and not only to me but also to all who have loved his appearing.” (2 Timothy 4:6-8)

What was the source of Paul's “boldness” at the end of his life? It was Christ. Paul kept his eyes firmly fixed on Jesus. He looked beyond the horizons of this life to the life to come where he knew his reward awaited him. He understood that those who give their lives in service to Christ - whether preachers or teachers, worship leaders or artists, business owners or line employees, CEO's or sanitation workers, professional athletes or politicians - all will receive the crown of righteousness for the work they do in spreading the gospel. All will receive the reward they are due for the sacrifices they make to expand God's Kingdom.

Friends, we can pour our lives out for many things in this world. We can chase our dreams. We can achieve our goals. We can pursue all sorts of influence, power, success, and wealth. But at the end of the day, the only thing truly worth giving your life for is Jesus. The only vision truly worth pursuing is the vision He casts of His Kingdom. The only race worth running is the one that finds its finish line in heaven.

Readings for tomorrow: Psalms 62-64, Romans 1

August 4, 2021  
The Power of the Gospel

Readings for today: [Psalms 62-64](#), [Romans 1](#)

You may have seen the news out of Europe about the Dutch man who tried to change his legal age. Biologically, he is in his sixties but he “feels” like he’s in his forties and his life is diminished because of the discrimination that happens the older one gets. You may have caught the news out of England about the man who believes passionately in “ethical veganism” and wants it to become legally protected as a religion so he can potentially force his former employer to give him his job back as well as change their investment practices so as not to violate his religious beliefs. You may have seen the opinion piece in the New York Times from the transgender woman who argues the medical ethical guideline of “Do no harm” no longer should apply because no doctor should ever have the authority to determine what actually “harms” another person. “I also believe that surgery’s only prerequisite should be a simple demonstration of want. Beyond this, no amount of pain, anticipated or continuing, justifies its withholding.” (Andrea Long Chu, NYT, 11/24/2018) These may seem like isolated cases to you. Outliers we should dismiss. I disagree.

I believe they are the prime examples of God giving us over to the “lusts of our hearts...dishonorable passions...debased minds.” Now please hear me. I am not being mean. I am not being judgmental. I am simply pointing out the reality of what happens when we turn away from God. We dis-integrate. Body, mind, heart, and soul are set in opposition to one another, resulting in skyrocketing rates of depression and suicide ideation. Dysphoria, once considered a mental illness, is now being celebrated and embraced. The Apostle Paul knew the tragic consequences of such thinking. It was celebrated in his own context as well. Human beings, created and designed to bring God glory and honor, turned from their sacred vocation and pursued their own pleasure. They did what was right in their own eyes. They forged their own path only to find it leading them over a cliff. The most heartbreaking part of reading the New York Times story mentioned above was Andrea’s willingness, even desire, to embrace depression and suicide. She admits taking hormones and having surgery will actually take her deeper into depression but she sees no alternative. She has no hope.

This is why Paul’s stirring words in Romans 1:16 are so important! “For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.” Make no mistake, Paul doesn’t believe the gospel is simply a good idea. One philosophy among many. One path among many to get to God. No, he truly believes the gospel provides the ONLY answer to the problem of pain and suffering of this world. He truly believes the gospel provides the ONLY hope we can possibly have for a better, richer, more integrated life. He truly believes the gospel ALONE has the power to save humanity from itself.

Now I know this idea is very unpopular in our culture today. To suggest Christianity is somehow superior in any way to any other religious or philosophical idea is considered arrogant and condescending. Exclusive and intolerant. But let me put it another way. Imagine you develop a successful treatment for cancer. Imagine your success rate is 100% at curing the disease. Sure, there are a lot of other treatments out there. Some more successful than others but none of them provide the cure your treatment guarantees. Would it not be right to promote it as the better, more superior option? Paul believes the gospel is the power of God for salvation. He believes it actually delivers on what it promises. Is he not right then to promote it as the superior cure to what ails humanity? Namely, sin? Is he not right to promote it above Torah? Are we not right to promote it above Islam? Hinduism? Buddhism? If we truly believe Jesus is God then how can we NOT declare Him as superior in every

way to Mohammed, Krishna, Buddha, even Moses? Friends, this is exactly the truth that changed Paul's life on the road outside Damascus. When he realized Jesus had been raised from the dead, he knew He could be no ordinary prophet. Jesus must be God and therefore everything Jesus said or did must be true. And if everything Jesus said or did must be true then we must believe Him. And if we believe Him then we will surrender our lives to Him. And if we surrender our lives to Him then we will submit all our thoughts, feelings, and actions to His Lordship. And if we submit to His Lordship, we will find ourselves a regenerated and re-integrated people living not for ourselves but for the honor and glory of God. This is the power of the gospel.

Readings for tomorrow: Psalms 65-67, Romans 2

**August 5, 2021**  
**God of our Salvation**

Readings for today: [Psalms 65-67](#), [Romans 2](#)

I love the deep faith of the Psalmist. Life in the ancient world was incredibly hard. It was a daily grind. A person lived under constant threat of famine or plague or some other natural disaster. Each spring the armies would go off to war with the fate of the nation hanging in the balance. Disease and death were constant companions. And yet in the midst of it all, he looks to God for salvation. He knows he can trust in God's character. He knows He can trust in God's power. He knows He can trust God's nature which is good and righteous and holy. This is what gives him hope. Not worldly success or comfort. Not earthly power or treasure. Not even his own physical well-being. God alone is the "hope of all the earth and of the farthest seas..." Listen to how he puts it...

"By awesome deeds you answer us with righteousness, O God of our salvation, the hope of all the ends of the earth and of the farthest seas; the one who by his strength established the mountains, being girded with might; who stills the roaring of the seas, the roaring of their waves, the tumult of the peoples, so that those who dwell at the ends of the earth are in awe at your signs. You make the going out of the morning and the evening to shout for joy." (Psalm 65:5-8)

You and I live in much different times. Life in America in the 21st century could not be more different than life in ancient Israel and yet it doesn't necessarily make it any easier. Yes, we live in relative comfort and ease. Yes, many of us do not need to worry about famine or plague or some other natural disaster. We can go to King Soopers if we are hungry. We can go to the doctor if we are sick. We live in homes specifically designed to withstand whatever Mother Nature may decide to throw at us. Sure, there are very real geo-political threats but we do not fear annual invasions by a foreign power. But life is still very much a daily grind. How many of us struggle with mental health issues? How many of us struggle with persistent physical pain? How many of us have suffered emotionally through the grief and losses of the last year? Death still stalks us whether we acknowledge it or not. Fear and anxiety seem like constant companions. The constant strain and stress takes a toll on our closest relationships and the relentless pressure to produce drives us into the ground. So where do we find hope? Where do we look for salvation?

God is the same yesterday, today, and forever. The same God who provided hope for the Psalmist of the ancient world is the same God who provides hope for us today. We simply need to look to Him. We need to believe His promises. We need to trust His character. Trust His power. Trust His nature which is good and righteous and holy. God is still at work doing awesome deeds! He is making Himself known in the farthest corners of the earth! By His strength He raises mountains and stills the raging seas. By His might He calms the oceans and brings peace to the nations of the earth. He performs these miracles so that those who dwell at the ends of the earth will see and believe and be in awe of His signs and wonders.

Friends, whatever you may be facing today, look to God for hope. Whatever battles you may be fighting today, look to God for salvation. Whatever struggles or suffering you may be going through, look to God for deliverance. He loves you. He is with you. He will be faithful to bring you through the dark valley into beautiful green pastures where you can be refreshed by still waters and restore your soul.

Readings for tomorrow: [Psalms 68-69](#), [Romans 3](#)



**August 6, 2021**  
**Learned Helplessness**

Readings for today: [Psalms 68-69](#), [Romans 3](#)

All of us live under the Law of God. All of us are accountable for every thought, word, and deed. All of us will stand before the judgment seat of Christ where every part of our lives will be laid bare. Nothing will be hidden. Nothing held back. Nothing will escape God's notice. For He sees all and knows all and judges all with righteousness. "Now we know that whatever the law says it speaks to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be stopped, and the whole world may be held accountable to God." (Romans 3:19)

Reflecting on the Law of God produces humility. It brings us to our knees. It stops every mouth. It ends every rationalizing and self-justifying thought. The purpose of the Law is to show us the depths of our sin. It holds a mirror up to our soul. It reflects back to us the reality that all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. None are righteous. None understand. None truly seek God. All turn aside. All go their own way. All do what is right in their own eyes. Our thoughts are prone to deceit. Our lips prone to bitterness and curses. Our feet swift to shed blood, get revenge, take out our anger on those around us. Our paths are lined with the bodies of those we've hurt and wounded along the way. We do not fear God. We do not love God. We have no peace with God. This is the fundamental truth of our existence. We were conceived in sin. Born in iniquity. And there is no escape.

