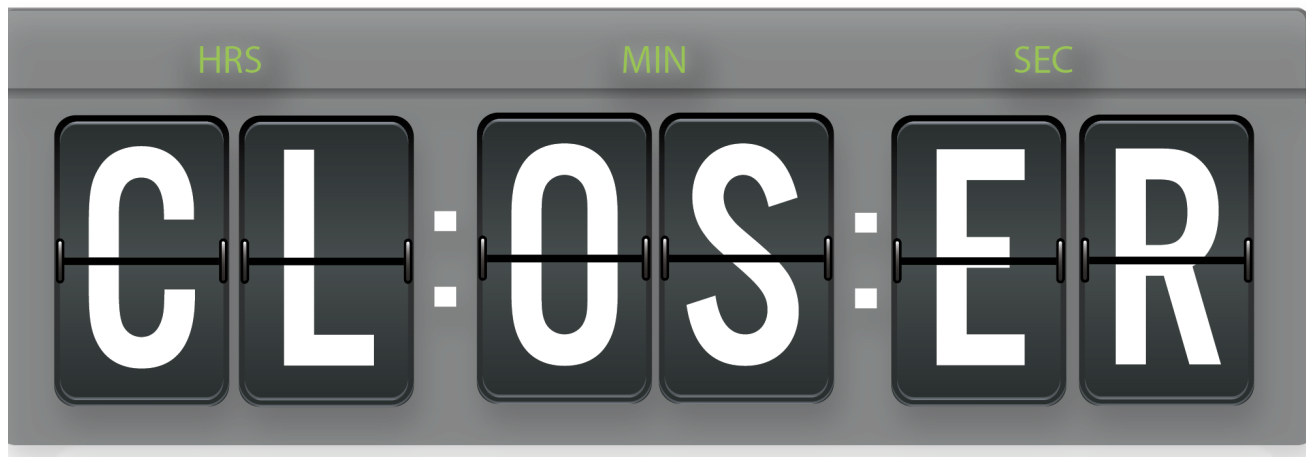




MARCH 2024 VOLUME 3



MARCH

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					1 Day 61	2 Day 62
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DAY 61

Numbers 30-31 • Mark 9

DAY 61

Numbers 30-31 • Mark 9

Keeping Our Word

Keeping Our Word

Keeping Our Word

Keeping Our Word

Keeping Our Word

Keeping Our Word

Keeping Our Word

Father, the temptation to lie or twist the truth is strong. Help us to be people of our word so that we reflect you.

Amen.

Numbers 32-33 • Mark 10

Child-Like Trust

NOTES

DAY 63

Number's 34-36 Mark 11

Scripture Reading

An Oasis of Grace

Numbers 35:6-15

TODAY'S FOCUS

“Select some towns to be your cities of refuge, to which a person who has killed someone accidentally may flee.”
Numbers 35:11

An oasis is a place in the desert where water is found. It's like an island in a barren wilderness where people can find refreshment and rest.

Six of the forty-eight cities that were given to the Levites were to be cities of refuge like an oasis in the desert. These cities were sprinkled throughout Israel, and they served as a refuge for anyone who accidentally took the life of another person. The one accused of murder still faced a trial, but a city of refuge protected that person from vigilante justice.

Cities of refuge were a place of safety, hospitality, rest, justice, and grace. They were like home base in a game of tag. The accused murderer was safe in the city of refuge. The refugee could be assured of being treated fairly and justly.

As recipients of God's grace, we must be an oasis of grace to others. We need to make our homes and churches a refuge for others by sharing the same grace that we have received. Many people in our world need a place to settle and find rest. Is your home open to people who are hurting? Are our churches welcoming to people who need forgiveness and healing?

Reach out to refresh others with God's love.
Have you asked Jesus to remember you?

Prayer

Father, help us to provide oases of grace to others. May we share the same mercy that we have received in Christ. In his name.

Amen.

NOTES

Deut. 1-2 • Mark 12

NOTES

Deut. 3-4 • Psalms 36 • Mark 13

The River of Delights

NOTES

Deut. 5-6 • Psalms 43 • Mark 14

Scripture Reading

Rest in God

Deuteronomy 5:12-15

TODAY'S FOCUS

“Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a sabbath ...”
Deuteronomy 5:13

Sabbath keeping is a sign of faith. Setting work aside one day a week is a way of saying that we have more faith in our Creator and Sustainer God than we do in ourselves. Keeping Sabbath recognizes that while we are workers in God's fields, the fields are still God's.

