

Monday, November 2, 2020

Clothe Yourselves With Love

Colossians 3:12-14 - *Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.*

When the Apostle Paul wrote this letter, he had never been to Colosse. He had heard about their faith and learned about some of their struggles. He reminds them that they are children of God and calls them to a life of love. He further defines that life as having compassion, kindness, humility, etc. He calls the church to work together and above all to be filled with love. Those are powerful words from Paul.

Colossians 3:15-17 - *Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell among you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God. And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.*

Paul called the church to a life of peace and gratitude. He urged the church to allow the word of God to dwell in them, especially in their hearts. He reminded them that everything they did was to be done to the glory of God.

I hope we might re-read these scriptures a few times. I know I need to be reminded that this is who God has called me to be. I have no control over anyone except myself. May each of us demonstrate a spirit of compassion, kindness and humility as we strive to serve God and others!

With love,
Larry

Heavenly Father – Thank you for loving us and for calling us to be your children. Fill our hearts today with a spirit of kindness and love. May these things overflow from our hearts to others around us.

In the precious name of Jesus – Amen.

Tuesday, November 3, 2020

Devote Yourselves to Prayer

Colossians 4:2-6 - *Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful. And pray for us, too, that God may open a door for our message, so that we may proclaim the mystery of Christ, for which I am in chains. Pray that I may proclaim it clearly, as I should. Be wise in the way you act toward outsiders; make the most of every opportunity. Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone.*

These final instructions from the Apostle Paul are clear. He expected this to be a praying church. In fact, he urged them to be devoted to prayer. I was reflecting upon the early days of the church in Jerusalem. From the first moments of the church we read:

Acts 2:42 - *They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.*

They were devoted to the instructions of the apostles, to each other, to breaking bread together and to prayer. Read through the book of Acts and see that for yourself, please! Prayer mattered to them and it should to us as well. I hope we will make time to pray regularly and to devote ourselves to prayer.

Many of us are busy people and we like to accomplish things – to get things done. I am a list maker, and it brings me much happiness to cross things off my lists. (True confession: It is not as much fun to put the list on my phone!) I often reflect on the life of Jesus and one day especially stands out to me. It is found in **Mark 1:21-29**. I hope you will read the story. Here Mark seems to describe one busy day in the life of Jesus: healing a man possessed by a demon, teaching in the synagogue, healing a woman who is ill and having the whole town come out to him that evening after a very busy day. All of that is impressive and it shows us the love and compassion of Jesus. But what he does next has spoken to me the most. “Very early in the morning while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place where he prayed.” (**Mark 1:35**)

May we find our quiet, solitary place to pray to the Lord every day!
With love,
Larry

Our Father – Forgive us when we have tried to substitute hard work for prayer. We need to be close to you and feel your presence in our hearts and lives. Teach us to be still and know that you are God. May we find ways everyday to say that we love you and to hear your voice speak to our hearts.
In the name of Jesus – Amen.

Wednesday, November 4, 2020

Give Thanks to the Lord

Psalm 107:1-3 - *Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good;
his love endures forever.*

*Let the redeemed of the Lord tell their story—
those he redeemed from the hand of the foe,
those he gathered from the lands,
from east and west, from north and south.*

November is the month we celebrate Thanksgiving. It will likely be a little different this year in some respects. The Psalmist urges God's people to *give thanks to the Lord*. I have thought about that instruction a lot over the years. Many of you try very hard to be grateful and thankful people. Sometimes when the circumstances are difficult, we find it hard to be this way. The Psalmist reminds us that the God who created us is good and his love endures forever.

When the apostle Paul wrote his letter to the Philippians, (as well as Colossian, Ephesians and Philemon) his circumstances were not ideal. He was under house arrest in Rome. (Likely the experience described in Acts 28:16-31.) He faced an uncertain future but still called the church to live in such a way that Christ would be honored. (**Philippians 1:27**)

There is no doubt that Paul's faith had deepened and matured over the years as he trusted in Jesus.

Philippians 4:11-13 – *I am not saying this because I am in need, for I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. I can do all this through him who gives me strength.*

These are powerful words from a man who had learned to be content in any and every situation. He truly believed that God was with him through all kinds of circumstances. Not everything was good, far from it, in Paul's life and likely in yours. But he did promise that *"My God will meet all your needs according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus."* (**Philippians 4:19**)

With love,
Larry

Heavenly Father – Remind us again to be thankful people. We rely on your grace and mercy. Please help us to learn to grow in our gratitude. May we learn the meaning of being content in all situations, realizing that you will meet all of our needs. In the name of Jesus, our Lord – Amen.

Thursday, November 5, 2020

We Are the People of His Pasture

Psalm 95:1-7 - *Come, let us sing for joy to the Lord;*

let us shout aloud to the Rock of our salvation.

Let us come before him with thanksgiving

and extol him with music and song.

For the Lord is the great God,

the great King above all gods.

In his hand are the depths of the earth,

and the mountain peaks belong to him.

The sea is his, for he made it,

and his hands formed the dry land.

Come, let us bow down in worship,

let us kneel before the Lord our Maker;

for he is our God

and we are the people of his pasture,

the flock under his care.