Many years ago, I took some classes in psychology. One of the experiments we studied had to do with learned helplessness. As I remember it, an animal was put in a box with the lid closed and given a shock. Because it could not escape, it eventually stopped trying. It simply endured. Even after the lid was removed, it would not jump out. It "learned helplessness." In many ways, that is the intended purpose of the Law of God. To teach us how utterly helpless and hopeless we are to save ourselves. We live in a closed system. A world corrupted by sin. There is no escape. The lid is too tight. We cannot get out. Our only hope is that the Master will come and save us from our broken condition.

This is what Paul is pointing us to this morning. "But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it— the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction: for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God's righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins. It was to show his righteousness at the present time, so that he might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus." (Romans 3:21-26) The righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the Law? You mean I don't have to work so hard to justify myself? The righteousness of God is available through faith to all who believe in Jesus Christ? You mean all I need to do is open my heart to Him and receive the gift of His grace? Yes to all of this and more! The righteousness of God is a gift, friends! It cannot be earned. It cannot be achieved. It cannot be purchased. It can only be received. God knows the broken condition of our world. He sees the helplessness of His creatures. He understands our hopeless state. So He sends His Son to atone for our sin and to show forth His righteousness that God might both be just and the justifier of the one who believes.

Friends, the good news of the gospel is that God has done what we could not! He has achieved what we never could! He has kept the Law! He has fulfilled the Law! He has satisfied the Law with its demands! And now He simply calls us to believe. To trust in what He has accomplished on our behalf! Trust Jesus, friends! For your life! For your future! For our nation and for our world!

Readings for tomorrow: [Psalms 70-72](#), [Romans 4](#)

August 7, 2021  
Saving Faith

Readings for today: [Psalms 70-72, Romans 4](#)

One of the things I love to do when I read through the Bible in a year is to read the passages from different versions. My preferred version is the ESV. But I read from the NIV and the RSV and when I am looking for a more contemporary version, I might go to the CEV. Today I read Romans 4 from the Message version that Eugene Peterson wrote and I found his words incredibly compelling. Especially when he gets to verses 13-25.

“That famous promise God gave Abraham—that he and his children would possess the earth—was not given because of something Abraham did or would do. It was based on God’s decision to put everything together for him, which Abraham then entered when he believed. If those who get what God gives them only get it by doing everything they are told to do and filling out all the right forms properly signed, that eliminates personal trust completely and turns the promise into an ironclad contract! That’s not a holy promise; that’s a business deal. A contract drawn up by a hard-nosed lawyer and with plenty of fine print only makes sure that you will never be able to collect. But if there is no contract in the first place, simply a promise—and God’s promise at that—you can’t break it. This is why the fulfillment of God’s promise depends entirely on trusting God and his way, and then simply embracing him and what he does. God’s promise arrives as pure gift. That’s the only way everyone can be sure to get in on it, those who keep the religious traditions and those who have never heard of them. For Abraham is father of us all. He is not our racial father—that’s reading the story backward. He is our faith father. We call Abraham “father” not because he got God’s attention by living like a saint, but because God made something out of Abraham when he was a nobody. Isn’t that what we’ve always read in Scripture, God saying to Abraham, “I set you up as father of many peoples”? Abraham was first named “father” and then became a father because he dared to trust God to do what only God could do: raise the dead to life, with a word make something out of nothing. When everything was hopeless, Abraham believed anyway, deciding to live not on the basis of what he saw he couldn’t do but on what God said he would do. And so he was made father of a multitude of peoples. God himself said to him, “You’re going to have a big family, Abraham!” Abraham didn’t focus on his own impotence and say, “It’s hopeless. This hundred-year-old body could never father a child.” Nor did he survey Sarah’s decades of infertility and give up. He didn’t tiptoe around God’s promise asking cautiously skeptical questions. He plunged into the promise and came up strong, ready for God, sure that God would make good on what he had said. That’s why it is said, “Abraham was declared fit before God by trusting God to set him right.” But it’s not just Abraham; it’s also us! The same thing gets said about us when we embrace and believe the One who brought Jesus to life when the conditions were equally hopeless. The sacrificed Jesus made us fit for God, set us right with God.”

You see, I struggle with faith. If I were Abraham, I am quite sure I would focused on my impotence or Sarah’s age and infertility and simply given up. I would have had a very hard time believing God would deliver on what He promised. This is what I love about Scripture. As I read about Abraham plunging “into the promise and coming up strong, ready for God, sure that God would make good on what He had said”, the Holy Spirit goes to work inside my own heart. The Word of God - which is living and active - begins to stir up faith deep in my soul. I find myself inspired to follow Abraham’s example. I find myself remembering all the promises God has given me. Promises for my children. Promises for my church. Promises for my friends serving Christ around the world in some of the most dangerous places. The Holy Spirit keeps working, reminding me that faith is a gift and not something I muster up on my own. He keeps placing the gift in front of me, encouraging me simply to receive. To

embrace. To believe. And every time my fears or doubts begin to creep in, the Holy Spirit plays the ultimate trump card...the resurrection of Christ. He takes me back to the most hopeless moment in human history when evil seemed to have finally gained the upper hand once and for all and He shows me an empty tomb. Resurrection is the promise we plunge into when we believe. Christ dying. Christ rising. Christ coming again. This is the gospel and it is what sets us right with God.

Readings for tomorrow: None

**August 9, 2021**  
**Escaping Envy**

Readings for today: [Psalms 73-74, Romans 5](#)

“Envy rots the bones.” Ever heard that phrase? It comes right out of Scripture. Proverbs 14:30 if you want to look it up. It’s a great image. For me, it brings to mind an old oak tree I once saw when we lived in Alabama. Huge. Majestic. Beautiful. Branches reaching to the sky. Sadly, it was rotten at the core so when a hurricane blew through, it fell over, leaving destruction in its wake. This is what envy does to us and I have to confess I too often fall into its trap. I envy those who have more success than I do. I envy those who have more of a platform than I do. I envy those who have more wealth than I do. And I especially envy the wicked who seem to get ahead. I don’t know why. I don’t understand. I cannot fathom why God allows them to prosper.

As I’ve grown spiritually, I’ve learned to deal with my envy. At first, I tried to ignore the thoughts when they came. Refuse to entertain them in my head. Resist the urge to give them a foothold in my heart. But I failed. The thoughts were too persistent. The attacks too relentless. Ultimately my self-discipline failed and they would find a way in. Then I sought to do battle with them. I memorized Scripture. I prayed every time the envious feelings would enter my heart. I tried to take authority over them and cast them out in the name of Jesus. But again I failed. The thoughts were too strong for me to resist. Finally, I stumbled upon the prescription offered by the Psalmist in our reading for today.

“But when I thought how to understand (my envy of the wicked), it seemed to me a wearisome task, until I went into the sanctuary of God; then I discerned their end. Truly you set them in slippery places; you make them fall to ruin. How they are destroyed in a moment, swept away utterly by terrors! Like a dream when one awakes, O Lord, when you rouse yourself, you despise them as phantoms. When my soul was embittered, when I was pricked in heart, I was brutish and ignorant; I was like a beast toward you. Nevertheless, I am continually with you; you hold my right hand. You guide me with your counsel, and afterward you will receive me to glory. Whom have I in heaven but you? And there is nothing on earth that I desire besides you. My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever. For behold, those who are far from you shall perish; you put an end to everyone who is unfaithful to you. But for me it is good to be near God; I have made the Lord God my refuge, that I may tell of all your works.” (Psalm 73:16-28)

The root of envy is greed. Covetousness. My insatiable appetite for more. Why do I envy the wealthy? Because deep down, I want what they have. Why do I envy the successful? Because deep down, I believe I am better than them. Why do I envy the wicked who get ahead? Because deep down I believe I am more righteous and therefore deserve more of God’s material blessings. You see my problem? When I give envy a foothold, my soul becomes embittered. When my soul becomes embittered, I become brutish and ignorant and like a beast enslaved to my sinful instincts and desires. How do I dislodge envy from my soul? I look to Christ. I find my deepest satisfaction in Him alone. “Whom have I in heaven but you? There is nothing on earth I desire besides You. My flesh and heart may fail - and in fact often do! - but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever.” When I make Christ my supreme treasure, everything I might be tempted to envy in this world fades into the background. It loses its hold on my life. The temptation is robbed of its power.