Today most Christians keep Sabbath on Sunday, the day of Christ's resurrection. It is easy to think that any work we do on that day is an exception. We need to get it done; it's too important to let go until Monday. But that kind of thinking denies God the right to be Lord of Creation and Lord of the Harvest. We rob God of his time. We act as if it all depends on us. But it doesn't. All our efforts will be futile without God's blessing.

Sabbath keeping can easily slip into legalistic rule keeping, in which we argue about which sports we can play, or how many miles we can travel on a Sunday afternoon. But legalism misses the point. We cease labor when we keep Sabbath in order to rest in and enjoy the work completed for us in Christ. It's salvation that is celebrated on the Sabbath. Sabbath remembers the day in which the Lord delivered us. We were slaves, but now we are free. We were in bondage to a harsh taskmaster, but now we're redeemed to serve a generous Lord. So let's not become slaves to our own work. Rest in God and in God's amazing work in Christ..

Prayer

Father, forgive us for acting as if our own work is what will save us. Thank you for the work of your salvation, finished in Christ, in whose name we pray.

Amen.

NOTES

Deut. 7-9 Mark 15

Deut. 7-9 Mark 15

Scripture Reading Prayer

The Curse of Crucifixion

Mark 15:25; Galatians 3:11-14

TODAY'S FOCUS

It was nine in the morning when they crucified him.

Mark 15:25

Crucifixion was the most horrible of deaths. Some victims hung for days in the scorching sun until finally the weight of their body, nailed at the hands and feet, collapsed their lungs. Any other death was preferable. Crucifixion was so horrible that it was inappropriate to mention it in conversation. No one imagined that the cross might become a religious symbol. Because of the cross Minucius Felix in his dialogue Octavius called Christianity a sick delusion. He said that anyone who worshiped a crucified person should himself be crucified.

The Bible also talks about the horrors of crucifixion. The cross is called an *onense* (Galatians 5:11), a sign of shame (Hebrews 12:2) and foolishness, and a stumbling block (1 Corinthians 1:23). Deuteronomy 21:23 states that “anyone who is hung on a pole [crucified] is under God’s curse.”

All of this adds significance to the fact that Jesus Christ was not just killed, but crucified. Have you noticed that Mark uses segments of time (“nine in the morning,” “noon,” “three in the afternoon”) to describe Jesus’ crucifixion? He wants us to reflect on the long, agonizing struggle Jesus endured for us on the cross.

And Paul sees the transforming blessing for us: “Christ re-deemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us.” Jesus took on the curse so that we will not be cursed.

Lord, amid our busyness, may we stop to focus on all you have done for us. Through your death we can live!

Amen.

NOTES

DAY 68

Deut. 10-12 • Mark 16

Scripture Reading

The Hope of the Resurrection

Mark 16:1-8

TODAY'S FOCUS

“He has risen!” Mark 16:6

For many of us, the fear of death is our greatest fear. No matter how hard we try, we cannot avoid death's frightening reality.

Death seems like the last and greatest enemy. But the good news is that in Jesus' resurrection God has provided the solution to death and to the fear of death.

In our reading for today, what the women planned to do was not pretty, but it was an act of devotion to Jesus to see that he had a proper burial. Because he had been crucified just before sundown on Friday, there hadn't been time to properly anoint and prepare his body for burial before their holy Sabbath day. So "when the Sabbath was over," the women bought spices and went to anoint Jesus' body, according to their custom.

But things didn't go as planned. Arriving at the tomb, the women were greeted by an angel, who told them something that transformed their lives and changed the world. "You are looking for Jesus the Nazarene, who was crucified," said the angel. "He has risen! He is not here." In an instant their entire understanding of life and death began to change. Jesus had gone from life to death to new life. His resurrection became death's defeat, and in the light of that, Paul could write, "Death has been swallowed up in victory" (1 Corinthians 15:54).

Christ is risen—for you! Do you believe that?

Prayer

Father, thank you for the assurance that Jesus has risen from the dead, and that we also will rise because we believe in him. Thank you for the promise of new life forever in you.

Amen.

NOTES

Deut. 13-15

Deut. 13-15

Scripture Reading

Not an Option

Deuteronomy 15:7-11

TODAY'S FOCUS

There will always be poor people in the land.
Deuteronomy 15:11

For all the social programs, time spent, and monies given, poverty is still with us. Is that what God means in our reading today? Is that what Jesus meant in Matthew 26:11? Will poverty never disappear? Today's reading doesn't answer that question. Rather, it reflects on how we treat people who have less, or are indebted: Don't manipulate the laws of debt forgiveness, but give without a grudging heart. Do not be tight fist, but openhanded. This applies to the needy who are closest to you as well as to those who are far away.

