

Monday, November 9, 2020

Jesus is the Way

Halloween was a fun experience for my wife Sherry and me. We got to take our grandson, Cooper, trick-or-treating for a bit after his parents had taken him. Cooper quickly proclaimed to us, "Follow my lead!" as we went up to various houses. He certainly knew what he was doing for the most part. Not bad for a four-year old. Eventually he wanted to see a house that was specially decorated for the evening. Again, he said, "Follow my lead!" this time however, he as lost and did not know the way.

I have thought about how often we are like Cooper, we think we know where we are going, until we don't.

Jesus worked with a group of followers who thought they knew him, and his ways. It turned out that they were wrong. Their understanding of discipleship (what it meant to follow Jesus) was not Jesus' understanding.

John 14:1-6 - *"Do not let your hearts be troubled. You believe in God; believe also in me. My Father's house has many rooms; if that were not so, would I have told you that I am going there to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am. You know the way to the place where I am going."*

Thomas said to him, "Lord, we don't know where you are going, so how can we know the way?"

Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."

The last week of Jesus' life he tried to show his followers that the way to God was through the cross. Jesus promised he had a place prepared for them. Thomas, one of the twelve, in exasperation expressed what the others likely felt, "Lord we don't know where you are going, so how can we know the way?" Jesus pointed out that the way was through him! Leadership, boldness and confidence can be fine qualities – unless you do not truly know the way!

Follow Jesus – he will lead you safely home.

With love,
Larry

Heavenly Father – Thank you for guiding our lives and leading us back to you. We praise you for our Lord Jesus, the way, the truth and the life. Teach us to listen and follow after him. Amen.

Tuesday, November 10, 2020

Some Gave All

Good Morning,

Tomorrow our nation will celebrate Veterans Day. It is a time to remember all those who have served our nation in the armed forces. Many of you grew up with a strong military mindset in your family. Perhaps you or other men and women in your family served in this way.

I saw a bumper sticker many years ago that made me think about those who have do so much for our country. The sticker read, “**All gave some. Some gave all.**”

John 15:12-13 - *My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends.*

When my uncles returned from WWII only two of the three came home. My Dad's oldest brother was killed in the Philippines near the end of the war. His story played out in thousands of homes who gave up their loved ones to fight for freedom. A second brother was shot down out of a plane and taken as a prisoner of war. He lived with night terrors the rest of his life, dreaming about that moment.

Our son-in-law served this nation for 20 years before his retirement. He earned a “Bronze Star” for his heroic efforts on the battlefield. He lives with stories he will never tell. We are so proud of him for all he has done.

Today and tomorrow I urge you to remember those who have served and have given their lives for our nation. Please take time to pray for and to say thank you for them.

With love and gratitude,
Larry

Heavenly Father – We thank you for those who served and who gave so much to guard and protect our freedom. Remind us to love and care for one another. Whatever our tasks in life involve may we, as your children, learn to love as Jesus loved. – Amen

Wednesday, November 11, 2020

You Are Elected

Now that the elections are over (some states, of course, are still counting ballots). I thought it might be nice to consider the idea of “election” in the scriptures for our devotional thoughts.

Romans 11:28-29 - *As far as the gospel is concerned, they are enemies for your sake; but as far as election is concerned, they are loved on account of the patriarchs, for God’s gifts and his call are irrevocable.*

One of the great struggles the apostle Paul faced in his life was that God’s people, the Jewish people, God’s elect, had rejected Jesus. That was not the case with all Jewish people. Some did believe. Most however, did not believe that Jesus was the Messiah.

God had elected (chosen) Israel out of all the people on the earth. It was certainly NOT because of their goodness, but because of God’s great love and mercy. Their outright rejection of Jesus caused Paul great pain.

Look up **Romans 9:1-5**

He pointed out how they had been greatly blessed by God, receiving the law, the Patriarchs, the temple and tracing the human ancestry of Jesus, the Messiah through them. We are reminded that all of us are now elected.

Peter wrote that to churches scattered throughout the ancient

world:

1 Peter 1:1-2 - *Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, To God’s elect, exiles scattered throughout the provinces of Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia, who have been chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through the sanctifying work of the Spirit, to be obedient to Jesus Christ and sprinkled with his blood: Grace and peace be yours in abundance.*

All have been elected (chosen) by God to know the Father, Son and the Holy Spirit.

2 Peter 1:5-7 - *For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; and to godliness, mutual affection; and to mutual affection, love.*

Here Peter urges the church to make great efforts to add to their faith. He says by doing these things they will never fall.

1 Peter 1:10-11 - *Therefore, my brothers and sisters, make every effort to confirm your calling and election. For if you do these things, you will never stumble, and you will receive a rich welcome into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.*

No matter how your candidates fared this past week, you have been elected.