All of us fall into the trap of envy. All of us tend to play the comparison game. We look at our neighbors and we envy what they have. We look at our boss and we envy their position. We look at those who are getting ahead and we envy their success. We look at other people at church who seem to

have it altogether and we envy their lives. We look at social media and we envy the highlight reel our friends and family post. The only way to escape this trap is to look to Christ. To fix our eyes on Jesus. To find our only comfort, our only peace, our only hope in His life, death, and resurrection.

Readings for tomorrow: Psalms 75-76, Romans 6

August 10, 2021

## Repentance

Readings for today: [Psalms 75-76, Romans 6](#)

Boil everything down. Reduce all the problems in our world and all the problems in our lives to their root and you will find sin. Human sin is the most pervasive, corrupting force in the universe. It tears at the fabric of our lives. It weakens the bonds we have with God, with each other, and with the world around us. It isolates and alienates and incites chaos at every turn. The Bible teaches there is only one prescription for human sin and that is repentance. It is the intentional turning away from sin and turning towards Christ. Listen to how the Apostle Paul puts it in Romans 6...

“Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, to make you obey its passions. Do not present your members to sin as instruments for unrighteousness, but present yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life, and your members to God as instruments for righteousness. For sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace.” (Romans 6:12-14)

Repentance is more than feeling sorry for ourselves. It's more than feeling guilt or remorse over what we have done. It is a decision to make a 180 degree turn in life and go in a different direction. I love the phrase Paul uses here...“present yourself.” Do not present yourselves to sin and allow it to use you as an instrument of unrighteousness. In other words, don't show up at sin's doorway looking for work. Don't clock in. Don't give sin your precious time or talent or treasure. Don't give sin a foothold in your life. Instead, present yourself every day to God. Show up in His throne room each morning and let Him give you your marching orders for the day. Intentionally place yourself at His disposal and give Him permission to use you for His purposes.

Far too often, we make the mistake of thinking repentance is simply about what we have to give up. We think of it solely in terms of what we have to sacrifice. But that's not the whole picture. Repentance is not just about what we have to give up but also what we do to fill up. I love the story Jesus tells in the gospels about the man who's been possessed by demons. He tells His disciples it's not enough to simply cast the demons out of the man's life. It's not enough for the man to even work hard to clean up his life. He has to fill himself up with something lest the demons return, find the “house” still empty, and take back over. True repentance involves both a “turning from” and a “turning to” if it is to be real and effective.

Repentance is one of the key marks of discipleship for a Christian. It's not something we ever grow beyond or graduate from so where do you need to repent in your life today? What attitudes, thoughts, feelings, or actions do you need to turn away from as you turn towards Christ? How are you intentionally yourself before God today and giving Him permission to use you as an instrument of righteousness in our world?

Readings for tomorrow: Psalm 77-79, Romans 7

**August 11, 2021**  
**The Wonders of God**

Readings for today: [Psalm 77-79, Romans 7](#)

One of the things I love most about the Bible is how it never runs from the ugly reality of human sin. It never whitewashes human history. It never attempts to paint the people of God in any kind of overly positive light. It simply tells the honest story of our successes and failures and frames them all in light of the faithfulness of God.

Take Psalm 78 for example. I love how the Psalmist begins in verse 1-4...“Give ear, O my people, to my teaching; incline your ears to the words of my mouth! I will open my mouth in a parable; I will utter dark sayings from of old, things that we have heard and known, that our fathers have told us. We will not hide them from their children, but tell to the coming generation the glorious deeds of the Lord, and his might, and the wonders that he has done.” If you’re reading this for the first time, you might find yourself a little confused. The Psalmist is going to utter “dark sayings from of old”, stories that his ancestors have passed down, tales that might otherwise be kept from children and yet these same stories will declare to the coming generation “the glorious deeds of the Lord?” This doesn’t make much sense to our 21st century, American Christian ears.

Things get only more confusing as we read the rest of the Psalm. In brief, it recounts all the ways the people of God have failed. All the ways they’ve sinned and fallen short of God’s glory. All the times they faced judgment for their disobedience.

“They did not keep God’s covenant, but refused to walk according to his law. They forgot his works and the wonders that he had shown them.” (Psalm 78:10-11)

“Yet they sinned still more against him, rebelling against the Most High in the desert.” (Psalm 78:17)

“They tested God again and again and provoked the Holy One of Israel.” (Psalm 78:41)

“They provoked him to anger with their high places; they moved him to jealousy with their idols.” (Psalm 78:58)

One would think they would suffer terrible judgment for their sin. One would think they would rightfully earn death for the ways they abandoned God and His Law. One would think God’s justice would demand an account and they would be wiped from the face of the earth. Their destruction becoming a byword and warning to all who would hear. But that’s not what happens. Amazingly enough, God meets their sin with grace. Meets their crimes with pardon. Meets their transgressions with mercy.

“In the sight of their fathers he performed wonders in the land of Egypt, in the fields of Zoan. He divided the sea and let them pass through it, and made the waters stand like a heap. In the daytime he led them with a cloud, and all the night with a fiery light. He split rocks in the wilderness and gave them drink abundantly as from the deep. He made streams come out of the rock and caused waters to flow down like rivers.” (Psalm 78:12-16)

“He commanded the skies above and opened the doors of heaven, and he rained down on them manna to eat and gave them the grain of heaven. Man ate of the bread of the angels; he sent them food in

abundance. He caused the east wind to blow in the heavens, and by his power he led out the south wind; he rained meat on them like dust, winged birds like the sand of the seas; And they ate and were well filled, for he gave them what they craved.” (Psalm 78:23-27, 29)

“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.” (Psalm 78:38-39)

“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. He drove out nations before them; he apportioned them for a possession and settled the tribes of Israel in their tents.” (Psalm 78:52-55)

“He chose David his servant and took him from the sheepfolds; from following the nursing ewes he brought him to shepherd Jacob his people, Israel his inheritance. With upright heart he shepherded them and guided them with his skillful hand.” (Psalm 78:70-72)

It’s an amazing read when we stop to think about it. It declares the goodness and graciousness of God’s character. It reminds us that though God will by no means pardon the guilty, His steadfast love will endure for a thousand generations. Most of all, this Psalm foreshadows the cross. It points forward to that unique event in human history where the overwhelming weight of human sin was carried on the shoulders of the Son of God. As He hung there between heaven and earth making atonement for all we had done and yet will do, the depth of our evil and suffering and sin was met by the wonder and glory of something even deeper still...God’s grace. Friends, the greatest miracle God has ever performed was our salvation.

Readings for tomorrow: Psalms 80-84, Romans 8



**August 12, 2021**  
**Redemptive Suffering**

Readings for today: [Psalms 80-84](#), [Romans 8](#)

“The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him.” (Romans 8:16-17)

What if I told you suffering was an essential part of the Christian life? Would it make you think twice about following Jesus? Would it cause you to re-evaluate what you believe? One of the great heresies of our time is prosperity preaching. It's the idea that if you are faithful enough. If you are obedient enough. You will be blessed. God will grant you your heart's desire. You will be wealthy. You will be healthy and strong. You will be successful. The television airways are filled with these messages. Prosperity preachers putting on a show and making bargains on your behalf with God. Implicitly or explicitly, they tie suffering to sin. They believe pain is a result of disobedience. They argue poverty and sickness is a result of a lack of faith. Such nonsense!

Paul makes it clear that those who follow Christ will share in His sufferings. Not because we seek suffering out. Not because Jesus demands His followers live in constant pain or poverty. But simply because the lives we lead put us at odds with the world around us. Our faith makes us aliens and strangers in our culture. It sets us apart. Makes us a target. Why? Because we serve a heavenly King. We belong to a heavenly Kingdom. Our primary allegiance is not to any earthly king or country. Not to flag or nation. Not to tribe or family. But to God Himself. By faith, we are adopted as His sons and daughters. By faith, we become part of His family. By faith, our citizenship is transferred from the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of light.

Jesus suffered. Jesus endured incredible pain. Jesus was tortured, falsely accused, and executed by the State because he posed a threat. His message subverted the kingdoms of this world. His preaching confronted the religious leaders of His day. He called them to repent. He called them to confess. He called them to lay down their wealth and power and position and authority for the sake of others. He called them to give their very lives away for the sake of the impure, unholy, rejected, and outcast. He upended social conventions. He tore down cultural taboos. Even the laws of nature obeyed Him! Disease disappeared. Demons were cast out. Death itself defeated. Watching Jesus work must have been awesome and frightening all at the same time.