Rather than solving the problem of poverty, God instructs his people to be generous to the needy. This suggests that the needy are not the only ones with a problem. Not having enough is devastating. But enjoying plenty with a grudging heart, a tight fist, or a merciless attitude toward the poor rots the soul. Blaming the poor for their poverty is wicked; and complaining about the rich is self-defeating. Let the needy not begrudge those who have, nor be tight-fisted with those less fortunate, for they know what it means to be needy. Christ exempts none of his disciples from the practice of generosity. And from those to whom much has been given, much is expected.

Do not withhold from others God's generous giving to you. There's always someone who needs something.

Prayer

Lord, may we use your gifts to us-gifts of teaching, liberal giving, encouragement, showing mercy with generosity and open hands. In your name we pray.

Amen.

NOTES

DAY 70

Deut. 16-18 • Psalms 38 • Gal. 2

Scripture Reading

Christ in Me

Galatians 2:20-21

TODAY'S FOCUS

I have been crucified with Christ . . . The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.
Galatians 2:20

Today's verses give a testimony of what it means to be a believer. Here Paul gets deeply personal about his relationship with Christ. He uses "I" several times to describe his own faith and trust in the Savior. Paul explains earlier that he was once a severe legalist. He believed he could keep the law perfectly and be righteous before God, but that was impossible. There's no way we can ever make ourselves right with God. We are made righteous only through believing a promise that Jesus' blood, shed on the cross, pays the whole debt of our sin. Jesus fulfilled all the requirements of the law for us, and he is the only One who could do that because he never broke the law. He was totally without sin.

So Paul learned, by grace, that he had to stop thinking he could earn salvation by trying to keep the law. Instead, he said, he had to die to the law in order to live for God. And he identified so closely with Jesus that he testified, "I have been crucified with Christ" as if his own body had been stretched on the cross. So now, said Paul, his old way of life was dead: "I no longer live, but Christ lives in me." This is the good news! We are not our own but are grafted into him who lives in us (see John 15). We are justified (made righteous) by faith in Christ alone! Can others see that Jesus is living in us?

Prayer

God of grace, by your Spirit, fill us with new life in Christ so that we may live as believers grafted into him forever.

Amen.

NOTES

Deut. 19-21 • Gal. 3

Baptismal Clothes

TODAY'S FOCUS

The same is true for the Christian identity we “wear.” May God’s Spirit give us all grace today as we wear Christlike virtues for the world to see.

Amen.

NOTES

DAY 72

Deut. 22-24 • Gal. 4

Scripture Reading

Leftover Sheaves

Deuteronomy 24:17-22

TODAY'S FOCUS

When you are harvesting in your field and you overlook a sheaf, do not go back to get it.
Deuteronomy 24:19

“Never leave money on the table.” This classic advice from business negotiators instructs people to squeeze as much out of every deal as possible, to drive tough bargains and maximize every opportunity. During the harvest, some sheaves of grain would inevitably fall to the ground. Good business sense would dictate that the harvesters would go back and collect those sheaves.

But that's not the way things went in ancient Israel. God instructed his people to use the harvest as an opportunity to care for vulnerable members of society: the poor, the foreigner, the orphan, the widow. The gospel changes the way we view our financial resources. God has no problem with businesses turning a profit. But profit is not the believer's only motive.

“Remember that you were slaves . . . and the Lord your God redeemed you,” God tells his people. Just as God rescued Israel from slavery in Egypt, so he rescues us from slavery to sin. Because of Jesus’ work, our worth is not in how much we can grasp, but in the new life provided by our Redeemer. As a result, we have the privilege of telling others about God’s redeeming work. We use words to tell the story of Jesus’ victory over sin, and we express this in our actions as we care for people around us. How is God’s redeeming work flowing through you to others?

Prayer

Lord, in redeeming us, you have put us in a place to care for others. Show us the people who need to know Christ's care through us.

Amen.

NOTES

Deut. 25-27

How Can We Live by the Spirit?