Today we continue our “Thanksgiving theme.” The Psalm we have read is a powerful one. It reminds us to come before God with a spirit of joy and thanksgiving. The Psalmist urges us to sing and shout to the “Rock of our salvation!” He is a great God, the king of all. The creation is his – all of it. The Psalmist urges us to bow down and kneel before God. He reminds all of us that we belong to him and this is a time for worship and praise!

I hope we will find time each day to offer a song, a praise and a prayer to God. Let us humble ourselves before this great God we serve. May we come with a spirit of humility and thanksgiving! We

belong to him. Great is the Lord and most worthy of praise!

How will you worship him today? How will you offer praise and thanksgiving?

Romans 12:1-2 – *Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship. Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.*

Paul gives us insight into one way of bringing praise to God. We do this by offering ourselves regularly as living sacrifices to him. From **Colossians 3:16-17** we are reminded to, *Let the message of Christ dwell among you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom through psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit, singing to God with gratitude in your hearts. And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.*

With love,

Larry

Our Father – Teach us to come before you with joy, thanksgiving and a spirit of gratitude. You are a great God! May we offer ourselves to you every day in service. Help us to realize that everything we say and do is to honor you.

In the name of Jesus – Amen.

Friday, November 6, 2020

Shout for Joy to the Lord!

Psalm 100 - *Shout for joy to the Lord, all the earth.*

*Worship the Lord with gladness;
come before him with joyful songs.*

Know that the Lord is God.

*It is he who made us, and we are his;
we are his people, the sheep of his pasture.*

*Enter his gates with thanksgiving
and his courts with praise;*

give thanks to him and praise his name.

*For the Lord is good and his love endures forever;
his faithfulness continues through all generations.*

Personal worship is always important. Perhaps you sing in the car, the shower or as you exercise. I hope you will take time regularly to “shout for joy to the Lord and to worship him with gladness!” Maybe reading a Psalm out loud would help you or even praying one of the Psalms in your prayer time would be good. God wants to hear from you!

Part of coming before the Lord is doing so with a spirit of thanksgiving and praise. I wonder if we find time regularly to offer our thanks and praise to God. Perhaps we could list the things that we have to praise God about and then do that! Many years ago, a professor of mine pointed out that Ephesians 1:3-14 is all one sentence in Greek.

Ephesians 1:3-14 – *Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual*

blessing in Christ. For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love he predestined us for adoption to sonship through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will—to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves.

In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God’s grace that he lavished on us. With all wisdom and understanding, he made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ, to be put into effect when the times reach their fulfillment—to bring unity to all things in heaven and on earth under Christ.

In him we were also chosen, having been predestined according to the plan of him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will, in order that we, who were the first to put our hope in Christ, might be for the praise of his glory. And you also were included in Christ when you heard the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation. When you believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God’s possession—to the praise of his glory.

Amazingly, it is Paul expressing praise to God for the blessings he has in Jesus Christ!

“Count Your Blessings” is an old favorite hymn to many. It reminds us to be grateful for all the Lord has done. I hope we will!

Heavenly Father – You are a good God. We are your children and we come before you to offer praise and thanksgiving for all you have done. Help us each day to praise you and offer thanksgiving for all you have done. In Jesus’ name – Amen.

Saturday, November 7, 2020

Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty

Revelation 4:1-2 - After this I looked, and there before me was a door standing open in heaven. And the voice I had first heard speaking to me like a trumpet said, "Come up here, and I will show you what must take place after this." At once I was in the Spirit, and there before me was a throne in heaven with someone sitting on it.

Revelation 4:8b-11 - Day and night they never stop saying:

"'Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty,' who was, and is, and is to come."

Whenever the living creatures give glory, honor and thanks to him who sits on the throne and who lives for ever and ever, the twenty-four elders fall down before him who sits on the throne and worship him who lives for ever and ever. They lay their crowns before the throne and say:

"You are worthy, our Lord and God,

to receive glory and honor and power,

for you created all things, and by your will they were created

and have their being."

The apostle John had one final, powerful mission to carry out for Jesus before he died. Jesus appeared to him while John was on the island of Patmos. (Read Revelation 1:9-20) This was an island off the Asian coast where Rome often kept political prisoners. I have always wondered if John felt "cheated" by his fate. After all, he had faithfully served Jesus longer than all the other apostles. He has so much more to do for God. What good was it to be in a place like this far away from the action?

Jesus called John to deliver crucial messages to seven churches in Asia who desperately needed to hear God's word. John faithfully wrote and sent those messages to the seven churches. Imagine how much we would be missing if this had not taken place!

In Revelation 4 after writing out these messages for the churches, God allows John to "peek" behind the door open to heaven. What an amazing moment and a powerful reward for this faithful servant! God allowed John to catch a glimpse of what heaven would be like. I hope you might read Revelation 4 and 5. You will be moved at all that God was showing John.

The focus seems to be on worshipping and praising the Lamb of God (Jesus). This takes place day and night as people "lay their crowns" before the feet of Jesus, the one who is worthy to receive glory, honor and praise.

As we close out our week of "Thanksgiving and Praise" let us remember Jesus and be grateful!

With love,

Larry

Heavenly Father – Thank you for things John saw and the things he said. May we fall down before you with praise and thanksgiving for the Lamb who was slain for our sins. As we read John's story, we are reminded that heaven is real and one day we will stand before you praising the Lamb of God. Maranatha – Come Lord Jesus - Amen