Jesus followers - the people known as Christians - are called to the same way of life. Paul reminds us the suffering we endure for our faith is actually what makes us co-heirs with Christ! And we are not alone. All of creation suffers along with us under the curse of sin. Every single human being struggles under the weight of sin. The difference is that those who follow Christ have hope. We have the hope of an eternal life waiting for us when Christ returns to claim His own. On that great day, our adoption will be complete. Our sufferings will come to an end. Every tear will be wiped away. Every hurt healed. Every pain redressed. Every injustice set right. This is why our present sufferings aren't worth comparing to the glory that will one day be revealed in us!

Readings for tomorrow: [Psalms 85-87](#), [Romans 9:1-10:4](#)

**August 13, 2021**  
**The Challenge of Election**

Readings for today: [Psalms 85-87](#), [Romans 9:1-10:4](#)

Today's reading is a challenging one. Paul is asking deep questions about the promises and purposes of God. So much of which is shrouded in mystery. So much of which we will never know this side of heaven. Has the Word of God failed? Is God unjust? How can God fault those whom He has not chosen? These questions are important. It is vital to wrestle with them honestly and vulnerably. True faith welcomes such challenges and doesn't settle for easy answers.

To begin, we must check our assumptions at the door. There are no standards of justice outside of God. God is not answerable to any human legal code nor does He subject Himself to human notions of universal fairness. God is the Potter. We are the clay. This fundamental principle undergirds everything Paul will say in these few chapters. The baseline for this discussion begins with God being God and human beings being human beings. The Creator is not the same as His creation. The creation is not the same as its Creator. There is a massive, ontological distinction between the two that must be maintained if we are to find our way through this quandary.

Second, because God is God, He has every right to exercise His sovereign choice over all He has made. He chose Abraham and Sarah out of all the families on the face of the earth. He chose Jacob over Esau before they were born. He chose Israel over Egypt. Moses over Pharaoh. The full witness of Scripture makes it clear that God freely chooses some vessels for honor and some for dishonor. Scripture makes it clear that God endures with patience "vessels of wrath prepared for destruction" so that He might "make known the riches of glory for His vessels of mercy." Over and over again, we see this played out in the Old Testament. There is simply no other way to honestly interpret it.

Third, what are we then to make of what's happening with Israel? God's elect? God's chosen? "To them belong the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the worship, and the promises. To them belong the patriarchs, and from their race, according to the flesh, is the Christ, who is God over all..." (Romans 9:4-5) Furthermore, what are we to make of the Gentiles? God's non-elect? The pagans who've rejected God all their lives? Though they have not pursued righteousness somehow they attained it by faith! Does this mean God's elect have been rejected? By no means! "For not all who are descended from Israel belong to Israel, and not all are children of Abraham because they are his offspring..." (Romans 9:6-7) So ethnicity no longer serves as a determining factor when it comes to membership in God's covenant community. What matters is faith and God has maintained a remnant - of which the Apostle Paul is one - who have been saved by grace.

Fourth, what should we conclude from Paul's words? God isn't done! God's plan for Israel is not yet complete! The Gentiles who have been grafted into God's family should not become prideful or take God's grace for granted for as Paul will say in just a couple of chapters, "Remember it is not you who supports the root but the root that supports you." (Romans 11:18) Instead, the Gentiles should wait and pray for the day when the partial hardening on Israel is softened because the full number of Gentiles have finally come in and God saves all of Israel.

How will this happen? Paul has no idea. He simply knows God is faithful. He will never abandon His people. His love is steadfast, loyal, and true. So at the end of all this deep wrestling there can only be an exclamation of praise. God is God. We are not. Thanks be to God!

Readings for tomorrow: [Psalms 88-89](#), [Romans 10:5-21](#)

August 14, 2021

**Foundations of God's Throne**

Readings for today: [Psalms 88-89, Romans 10:5-21](#)

“Righteousness and justice are the foundation of your throne; steadfast love and faithfulness go before you.” (Psalm 89:14)

It is tempting when we look at the growing chaos of the world around us to give into fear and anxiety. To get stuck in the mire of sadness and deep grief. If you are like me, your heart breaks for the brokenness and the broken people of this world. In recent days, the Taliban have almost retaken all the territory they lost in Afghanistan. I cannot imagine what it must feel like to be a woman or a Christian or even a moderate Muslim over there right now. The crisis at the southern border of the United States only deepens as thousands seek asylum from the violence and life-threatening poverty of their home countries in Latin and South America. Police officers are being targeted on a daily basis in some of our larger cities as violent crime increases. Ethnic and sexual minorities still feel the burden of discrimination in far too many places here at home and around the world. The Delta variant has rolled back much of the progress we made in dealing with the pandemic this past spring. Many of our children and teachers are facing the monumental challenge of making up for lost ground from the last year. It's overwhelming to think about and there are few hopeful signs on the horizon. Why do such things happen? Why does humanity's inhumanity seem set to play on an endless loop?

The Bible's answer is clear. We have abandoned God. The only source of true life and light and love in this world. By His command the world was made and all that was in it. By His command human beings were shaped and formed in His image. By His command we were given a mandate to be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth. Exercising dominion in His name. This was the pathway to true progress. This was the road to righteousness. This was the journey to justice. But we abandoned His ways long ago. We chose to blaze our own trail. Build our own road. Cut our own path through the wilderness. And where has that gotten us? A world full of hate and anger and fear. A world full of violence and suffering and pain. A world full of injustice and inequality. We have remade the world in our own broken image and are suffering the consequences of our actions.

God calls us to a different path. The path of righteousness. The path of justice. Psalm 89:14 teaches us that God's throne rests on these two pillars. Righteousness is about our standing before God. Clothed in Christ, we seek to become who we already are in Him. We follow His commands. We conform our hearts and minds to His example. We speak His truth. We live for His glory. We surrender all that we have and all that we are to Him. Justice is about the systems and structures we live under. Government. Business. Education. Media. Arts. Church. Family. These are by definition unjust because they are human creations and each generation must engage in the work to align them and re-align them with God's Kingdom. When righteous people are engaged in justice work, the cities and communities in which we live flourish. When unrighteous people engage in unjust work, the cities and communities in which we live burn. This is the power God entrusted to us from the beginning and it is responsibility He has given us as human beings.

The Bible is full of all kinds of wisdom regarding the righteousness and justice of God. All of us should be seeking to become more righteous individually AND all of us should be working for justice systemically and collectively. This unique gift the church offers the world is Jesus. Governments pass laws. Social policy can be re-written and reformed. Law enforcement can enforce a host of new regulations. But none of it will make a bit of difference without the transformation of the human heart. Friends, more than ever, the world needs Jesus. Who are you sharing Him with today?

Readings for tomorrow: None

**August 16, 2021**  
**The Gift of the Psalms**

Readings for today: [Psalms 90-95, Romans 11](#)

Every year as I make my way through the Psalms, I receive a great gift. The Psalmists lift my eyes above the hills. Above the horizons of my own life. Above my sinful tendency to “navel gaze” and focus on my own needs, wants, and desires. They direct me to God. They place Him in full view before me. They confront me with His character. They nourish me on His divine nature. They relentlessly remind me of His goodness and grace. They place words of praise in my mouth and in my heart and mind. They extol God’s infinite virtues. Righteousness. Justice. Grace. Mercy. Peace. Power. Love. The list is endless. Consider just a few of the verses we read today...

“Lord, you have been our dwelling place in all generations. Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever you had formed the earth and the world, from everlasting to everlasting you are God.”(Psalm 90:1-2)

“I will say to the Lord, “My refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust.” Because you have made the Lord your dwelling place—the Most High, who is my refuge— no evil shall be allowed to befall you, no plague come near your tent. For he will command his angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways. “Because he 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.” (Psalm 91:2, 9-11, 14-16)

“It is good to give thanks to the Lord, to sing praises to your name, O Most High; to declare your steadfast love in the morning, and your faithfulness by night, to the music of the lute and the harp, to the melody of the lyre. For you, O Lord, have made me glad by your work; at the works of your hands I sing for joy.” (Psalm 92:1-4)

“The Lord reigns; he is robed in majesty; the Lord is robed; he has put on strength as his belt. Yes, the world is established; it shall never be moved. Your throne is established from of old; you are from everlasting.” (Psalm 93:1-2)

“O Lord, God of vengeance, O God of vengeance, shine forth! Rise up, O judge of the earth; repay to the proud what they deserve!” (Psalm 94:1-2)

“For the Lord is a great God, and a great King above all gods. In his hand are the depths of the earth; the heights of the mountains are his also. The sea is his, for he made it, and his hands formed the dry land. Oh come, let us worship and bow down; let us kneel before the Lord, our Maker!” (Psalm 95:3-6)

Reflecting on these verses is deeply humbling which I believe is the Psalmist’s point. As we come face to face with God. As we gaze on Him in the beauty of His Holiness. As we experience the wonder of His love and grace, we should be brought to our knees. The fathomless depth of our sinful condition is revealed. All our secrets laid bare. God is God. We are not. God is good. We are not. God is righteous. We are not. God is faithful. We are not. God is love. We are not. As we come to grips with the utter brokenness of our condition, we are driven to helplessness and despair. We experience godly sorrow over all the ways we fall short of the glory God desires to reveal in us. As we grieve, we are being prepared by God’s Spirit for the transforming experience of His grace.