Paul helps to answer these questions. If we are to live by the Spirit, we have to stop acting as if we are in control of our lives. We have to let ourselves be led by the Spirit of God. We must “obey only the Spirit’s instructions.” We need to stay in step with the Holy Spirit. Only the Holy Spirit can help us become and be what the Lord wants us to be in the coming year. We have to listen to what the Spirit tells us by turning to the book of the Spirit, the Bible. We have to pray each day to be filled by the Spirit. And Jesus himself assures us that God, who dearly loves us, will “give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!” (Luke 11:13).

Amen.

NOTES

Deut. 28-29 • Gal. 6

Carry Burdens

NOTES

DAY 75

Deut. 30-31 • Psalms. 40 1 • Cor. 1

Scripture Reading

The Cross as Foolishness
(To the World)

1 Corinthians 1:17-31

TODAY'S FOCUS

The message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing.
1 Corinthians 1:18

People outside of the Christian faith may wonder how we can celebrate a gruesome death that happened 2,000 years ago. How can a single state-sponsored execution so long ago be the source of redemption for the whole universe? As 1 Corinthians 1 suggests, that seems to be a rather foolish thing to try to explain to others.

Wouldn't a solution that reveals more power be more impressive? That way of approaching things tends to make our cultural values the ultimate norm by which we judge God. But we are called to do the opposite. The cross is one of best places to begin our cultural resisting efforts. As Paul tells us in 1 Corinthians 1, the God of the Bible is the kind of God who chooses the lowly, the weak, the seemingly foolish to accomplish mighty things. The cross, which can seem foolish, is actually the richest expression of God's wisdom.

This "upside-down" way of doing things can seem really strange and even foolish. But the "upside down" kingdom of God is actually right-side up.

So get to know your neighbors and share with them what can seem like the foolishness of the cross. You are speaking God's wisdom. Invite them to join you in reorienting your world around the clearest statement of God's saving love for all of us.

Prayer

Lord, help us to be suspicious in a holy way. Help us to be suspicious of anything the world deems important so that we can compare it to the power of the cross.

Amen.

NOTES

Deut. 32-34 • 1 Cor. 2

Scripture Reading

The Holy Ghost

1 Corinthians 2:6-16

TODAY'S FOCUS

“What no eye has seen, what no ear has heard, and what no human mind has conceived” these are the things God has revealed to us by his Spirit.

1 Corinthians 2:9-10

Christians used to refer to the Holy Spirit as the Holy Ghost. We probably dropped that term because ghosts are scary, while the Holy Spirit can be our best friend and continuous companion. But maybe we lost some of the mystery of life in the Spirit when we left the word “ghost” behind. There is a mysterious spiritual world out there beyond what we see with our eyes and hear with our ears. But we can connect with that world when we surrender our life to Christ and are filled with new life in the Holy Spirit.

The Bible explains that the natural person cannot understand the things of the Spirit because they are spiritually discerned. When we seek only material blessings, we miss the greatest blessing of all. When we look only at the world around us, we miss a spiritual reality that is close, real, and available: life in the Spirit.

Come and explore this mysterious reality made concrete by God's revelation in the Bible. Come and meet the person of the Spirit of God. The Spirit is a person, and he wants a personal relationship with you. The Spirit of God wants to fill you, empower you, teach you, enlighten you, lead you, groan with you, pray through you, and even sing through you. The Holy Spirit has marvelous gifts for you and tasty fruit that people around you will crave.

Prayer

Spirit of Jesus, open my eyes to life in the Spirit. May I not miss the hidden wisdom of God by settling for mere glimmers in the natural world around me.

Amen.

NOTES

DAY 77

Joshua 1-2 • Psalms 37 • 1 Cor. 3

Scripture Reading

Courage

Joshua 1:1-9

TODAY'S FOCUS

“Be strong and very courageous.”
Joshua 1:7

Our hearts stir with the stories of courageous people in the Bible. We admire Abram for leaving his homeland to follow the Lord. We applaud Moses for marching in before Pharaoh with God's demand "Let my people go!" We love to hear of young David going out to meet mighty Goliath. Well, look at God's approach to Joshua, who is about to take over in Moses' place. God's first words to Joshua are about courage. Three times in his address to Joshua, God repeats the challenge; "Be strong and courageous."

Courage is needed when the task is big and this task is immense! God says, in effect, "Call Israel together; cross the Jordan; conquer the cities; overcome the enemies; resist their gods. Yes, the enemies will be fearsome, but you must be courageous!"

Courage has always been a necessary quality among the people of God. Standing for righteousness in a society that accommodates itself to evil takes courage. Spreading the true gospel of Jesus Christ in a culture that wants to say any religion will do, takes courage.