Heavenly Father – Help us to remember that you have chosen and elected all of us to love and serve you. May we make every effort to grow in our faith and knowledge of you and your Son. Help us to be salt and light in the world you created. Remind us of the important

Thursday, November 12, 2020

The Lord's Prayer

Matthew 6:9-13 - *"This, then, is how you should pray:*

*"Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
And forgive us our debts,
as we also have forgiven our debtors.
And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from the evil one.'
[For thine is the kingdom, and the power,
and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen]*

Luke 11:1-4 - *One day Jesus was praying in a certain place. When he finished, one of his disciples said to him, "Lord, teach us to pray, just as John taught his disciples."*

*He said to them, "When you pray, say:
"Father, hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come.
Give us each day our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins,
for we also forgive everyone who sins against us.
And lead us not into temptation."*

We all know that Jesus was a man of prayer. Luke the physician and sometimes a travel companion of the Apostle Paul, describes Jesus as being in prayer often. In fact, of all the things Jesus had to teach his followers, it is noteworthy that they asked him to teach them how to pray. These Jewish men who had likely been to the synagogue in their community and possibly to the Temple in Jerusalem to hear numerous prayers, wanted Jesus to teach them to pray! There must have been something about the way our Lord prayed that inspired others.

We do not know anything else about John the Baptist teaching his followers about prayer. Dr. Mark Black in his work on the Gospel of Luke says, "It is uncertain whether or not Jesus intended his disciples to repeat these very words. However, first century Jews regularly recited prayers in unison at the synagogue."

You know this prayer very well and perhaps it has meant a lot to you at special times in your life. I hope you will read it in both the account of Matthew and Luke. Pray the prayer out loud several days in a row. Please allow it to speak to your life.

We all need to acknowledge the holiness of God, our own need to rely on him and to pray for his guidance in this world, let's ask for his forgiving grace.

Heavenly Father – We acknowledge that you are God and we need you in our lives. May your kingdom come and your will be done here on earth. Forgive our sins and teach us to be forgiving of others. Yours is the kingdom, the power and glory forever. Amen

Friday, November 13, 2020

Follow the Example of Jesus

Luke 6:12-16 - *One of those days Jesus went out to a mountainside to pray, and spent the night praying to God. When morning came, he called his disciples to him and chose twelve of them, whom he also designated apostles: Simon (whom he named Peter), his brother Andrew, James, John, Philip, Bartholomew, Matthew, Thomas, James son of Alphaeus, Simon who was called the Zealot, Judas son of James, and Judas Iscariot, who became a traitor.*

Luke shows Jesus in prayer during critical moments of his life. One of those moments was just prior to the selection of his twelve apostles. Luke tells us that the decision was so important that Jesus went into the hills alone and spent the entire night in prayer to God. It was not until the next morning that God made it clear to his Son whom to select. Many people had been with Jesus. He needed the wisdom of God to guide his decision about those who would be future leaders in the church. Their task would be enormous. They would need to endure great persecution for their faith and would have numerous obstacles to overcome. One of those twelve would eventually betray Jesus.

The decisions you and I face regularly are likely not quite of this magnitude. However, the example of Jesus is there before us again. We should listen to his words, follow his example and make choices that impact our lives based on prayer, sometimes extended prayer over a lengthy period of time.

With love,
Larry

Heavenly Father – We all face many choices on a regular basis. Help us to seek your will for our lives. Teach us to pray as Jesus did about those important decisions. Remind us that “prayer was the air Jesus breathed.” Teach us how to be more like him. Amen

Saturday, November 14, 2020

Prayer and Transformation

The Gentiles (non-Jewish audience) to whom Luke was writing were seeing that Jesus was a man of prayer. Notice Luke's emphasis on prayer: at Jesus' baptism (**Luke 3:21-22**), the choosing of his apostles (**Luke 6:12-16**), in Gethsemane (**Luke 22:39-44**), as well as while he hung on the cross (**Luke 23:44-46**). There are many others in scripture, but one is particularly significant and is found in **Luke 9:28-35**.

Look up Luke 9:28-35

I spoke about the Transfiguration of Jesus a few days ago from **Mark 9**. This story is also found in **Matthew 17**. Keep in mind that the main point of this story is that God is calling people to listen to his son! When Moses and Elijah appear on the mountain talking with Jesus they are suddenly taken away. These two powerful representatives of the Law and the Prophets have come and gone. Now there is only Jesus, God wants these men to listen to him. This was a key moment in Jesus' ministry. It must have impacted Peter as well because many years later he wrote:

2 Peter 1:17-18 - *He received honor and glory from God the Father when the voice came to him from the Majestic Glory, saying, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased." We ourselves heard this voice that came from heaven when we were with him on the sacred mountain.*

Jesus had taken Peter, James and John up on a mountain to pray. While Jesus was praying his appearance changed (the Greek word means to be transformed and is used only two other places in the New Testament (**Romans 12:1-2** and **2 Corinthians 3:18**). This life changing moment for Jesus and his apostles began while he was praying.

We all need life changing moments. From that passage in **2 Corinthians 3:18** we are reminded that God's Spirit is at work in our lives to transform (change) us into the likeness of his Son!

Transformation often begins with prayer!

With love,
Larry

Heavenly Father – Change our hearts and change our lives as we look to Jesus. We believe we are all “a work in progress” being transformed by your Spirit regularly into the likeness of your Son. Help us to yield our will to yours as you try to work in our hearts. In the name of Jesus – Amen.