The reality is we have to come to the end of ourselves before we will turn to God. We have to be emptied of all our resources, all our strength, all our dependence on self if we are to be filled with God's Spirit. And this is the heart of the gospel. Those who humble themselves will be exalted. The last shall be first. Those who sow generously and sacrificially will reap a harvest of righteousness. Those who lose their lives for Jesus' sake will find them.

Readings for tomorrow: Psalms 96-98, Romans 12

**August 17, 2021**  
**Be Transformed**

Readings for today: [Psalms 96-98, Romans 12](#)

I recently came across this quote from one of my favorite pastors, "I more and more find the precious part of each day to be the thirty or forty minutes I spend each morning before breakfast with the Bible. All the rest of the day I am bombarded with the stories that the world is telling about itself. I am more and more skeptical about these stories. As I take time to immerse myself in the story that the Bible tells, my vision is cleared and I see things in another way. I see the day that lies ahead in its place in God's story." (Lesslie Newbigin) It reminded me of what Paul says in Romans 12 about not being conformed to the patterns of this world but instead be transformed by the renewal of the mind through Spirit.

What does such transformation look like? It looks like the life Paul describes at the end of chapter 12. "Let love be genuine. Abhor what is evil; hold fast to what is good. Love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honor. Do not be slothful in zeal, be fervent in spirit, serve the Lord. Rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer. Contribute to the needs of the saints and seek to show hospitality. Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them. Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep. Live in harmony with one another. Do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly. Never be wise in your own sight. Repay no one evil for evil, but give thought to do what is honorable in the sight of all. If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all. Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord." To the contrary, "if your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink; for by so doing you will heap burning coals on his head." Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good." (Romans 12:9-21)

This is the difference Christ makes in a person's life. He changes us from the inside out. He shifts our outlook and understanding of the world. He transforms our thoughts and our attitudes as we surrender more and more of our hearts to Him. Because we are so deeply satisfied in Christ. Because Christ meets our every need. Because Christ is the object of all our devotion and affection, we are set free. Set free to love. Set free to do good. Set free to honor one another. To put one another's needs above our own. We are patient in affliction knowing it is but a season. We are constant in prayer because we know our Father hears our every word. We are set free to be generous because money has no hold on us. We can bless those who attack us or seek to do us harm because Christ Himself is our defense and our reputation is secure in heaven. Christ gives us the confidence to grieve with those who grieve and celebrate the success of others. Because we rest in the forgiveness and grace of Christ, we can extend it out to others which leads to unity and harmony. Humility rather than pride is our constant companion. And we can release the need to get even or get back because we trust in the justice of God.

I get asked all the time, "What makes a Christian different?" Friends, this is it! When Paul talks about not being conformed to the patterns of this world, he means rejecting the way of hate. The way of outrage. The way of selfishness and pride. He means rejecting the ways of sin and evil for the ends never justify the means. He means rejecting any compromise with godlessness and instead living a life of unconditional love and grace. He means laying aside our desire for control. Our desire for power. Our desire for wealth and privilege and position and instead humbling ourselves before God. Christians understand our lives our not our own. We have been bought with a price. We have been purchased by God. We are slaves to Christ. We have no will of our own. No desires of our own. We exist to serve Christ and to bring Him glory. This is our highest calling. Our life's passion. Our greatest priority. And it is the world's most desperate need. Salt and light, friends. This is what you are in Christ. Believe this! And live your life for Him!

Readings for tomorrow: [Psalms 99-101, Romans 13](#)

**August 19, 2021**  
**My Life is not My Own**

Readings for today: [Psalms 102-104, Romans 14](#)

“For none of us lives to himself, and none of us dies to himself. For if we live, we live to the Lord, and if we die, we die to the Lord. So then, whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord’s. For to this end Christ died and lived again, that he might be Lord both of the dead and of the living.”(Romans 14:7-9)

“My life is not my own.” This is one of the most fundamental truths in all of Scripture and yet it is perhaps the most difficult for me to accept. I was born and have been raised in a country founded on the principle of individual freedom. A nation whose founding documents proclaim that we hold certain “truths to be self-evident, that all people are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights, that among these are Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness.” I have been given incredible opportunities in my lifetime. I’ve had access to excellent education and healthcare. I have never faced discrimination because of my race, gender, or sexual orientation. I come from a stable family with parents who’ve been married for over fifty years who taught me the value of hard work, that nothing worth doing is ever easy. In short, everything in my experience reinforces the notion that life is what I make of it. Success or failure are entirely dependent on my hard work. Personal freedom is fundamental and my personal happiness is an inalienable right.

No wonder I struggle to accept the claim Christ places on my life. According to the Bible, I am never truly free. I am either a slave to sin or a slave to Christ. I am either a slave to sin or a slave to righteousness. I am either a slave to the prince of this world or a slave to the King of kings and Lord of lords. In either case, individual freedom is an illusion. It simply is not real. We are influenced far more than we like to admit. Family of origin issues shape how we see the world. Life experience can make us compassionate or cynical. Success or failure can lift us up or beat us down. Physical limitations, brain chemistry, and the company we keep all make a significant impact on the choices we make on a daily basis. Access to healthcare or education create opportunity as does our economic or social status. And none of these things even begins to touch the basic spiritual reality that the Apostle Paul references here in Romans 14.

Remember Paul is talking to fellow Christians. People who have been bought with a price. Redeemed from this world. Saved from an eternity of judgment, hell, and death. As such, their wants, needs, and desires are submitted to Christ. His will is more important than their own. Following His way and seeking His righteousness becomes far more important than self-fulfillment. They no longer live for themselves. They no longer die for themselves. Through His death and resurrection, Christ has laid claim to their lives. He has purchased them with His own blood. He has ransomed them from slavery and they now owe Him their ultimate allegiance.

When this truth begins to lay hold of you, it changes everything. All of a sudden it hits you that nothing you have is truly yours to own. Not your time. Not your talent. Not your treasure. Not your opportunities. Not your achievements. All of these things are given to you to steward for Christ’s glory. All of these things are given to you to put to use for His Kingdom purposes. And a crown of righteousness awaits the one who truly places their life in God’s hands.

Readings for tomorrow: Psalms 105-106, Romans 15:1-21

August 20, 2021  
Seeking the Good of Others

Readings for today: [Psalms 105-106, Romans 15:1-21](#)

“We who are strong have an obligation to bear with the failings of the weak, and not to please ourselves. Let each of us please his neighbor for his good, to build him up. For Christ did not please himself, but as it is written, “The reproaches of those who reproached you fell on me.” (Romans 15:1-3)

Another day. Another Word from the Lord that cuts against the grain. From the moment we wake up until we lay our head down at night, we are inundated with messages that foster a self-centered approach to life. Social media is literally built to reinforce self-absorption. Ads bombard us constantly with promises of self-fulfillment. Leaders from all walks of life - including the church - engage in self-promotion to increase their platform and spread their message far and wide. In fact, one can make a strong argument that our entire social system is built on a foundation of what famous Scottish moral philosopher, Adam Smith, termed “enlightened self-interest.” In his seminal work, *The Wealth of Nations*, Smith argues it is our individual need to fulfill self-interest that produces societal benefit and this forms the basis of what we now call the free market economy.

Writing in 1776, Smith could not have foreseen the complete breakdown of the moral framework in which he operated. He assumed that everyone shared his Judeo-Christian values which acted as a restraint on self-interest. He knew that the pursuit of self-interest wouldn't produce societal benefit on its own. It required “enlightenment.” For Smith, this meant the ability to make short-term sacrifice for long-term benefit. It meant operating on principles of thrift and hard work. It meant holding to roughly the same core moral values which we might now call the inalienable rights of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. Sadly, Smith was mistaken. Enlightened self-interest is not natural for the majority of people. Morality has been relativized. Long-term happiness has been dumped in favor of temporary pleasures. Christendom has broken down and been replaced by unrestrained hedonism.