Allegiance to Jesus Christ in a world that is often against Christ takes courage. Paul's charge to his friends in Corinth applies to us all. "Be alert. Continue strong in the faith. Have courage, and be strong" (1 Corinthians 16:13, NCV).

Prayer

O Lord, I know there are issues to face, temptations to withstand, and enemies to meet. Give me a courageous heart, that I may be firm in my obedience. For Jesus' sake.

Amen.

NOTES

DAY 78

Joshua 3-6 • 1 Cor. 4

Scripture Reading

Faithful Servants

1 Corinthians 4:1-5

TODAY'S FOCUS

Now it is required that those who have been given a trust must prove faithful.

1 Corinthians 4:2

God desires that we reflect his faithfulness. His Spirit wants to grow faithfulness in our lives so that increasingly we may become like Jesus. When the apostle Paul wrote to the believers in Corinth, he said that as servants of Christ, we have been entrusted with the “mysteries God has revealed.” Elsewhere Paul said we are like ordinary jars of clay into which God has stored a great treasure (see 2 Corinthians 4:7). These “mysteries” and “treasure” are, in fact, the message of the gospel (see Ephesians 3:4-6; Colossians 1:25-27). We are now ambassadors of Christ and heralds of the good news of God’s salvation in Christ. And those who have been given such a trust, Paul explains, “must prove faithful.”

Faithfulness has a lot to do with steadiness and dependability. Wishy washy lives don't please the Lord. To the half hearted disciples living in Laodicea, Jesus wrote these words through John: "I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot. I wish you were - either one or the other! So, because you are lukewarm neither hot nor cold I am about to spit you out of my mouth" (Revelation 3:15-16). What master wants servants who are half faithful? When Jesus, our Master and Savior, returns, he will be looking for servants that have remained faithful, just as he has remained faithful to us.

Prayer

Father, help us to be faithful so that when Jesus returns, we will hear him say to us, "Well done, good and faithful servant." In his name we ask this

Amen.

NOTES

Joshua 7-8 • Psalms 69 • 1 Cor. 5

The Sword of the Lord

TODAY'S FOCUS

The instruction to circumcise all the Israelite soldiers made no military sense. Blood loss from surgery would weaken the army; it would take extra time for the men to regain strength. But the surgery God required would show God's strength through Israel's weakness.

Before wielding his sword against the people of Canaan, God used it, in a sense, on his own people, to remind them of their identity. Since the time of Abraham (Genesis 17) circumcision had been a sign of total commitment to God. Before engaging in battle against Jericho, God called Israel to arm their commitment, to show they belonged to him, body and soul. In addition, Joshua learned from the Lord's army commander that he had to change his thinking to prepare for doing battle God's way. Today we engage in bringing the gospel of the Lord to people who do not believe in him. What conditions must we meet before doing so? Must we make sure we get a proper education? Gain the backing of a church? Be willing to be scorned? Have enough time to visit people? All of these are important, but they are not enough.

***“Have thine own way, Lord.” Guide us to
serve you faithfully.
Amen.***

NOTES

Josh. 9-11 • 1 Cor. 6

You Are a Temple

TODAY'S FOCUS

It is never a pleasant experience when the Holy Spirit shows us what really needs to change in our lives, but we aren't left to do all the work ourselves. In fact, on our own we cannot overcome the sin that needs clearing out. We need God's power in order to change, and the Spirit works in us to make sure we do.

Amen.

NOTES

DAY 81

Joshua 12-14 • 1 Cor. 7

Scripture Reading

"Unselfish Use of Our Bodies"

1 Corinthians 7:1-7, 32-35

TODAY'S FOCUS

Unmarried people are concerned about the Lord's affairs: being devoted to the Lord, but married people are concerned about how to please their spouse. 1 Corinthians 7:32-35

1 Corinthians 6 makes it clear that our bodies do not belong to us but instead as believers our bodies belong to God. 1 Corinthians 7 takes that truth to the next step by applying it to everyone and provides instructions regarding how we are to treat our bodies in the context of others. Everyone is in one of 2 groups, married or unmarried (single), and is to see their bodies not as their own possession but rather as a servant for the purposes of God.

Just as it was for the people of Corinth, it is natural and tempting for us to be selfish in the use of our bodies. Married people are to guard against selfishness that leads to depriving their partner of intimacy and care. Single people are to guard against selfishness that keeps them too busy with their own desires having little or no time for the ministry of God.