That's why the words of the Apostle Paul strike so close to home. In many ways, we are fighting some of the same battles he fought. The Roman world was awash with sin. Might made right. Lust was glorified. Power, wealth, and personal pleasure were among the highest goals. Into this world, Paul brings a Word from the Lord. A Word that would have sounded like a clashing gong or crashing cymbal to those who listened. A Word that confronted culture and turned everything upside down. We who are strong have an obligation to bear with the failings of the weak? Are you serious, Paul? The weak have only themselves to blame. The weak don't deserve our help. The weak are a drag on society. Each of us should seek please our neighbor? Put his or her good above our own? Build them up? But if I spend my days doing that, who will take care of me? If I put my neighbors needs above my own, where is my guarantee that they will do the same for me? What happens to me if I pour myself out for those around me and don't get anything in return? Are you crazy?

Even after two thousand years, Paul still sounds a little nuts. You hear it all the time. We have a responsibility to care for the Afghans fleeing their country? We have a responsibility to care for the unvaccinated who contract COVID-19? We have a responsibility to provide social safety nets for the poor and marginalized among us? We need to reform systems and structures to create more opportunity for those who've been historically oppressed? I have to care for my spouse who struggles with addiction? I have to bear with my child who has disrespected me? On and on the list goes. And those are just some of the questions I've had to field in the last week!



Friends, Christ did not come to be served but to serve and to give His life as a ransom for many. Christ did not come to please Himself but to offer Himself as a sacrifice for our sins. Christ did not come promote Himself but instead emptied Himself of all His divine glory in order to die on a cross for us. It is only those who lose their lives for Christ's sake who will find them. Only those who give up their lives for Christ's sake who will gain them in the end. Let the Holy Spirit crucify any selfish ambition or vain conceit within you - no matter how enlightened - so that Christ may reign in your mortal body and you experience the abundant life He promises to those who believe.

Readings for tomorrow: Psalms 107-108, Romans 15:22-33

August 21, 2021  
**The Steadfast Love of the Lord**

Readings for today: [Psalms 107-108](#), [Romans 15:22-33](#)

“Whoever is wise, let him attend to these things; let them consider the steadfast love of the Lord.” (Psalm 107:43)

Today’s Word comes at a good time for me. I’ve had quite a week. The Delta variant of COVID-19 continues to spread through our community so our local public health department decided to issue a mask mandate for children ages 2-11 as they head back to school. This created quite a bit of anxiety for many families in our community and in our congregation as you can imagine. The following day our county commissioners decided to opt out of the mandate but the school district decided to stay in which added a layer of confusion to the situation. It’s not been easy to navigate. At the same time, I am talking to many service men and women who are watching what is taking place in Afghanistan with horror. They cannot believe all their blood, sweat, and tears would be in vain. For some, it triggers incredible pain. For others, it’s brought back the nightmares. For still others, it comes with a tremendous amount of grief as they think about the Afghan friends who will be left behind. The situation is compounded by the arrogance of our political leaders and the blame-shifting on both sides of the aisle. It’s frustrating if not typical and real people continue to pay the price. In particular, I think of the Afghan pastors I am connected to through many missionary friends. They have let it be known that the Taliban are going door to door to hunt them down. Their lives are in danger. The lives of their families are in danger. The lives of those they serve in their congregations are in danger. And yet they remain faithful. It’s humbling and it brings me to my knees in constant prayer.

So it’s been a week. I’ve felt the pastoral burden of ministry keenly. I’ve had moments of frustration. Moments of doubt. Moments of anxiety. I’ve not slept real well. And that’s why I needed the reminder this morning of the steadfast love of God. I needed to take a step back and remember His goodness and grace. I needed to be reminded that He will not allow evil to have its way. Despite what I may feel or what I may think, God remains sovereign. He is at work. He is even now gathering His redeemed from the north, south, east, and west. He promises to satisfy their longing souls and fill their hungry souls with good things. He promises to bring them out of darkness and the shadow of death and break the bonds of their oppression. He promises to heal them and deliver them from their self-destruction. He promises to calm the storm and make the raging sea like glass.

Furthermore, God is at work judging those who do evil. He will turn their rivers into deserts and their fruitful lands into salty wastes. He will pour contempt on princes make them wander in trackless wastes. He will not allow their foolishness to stand. He raises up and lays low even the most powerful in this world. Kingdoms come and go. Empires rise and fall at His command. He shuts the mouths of the wicked. He exposes their lies. He makes them reel and stagger like drunken men. He brings them to the end of their strength. The end of their wisdom. The end of their resources. All so they will cry out to Him.

Friends, this is why the Psalmist declares whoever is wise, let him attend to the Word of God. Let her consider the steadfast love of God. Let him think on God’s goodness and God’s faithfulness throughout the generations. Let her count the blessings of God and offer thanksgiving and praise. You may have had a week like me. Perhaps you too are feeling the burdens of anxiety and fear and frustration and failure. Maybe you find yourself depressed or despairing over the circumstances of your life or the condition of our world. Turn to Christ! Place your trust in Him! He is strong enough to hold all things together when everything feels like it’s falling apart.

Readings for tomorrow: None

August 23, 2021  
**Kingdom Work Requires Teamwork**

Readings for today: [Psalms 109-112](#), [Romans 16](#), [1 Corinthians 1](#)

No person is an island. No godly leader every goes it alone. As one celebrity Christian leader falls after another, it is good for us to reflect on Paul's words from Romans 16. Paul is surrounded by a great cloud of witnesses. The burden of Paul's work is shared by many. The names are listed for all to see. Phoebe. Pricilla and Aquila. Epenetus. Mary. Andronicus and Junia. Ampliatius. Urbanus and Stachys. These are just a few of the leaders Paul surrounded himself with as he carried the gospel to the Mediterranean world. We also know he journeyed with Barnabus, Luke, John Mark, and several others. The early church was wise to set apart teams of missionaries rather than commission them to go out on their own.

We would do well to follow their example. We live in a culture that celebrates the myth of the self-made woman or man. The woman who does it all. She has a fast-track career. Perfect kids. Volunteers on the local school board and teaches Bible study at church. The man who does it all. He climbs the corporate ladder. Prays with his kids every night. Serves his wife sacrificially. And is a leader in the community. We celebrate these women and men. We place them on pedestals. We follow them on social media. We read their books and take their advice. We seek to emulate them in all we do. Then they fail. They fall. They have an affair. They embezzle money. Their marriages and families fall apart. Their carefully curated public persona comes crashing down. And we are shattered. So disappointed. So discouraged. So let down.

Why do these things happen? The pattern is clear. Somewhere along the way, these men and women start to isolate themselves. They separate from their team. They believe their own hype. They put themselves beyond any kind of real accountability. The results are disastrous.

Friends, Kingdom-work is teamwork. Not even the Son of God could do it by himself! Throughout the Scriptures, we see great leaders of the Bible sharing authority. Moses raises up elders to serve alongside he and Joshua. David has an abundance of counselors to share the load. Jesus calls 12 disciples and the Apostle Paul thanks numerous people at the end of his letters for their support and encouragement and labor in the work of the gospel.

Who's on your team? With whom do you share the burdens of your life? Are you and your spouse a team in your home? Do you give your children as much authority and responsibility as they can handle as they grow up? Do you share leadership at work? Do you give people around you the freedom to fail and learn from their failures? Do you empower your team to make real decisions and then hold them accountable? Are you intentionally raising up leaders to take your place? Do you submit yourself to accountability? These things are critical if you are going to do God's work over the long haul.

For my part, I am deeply grateful for a group of elders who hold me accountable. They ask about my marriage. They pray for my family. They are not afraid to tell me "no." I am deeply grateful for a wife who is a true partner in life and ministry. She gets in my face. Doesn't believe the hype. Brings me back to earth when I need it. I am thankful for my children and the honest relationships we are cultivating with each other. I am thankful for colleagues who ask great, probing, personal questions that make me reflect deeply on life. I am thankful for a mentor of almost thirty years who constantly reminds me to maintain my first love. I am thankful for an accountability partner of almost 20 years who knows everything about me and who challenges me to live more faithfully for Christ. Without these people in my life, I would not be the man I am today. I would not be the husband I am today. I would not be the father I am today. I would not be the pastor I am today. Who's on your team?

Readings for tomorrow: [Psalms 113-115](#), [1 Corinthians 2](#)

**August 24, 2021**  
**Seeking the Mind of Christ**

Readings for today: [Psalms 113-115, 1 Corinthians 2](#)

This weekend we are having our elder retreat. It's an annual affair where the leaders of our church family go away for a few days to seek the mind of Christ. This year feels different however. The pressures of the past 18 months have taken their toll on all of us personally as well as our church family corporately. While we've navigated the crisis quite well thanks to the grace of God, it is still a crisis. People are still struggling to find a new normal. There is a growing realization that things will never return to the way they once were. Life from this point forward will be a blend of in-person and virtual activity. And yet the call remains to live out the Great Commandment and fulfill the Great Commission. So we are going away for a few days to seek the mind of Christ. To ask God for His wisdom in helping us meet and overcome the challenges we face in our world today. Thankfully, we know God is building His church. We know the gates of hell cannot stand against it. So we approach our time together with confidence that God is more than able to show us the way.

Seeking the mind of Christ is not just something pastors and elders do. It's the primary responsibility of every Christian as we seek to navigate the challenges of this world. It is a higher priority than our own happiness. A higher priority than our own comfort. A higher priority than our own success. It is more important than our pride. More important than our public reputation. More important than our political allegiances. We know we have discerned the mind of Christ when there is spiritual unity and godly humility and mutual submission. We see the mind of Christ in action when there is forgiveness and grace and reconciliation. We recognize it in those who are willing to be last so that others might be first. Those who are willing to decrease so that others may increase. Those who are self-effacing and who practice the art of self-forgetfulness.

Seeking the mind of Christ has never been easy. The early Christians in Corinth struggled mightily with the concept and to embrace the practice. They were divided. They followed charismatic human leaders rather than Christ Jesus Himself. They sought the wisdom of this world. They wanted to be esteemed by the top philosophical thinkers of their day. They boasted in their own ability. The depth of their spiritual maturity. They stood in judgment over those who seemed "less spiritual." They wanted all the credit for the ministry they were building. They refused to share the glory with another. They wanted to be known. They wanted to be influencers. They wanted to be taken seriously and treated with respect by the culturally elite of their day. But the gospel calls us to a different way.

How do we seek and find the mind of Christ? There is only one way path. The path of humility. Relinquishment. Surrender. Listen to how Paul describes it for his Corinthians friends...

"For the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God." (1 Corinthians 1:18)

"For since, in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom, it pleased God through the folly of what we preach to save those who believe. For Jews demand signs and Greeks seek wisdom, but we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles...For the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men." (1 Corinthians 1:21-23, 25)

“But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are, so that no human being might boast in the presence of God.” (1 Corinthians 1:27-29)

“For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified. And I was with you in weakness and in fear and much trembling, and my speech and my message were not in plausible words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, so that your faith might not rest in the wisdom of men but in the power of God.” (1 Corinthians 2:2-5)

These are some of the most powerful passages in the New Testament. They resonate deep within us for we recognize the Spirit who inspired them. God’s ways are not our ways and His thoughts are not our thoughts. God is not bound by human wisdom. God cannot be reduced to human categories. He is completely and utterly free from any constraints in this world. He makes foolish the wise. He makes weak the strong. So if we are to seek the mind of Christ, we must lay aside our natural inclinations. We must lay aside our pride and ego and desire to be in control. We must lay aside our anxieties and fears. Instead, we must trust Him to reveal Himself in His time and in His way. We must seek to know nothing except Christ. We must seek to follow Christ in His footsteps. We must align our hearts with Christ. As we do, we will find ourselves being built up together as God’s Temple. He will come to dwell in our midst. He will come to fill us and sanctify us.

Friends, resist the temptation to believe your own hype. Resist the temptation to believe you are “something” in this world. Resist any notions of power and privilege. Let go and let God have all the glory! The reality is we are simply servants of Christ. We are simply stewards of the mysteries of the gospel. We do not own the gospel. It is not ours to command or control. We do not own Christ. He is not ours to direct nor is He under our authority. God is God and we are not. Christ is Christ and we are not. We serve at His pleasure. We bow before His throne. We live and move and have our being under His sovereign authority. And this sets us free from all the strivings and struggles of this world. Seek the mind of Christ! Let your heart be filled with the love of Christ! Let all you do be motivated by a desire to honor Christ! This is His will for our lives.

Readings for tomorrow: Psalms 116-119:48, 1 Corinthians 3

August 27, 2021  
The Meaning of Wisdom

Readings for today: [Psalms 119:105-176, 1 Corinthians 5](#)

A few years ago I read a book that helped me parse the difference between wisdom and foolishness. Wisdom, according to the author, is when we see the truth and adjust our lives accordingly. Foolishness, on the other hand, is when we demand the truth adjust to our reality. To put it another way, wise people will meet the demands of life while foolish people will demand that life meet their demands. Wise people receive feedback when given, own their own performance, mistakes, and issues and take responsibility without externalizing blame or giving excuses. Foolish people become defensive very quickly when confronted, refuse to own their own shortcomings, and often externalize by blaming those around them. Wise people listen. Fools dismiss or ignore.

Are you a wise person or a fool? How do you know? Well, how do you feel as you read the words from Psalm 119? What happens internally when you consider the demands of God's Law? Are you the kind of person who embraces God's commandments, however imperfectly? Are they your delight? Do you find yourself seeking to bend your life in submission to what God has revealed in His Word? Or are you the kind of person who resists God's laws? Dismisses them? Ignores them? Rationalizes away your sin? When you read or engage God's Word, do you seek to bend it to your will? Your life? Your desires? Are you a wise person or a fool?

The Psalmist is clearly wise...

"I will never forget your precepts, for by them you have given me life..."

"Oh how I love your law! It is my meditation all the day..."

"How sweet are your words to my taste, sweeter than honey to my mouth!"

"Through your precepts I get understanding; therefore I hate every false way."

"Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path."

"Your testimonies are my heritage forever, for they are the joy of my heart."

"The sum of your word is truth, and every one of your righteous rules endures forever."

(Psalms 119:93, 97, 103-105, 111, 160)

The Psalmist loves God's Word. Loves God's Law. Loves God's commands. The Psalmist seeks to do all he can to adjust his life to God's Will. To live his life under God's sovereign rule and authority. He makes no excuses for his sin. He doesn't hide his shortcomings. He faces his failures honestly and transparently. And he seeks God's face.

Sadly, so many in our culture today are fools. Even more tragically, they sit in our pews and attend our worship services. As the Apostle Paul says in Romans 10:2, they have a "zeal for God but not according to knowledge." They love God but not in the way He deserves or demands. Instead, they "do what is right in their own eyes." They bend God's Truth to their reality. They seek to make God's Word

null and void either through outright rejection or simple ignorance. They refuse to submit their lives to His will or certain areas of their lives to His will and as a result, they live lives of quiet desperation. They are not evil people. They do not have bad intentions. They simply are misguided. They bow to the pressure and anxiety and take the more expedient path rather than wait on God. I love the way Paul puts it in Romans 1, "Although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened. Claiming to be wise, they became fools..." (Romans 1:21-22)

Let me be the first to say this is me! On some level. At certain seasons. When facing great stress or anxiety or fear. In particular circumstances throughout the course of my life, I have tried to bend God's will to my own. I have tried to rationalize away my sin. I have tried to make twist and turn God's Law to make it fit my life. To no avail. I have thrown myself against the will of God so many times until I finally broke. Finally surrendered. And with that surrender has come wisdom. Not perfection. Wisdom. Self-knowledge. Self-understanding. Seeing myself for who I truly am, warts and all. And learning to trust God's ways above my ways. God's thoughts more than my thoughts. God's will more than my feelings. This is what it means to be wise, friends. The fear of the Lord truly is the beginning of wisdom!

Readings for tomorrow: Psalms 120-123, 1 Corinthians 6

**August 28, 2021**  
**Songs of Ascent**

Readings for today: [Psalms 120-123, 1 Corinthians 6](#)

Psalms of Ascent. Many believe these were the songs Israel sang as they ascended to Jerusalem to keep the three annual festivals detailed in Deuteronomy 16. They are songs of worship. Songs of praise. Songs of thanksgiving. They express the deep gratitude the people feel towards God for all He has done for them. They sing them together. They sing them as they gather. They sing them in good times. They sing them in bad times. One can almost imagine thousands coming to Jerusalem all singing these songs with one voice. It must have been a powerful, moving scene. In addition, many scholars believe these were the songs Israel sang at different high points in their history like the dedication of Solomon's Temple or the rebuilding of the walls during Nehemiah's time. Over and over again, Israel returned to these psalms to express their faith and trust in God.