We are created for God's glory, and we are to use our bodies in such a way that others receive the love of God. Though some have interpreted scripture that abuse in one form or another is acceptable, the Bible does not teach that. When we read scripture in light of its full context, we understand the power of the love of God for us to be loved, receive love and to give love in how we use our bodies.

When we are God centered, we are able to balance self-care with the care for others just like Jesus. Jesus gave Himself to others while not losing Himself because He knew who He was and His purpose (John 13:1-5).

Prayer

Father, help us to see our bodies and lives as Your possessions and use them in godly ways in ministering to others to bring You glory and further Your kingdom, in Jesus' name.

Amen.

NOTES

DAY 82

Joshua 15-17 • 1 Cor. 8

DAY 82

Joshua 15-17 • 1 Cor. 8

Asking Makes the Difference

TODAY'S FOCUS

Joshua 17:3-4

Imagine the boldness of Zelophehad's daughters (Mahlah, Noah, Hoglah, Milkah and Tirzah) to go to Moses and express their situation and to ask for their inheritance of land. If they had not asked for it, their family would not have received an allotment since their father died in the wilderness and did not have sons. (Numbers 27:3-7)

Sometimes the difference between possessing or not possessing something is our asking for it. Our asking for it will not only bless us but could also be a blessing to others. What are we leaving on the table that God may be willing to give to us?

Father, help us to be bold with a humble heart and armed with information in asking for a blessing. Please make the results of our requests to be a blessing to us and others in Jesus' name.

Amen.

DAY 83

Joshua 18-20 • 1 Cor. 9

Scripture Reading

Give Your All for God

1 Corinthians 9:19-27

TODAY'S FOCUS

Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one gets the prize? Run in such a way as to get the prize. 1 Corinthians 9:24

Great displays of discipline, commitment, dedication, hard work and tenacity occur at the Olympics. When we know the history of the athletes competing in the Olympics, we are inspired, amazed and excited for them as they compete. It is as if we feel a sense of affinity with them. In some cases, we become part of the athlete's cheering section, wanting them to be triumphant in their competition.

In 1 Corinthians 9 Paul expresses his commitment, dedication and tenacity regarding his desire and call to preach the gospel. Though he should receive financial support from the church, he does not. Paul's focus is on Christ and making sure people hear, understand, and accept the gospel. Crossing the finish line to fulfill the call on his life is more important to Paul than fighting for his right to receive financial support. Paul understood the cost of his "race" and would not be side-tracked, even if it involved sacrificing financial support.

As believers, it is not the race against others that we must win, but it is the race against laziness, complacency, indifference, cowardice, and fear. These and other things can cause us to fail in achieving our life's purpose. Instead of giving our whole self to the assignments that God has given to us, we surrender to the temptation to do just enough or just a little more than others.

God calls us to be like Paul in giving our entire effort and using every gift, talent, and skill that God gives us for His glory and to complete His purpose in our lives. Are we doing that?

Prayer

***Father, thank You for every gift, talent and skill that You have given us and are helping us to develop. Help us to use each one fully and in the way You want us to use them. Help us not to allow anything to hinder our full surrender to You. In Jesus' name we pray.
Amen.***

NOTES

Joshua 21-22 • Psalms 47 • 1 Cor. 10

Scripture Reading

Celebrating God

Psalm 47:1-9

TODAY'S FOCUS

God reigns over the nations; God is seated on his holy throne.

Psalm 47:8

For many believers, it is exhilarating to attend weekly morning worship service. For some exhilaration comes from the preaching or teaching of scripture, and for others, it is the singing of praise and worship songs or a combination of both items.

The Psalmist reminds his audience of the greatness of God and that He is King over everyone, everywhere. He also reminds the people of what God has done for them through his statements in verses 3 and 4: God had conquered nations and given them land (inheritance). Notice the posture of God, He is seated on His throne, which is a reference to His power and control over His kingdom.

Recalling the actions that God has done on our behalf should affect us in two ways: it should help us to know God's character and provoke us to praise and worship Him. He deserves our adoration and desires it. We were created for His purpose and His glory. (Ephesians 1:3-14) This is the reason that when we praise and worship God, we feel peace and get to experience God's power. His peace and power replace fear because we know that God has everything under control and that we can accomplish anything with God's help just as the people of Judah did in 2 Chronicles 20:19-22.

It is easy to just sit and watch others engage in worship and thereby make it a second-hand experience. However, praise and worship are participatory activities. Our level of intensity in doing them reflects our understanding and appreciation of who God is and what He has done for us.

Prayer

***Father, help us to remember what You have done and keep doing for us. Help us to fully engage in expressing our appreciation for and declaring what we know about Your character. In Jesus' name we pray.
Amen.***

NOTES

DAY 85

Joshua. 23-24 • Psalms. 44 • 1 Cor. 11

DAY 85

Joshua. 23-24 • Psalms. 44 • 1 Cor. 11

Scripture Reading

Deadly Appetites

Scripture Reading

Deadly Appetites

Joshua 24

TODAY'S FOCUS

But as for me and my household, we will serve the LORD. Joshua 24:15

In the Old and New Testaments, there are warnings given to people of faith regarding idols. As Joshua is preparing for his transition, he warns the Israelites to obey God and not to serve and worship idols because God will judge them and they will die. Paul also warns the Christians in Corinth to be careful of idol worship. In both the Old and New Testaments people were enticed by their appetites... appetites for something to satisfy their longings for comfort and control which caused them to abandon God and His ways. Because they satisfied their appetites outside of the will of God, God judged them, and they died.

On several occasions, the Israelites found comfort in the form of idol worship. When they lived in Egypt they were surrounded by idols and falsely assumed the idols would provide the comforts of a good life and power over their enemies. Likewise, the Corinthian believers may have made the same assumptions based on their past habits of idol worship.

Joshua and Paul instructed those who believe in God to live for Him and not allow their misguided appetites to lead them astray. Idol worship is birthed out of a legitimate need or appetite that is met outside of the will of God. It replaces God with something or someone as the way for it to be met. Idol worship at its core is selfish and thrives in selfish behaviors. It seeks to provide satisfaction to oneself at the expense of others. When people indulge in idol worship, they seek primarily to get their own needs met and have no regard for God's will or the needs and care of others.

Sometimes it is easy in our society for us to hide our idol worship because we have knowingly or unknowingly disguised it. However, if we ask God to show us our motives and we are honest with ourselves, it will become more visible.

Prayer

**Father, help us to worship and serve
you in complete obedience and
abandon idol worship as well as guide
our families to do the same in Jesus'
name.
*Amen.***

NOTES

Judges. 1-3 • 1 Cor. 12

One Church

1 Corinthians 12:27

Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it.
1 Co 12:27

I still get a kick out of the fact that some people call our church, “The One”! Before becoming “One Community Church” we were just called, “One Church”. In those days, even more, people called us, “The One”. Pastor Conway was always gentle in his correction, explaining that Christ is “The One”. We are “One Church”. Despite the confusion, I love the name of our church. Although the inspiration for our name comes from Jesus’ “High Priestly Prayer” in John 17, this passage in 1 Corinthians 12 also highlights the importance of unity.

In distinguishing between the different roles and gifts of each person, Paul, the writer of 1 Corinthians emphasizes the oneness of the body of Christ. He is clear that our uniqueness is not to be diminished. We are not clones and there is no such thing as a Christian prototype. When we appreciate one another's unique attributes, it frees us to work in our area of giftedness and the Body of Christ is blessed.

However, many times, we lean to either extreme; not allowing for diversity or not contending for unity. Both are necessary to the health of the Church. We must vigilantly fight against divisions. Yet we must never force conformity. People can be different, but their uniqueness is designed to be a blessing to others not a point of contention nor a means to gain attention.

***Lord, we thank you for the unique ways in which you have enabled us to be a blessing to others! May we use our gifts to bring glory to your name.
Amen.***

[illegible]

DAY 87

Judges 4-5 • Psalms. 39, 41 • 1 Cor. 13

DAY 87

Judges 4-5 • Psalms. 39, 41 • 1 Cor. 13

Scripture Reading

Scripture Reading

1 Corinthians 13:4-5

TODAY'S FOCUS

Love keeps no record of wrongs.

1 Corinthians 13:4-5

We often have to make a choice either to extend forgiveness to someone, or to hang on to and nurse a grievance. A friend we trust betrays us. A college roommate criticizes us publicly. A business colleague swindles us. Someone posts something on social media that isn't true, but it goes viral and stains our reputation. When wronged, we want justice. We want the perpetrator to feel our hurt, to know the pain they have caused. We want revenge.