Christians have built on this tradition. Many churches throughout the world sing these psalms in worship. The Eastern Orthodox Church sings these psalms every Friday during Vespers. The Roman Catholic Church schedules these psalms to be sung during daily prayer. The goal is to remind Christians we are on our own pilgrimage to a Heavenly Jerusalem and these psalms build the spiritual intensity of the worship service as we prepare for the reading of the gospel. It's a powerful thing to experience.

These psalms are favorites among believers. Especially in times of trouble. In times of plague and pandemic. In times of national or personal crisis. In such times, we cling to the language of God protecting us. God guiding us. God providing for us. God helping us. "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." (Psalms 121:1-2) "I was glad when they said to me, "Let us go to the house of the Lord!" (Psalm 122:1) "To you I lift up my eyes, O you who are enthroned in the heavens! Behold, as the eyes of servants look to the hand of their master, as the eyes of a maidservant to the hand of her mistress, so our eyes look to the Lord our God, till he has mercy upon us." (Psalms 123:1-2) There is something special that happens when we gather to sing these praises. Something deeply transformative. Something life-changing. We are encouraged. We are strengthened. We are blessed by the experience of being in God's presence together and given the strength to endure.

The last year to 18 months have challenged Christians all over the world to think about the priority of corporate, gathered worship. What once may have seemed optional or discretionary or perhaps even disposable has taken on a new importance. You never know what you've lost until it's gone, right? We've weathered "shelter in place" orders and restrictions on mass gatherings. We've endured fear and grief and loss and loneliness. Many of us know loved ones who got sick or perhaps even died. And the new Delta variant raises new fears of potential lockdowns. Our collective suffering creates a deep longing in our hearts. A longing for connection. A longing for physical touch. A longing for the presence of other people. Friends, God put these longings in our hearts. God hardwired these longings deep within our souls. It is never good for human beings to be alone and we are all struggling with the effects of this lonely, difficult season.

Thankfully, we can still gather. Some of us will choose to gather physically. Some will choose to gather virtually. While the latter is not an adequate replacement for the former, it is a blessing for those who may be sick or homebound or traveling or distant from those they love. As we gather, we sing. We sing the songs of ascent. We sing the praises of God. This is what Christians have done for thousands of



years. Yes, even in the midst of pandemics like the Spanish flu or the Bubonic plague or when other diseases have ravaged the earth. I know many of us worship Jesus daily on our own. I know many of us experience Jesus profoundly as we hike or hunt or spend time in nature. But neglecting the worship of God with the people of God places us at risk. Especially in a time like this. Furthermore, it places us out of step with thousands of years of Christian history. It places us out of step with the will of God as revealed in Scripture. It's frankly arrogant and prideful and foolish to claim we don't need the church. God loves His bride. God loves His children. God loves having His family together. God loves hearing His people sing. God loves meeting His people in the sacraments. God loves teaching His people through His Word. Jesus said, "For where two or three are gathered in My name, there am I among them." (Matthew 18:20)

Friends, I know this continues to be a challenging time. I know this continues to be a difficult season. I know many of us are tired and weary and ready to get back to "normal"...whatever that may be. My encouragement to you is to use this time to make corporate worship a priority. Plant your flag in the ground. Take a stand for your faith. Don't let the devil gain a foothold in your life. Make sure God gets the time He deserves and the worship He demands. Don't fall into the trap of giving up your Sunday mornings with God's people! Don't let anything come between you and your first love!

Readings for tomorrow: None

**August 31, 2021**  
**The Key to Unity**

Readings for today: [Psalms 130-133, 1 Corinthians 8](#)

Unity seems so elusive these days. Our families are divided. Our churches divided. Our communities divided. Our nation divided. Certainly, our world is divided. We divide along political lines. We divide along economic lines. We divide along social and cultural lines. We divide along ethnic lines. We divide along theological lines. We divide along generational lines. The issues are legion. Masking or no masking. Vaccinations or no vaccinations. Republican or Democrat. Progressive or conservative. Black or white or brown. African or Asian or Latino or European. Rich or poor. Old or young. Gay, Queer or straight.

As a pastor, I see it all the time. In fact, I have a front row seat to the pain. I also know the root cause. Idolatry. Human hearts are idol factories and it seems like the assembly lines of our souls are running 24/7 these days. Idols are anything - good or bad - that becomes an ultimate thing in our life. Anything that causes us to draw a line in the sand and separate from those we love. I think of the dear friends I know who no longer speak to their parents or their children because they have allowed a particular issue to trump the love they once shared. I think of dear friends I know who have jettisoned relationships of ten, twenty, thirty years simply because of how the other person voted. Most tragically, I think of brothers and sisters in Christ who have left churches - including the one I serve - or who have separated themselves from the fellowship of the saints because they have bought the lie the enemy is selling that those who think differently than them are going to hell or deserved judgment or scorn or are not worth their time.

Idolatry. It's the besetting sin of the human heart. It is the source of all division. The root of so much relational pain. It is the greatest and most effective weapon in the enemy's arsenal as he seeks to kill, steal, and destroy all God has made. Friends, listen again to God's truth. Listen again to God's Word as He casts His vision for His people...

"Behold, how good and pleasant it is when brothers and sisters dwell in unity! It is like the precious oil on the head, running down on the beard, on the beard of Aaron, running down on the collar of his robes! It is like the dew of Hermon, which falls on the mountains of Zion! For there the Lord has commanded the blessing, life forevermore." (Psalm 133:1-3)

Unity. Not unanimity. Not conformity. Not sameness. But a unity that transcends all earthly differences. A spiritual unity that binds our hearts together. A unity Christ prayed for, fought for, and ultimately won for us on the cross. At the foot of the cross, the ground is level. All have sinned. All stand in need of His grace. Not one of us better than another. Not one of us more worthy than another. At the cross, humanity is brought to its knees before her Lord. All idolatrous identities are cast down. All that we hold dear and think important, we throw at His nail-scarred feet. Oh, that we could keep our eyes fixed exclusively on Jesus! At the cross, God commands His blessing which is life forevermore!

So what does this life of blessing look like in real time? What does it look like when the person I live with watches a cable news channel 24/7 that I can't stand? What does it look like when the person I work with takes a different position on masks or vaccines? What does it look like when the person I love goes down the rabbit hole of conspiracy theory? What does it look like when my child comes out to me? What does it look like when our national leaders fail? Or church leaders fail? Listen to the Apostle Paul's words from 1 Corinthians 8, using the example of food being sacrificed to idols...

“Now concerning food offered to idols: we know that “all of us possess knowledge.” This “knowledge” puffs up, but love builds up. If anyone imagines that he knows something, he does not yet know as he ought to know. But if anyone loves God, he is known by God...For although there may be so-called gods in heaven or on earth—as indeed there are many “gods” and many “Lords”—yet for us there is one God, the Father, from whom are all things and for whom we exist, and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things and through whom we exist. However, not all possess this knowledge. But some, through former association with idols, eat food as really offered to an idol, and their conscience, being weak, is defiled. Food will not commend us to God. We are no worse off if we do not eat, and no better off if we do. But take care that this right of yours does not somehow become a stumbling block to the weak. For if anyone sees you who have knowledge eating in an idol’s temple, will he not be encouraged, if his conscience is weak, to eat food offered to idols? And so by your knowledge this weak person is destroyed, the brother for whom Christ died. Thus, sinning against your brothers and wounding their conscience when it is weak, you sin against Christ. Therefore, if food makes my brother stumble, I will never eat meat, lest I make my brother stumble.” (1 Corinthians 8:1-3, 5-13)

Paul clearly gives up his “rights” in order to remain in relationship with those around him who do not share his understanding on idolatry. He refuses to put a stumbling block before them. He doesn’t want to be the one who gets in the way of them potentially coming to a deeper understanding of Christ. Instead, he walks with them. He willingly sacrifices on their behalf. He loves his neighbor by placing their needs before his own. He knows the limits of human knowledge. He knows at best it puffs up while love builds up. He knows it is useless to argue or cite statistics or share articles on Facebook. Instead, he seeks to walk alongside the “weaker” brother or sister. Love them where they are. Meet them where they are. Enter their life so that he might win them to Christ. How is he able to do this? He has complete confidence that “there is one God, the Father, from whom are all things and for whom we exist, and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things and through whom we exist.” Everything else is an illusion. Every other god an idol. Every other line in the sand simply not worth defending. Every other hill not worth dying on.

Readings for tomorrow: Psalms 134-137, 1 Corinthians 9