Paul imagines an accountant recording items in a ledger, but he says love doesn't do that. It doesn't record wrongs done against us. Have you ever listened to a person describe something done against them decades ago? They remember every ugly detail. Some of us have no statute of limitations. We review our ledger regularly, and we spoil our lives.

More than one person in history never forgot a slight against him. He might have appeared to bury the hatchet, but each time he marked the spot. A pastor said, "Most of what I talk about with people in my church is learning to forgive." Many of us have a bitterness we polish like a priceless antique. We cling to it like a child clutching a favorite, filthy rag of a blanket.

Prayer

Father, heal our old wounds. Give us the grace of forgiveness. End our record keeping. Through Jesus, who paid for all our wrongs.

Amen.

NOTES

DAY 88

Judges 6-7 • Psalms. 52 • 1 Cor. 14

Scripture Reading

A Hero in Hiding?

Judges 6:1

TODAY'S FOCUS

The angel of the LORD came where
Gideon was threshing wheat in a wine press
Judges 6:11

Where do we find heroes? We might try to find them in sports, movies, television, or the news. But what about in a wine press?

Gideon was threshing wheat in a most unlikely place. People usually separated wheat from chaff out in the open air so that breezes could blow the unwanted chaff away. But Gideon did not live in a “usual” time.

Israel had again fallen away from allegiance to God. So God was using the Midianites as an instrument of punishment. The Midianites plundered Israel and ravaged the land, destroying the crops and harvests. As a result, farmers threshed grain in places sheltered from an open view in a wine press, for instance. It was a time of fear, and Gideon was a fearful man.

Sometimes people think heroes of faith have no fear, but that's not true. Following God is often a journey that begins with an encounter in which God calls the fearful away from their fears. Do you hear the irony in God's message to Gideon through his angel? "The LORD is with you, mighty warrior."

How can we face our fears and join the journey of faith? By remembering that we are not alone. The Lord is with each one of us. Still today God desires to give that same message to us as ordinary people whom he calls for his extraordinary purposes.

Prayer

Dear God, you know my fears. Help me to face them by trusting in your forgiveness, presence, and provision through Jesus; Immanuel (God with us). Amen.

NOTES

DAY 89

Judges. 8 • Psalms. 42 • 1 Cor. 15

Scripture Reading

We Will Be Changed

1 Corinthians 15:50-58

TODAY'S FOCUS

The perishable must clothe itself with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality.
1 Corinthians 15:53

Ours is a world in which iron rusts, paint peels, flowers fade, computers crash, businesses go bankrupt, and our bodies break down and die.

Easter, however, is the overture to the last trumpet call. At the sound of that trumpet, “the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed” “in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye.” Easter is the introduction to the time when our perishable bodies will be clothed with the imperishable and our mortal bodies with immortality.

Death proves that we are not now naturally immortal. Death proves that mere fallen “flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God.” In other words, unless you somehow undergo a radical change, you will never enter the kingdom of eternal life with God. Easter is the glorious evidence that such profound change can happen. Easter faith, resurrection faith, is the conviction that it will happen. And personal faith is the conviction that it will happen to each believer personally.

Do you believe that it will happen to you? Do you have resurrection faith? Easter is the evidence that God is far stronger than Satan, that good is stronger than evil, that truth is stronger than the lie, that love is stronger than hate, and that life is stronger than death.

Thank God for Easter!

Prayer

***Heavenly Father, without resurrection, our faith is useless. Convict us so powerfully of the good news of Easter that we can already today begin to live new lives. In Jesus.
Amen.***

NOTES

DAY 90

Judges. 9-10 • Psalms. 49 • 1 Cor. 16

Scripture Reading

The Mercy of God

Judges 10:10 – 16

TODAY'S FOCUS

Then the sons of Israel said to the Lord, “We have sinned, do to us whatever seems good to you; only please save us this day.” So they removed the foreign gods from among them and served the Lord, and He could no longer endure the misery of Israel.

Judges 10:15-16

We are beginning to see a recurring theme throughout the book of Judges where Israel is yet again abandoning the Lord and serving false gods. This causes the Lord to burn with anger, so He turns the people over to their idols they believe are worth worshiping. As a result, they begin to experience great difficulty.

Similarly, many Christians today unwittingly believe worldly pleasures are better than submitting to God. Many of our idols include living for money or our careers. Perhaps you're focused on sex or sensuality that has begun to rule over your life. Whatever your idol, one thing is certain, they slowly take our affections off Christ and make us slaves to sin.

The real danger is when we get into difficult situations and run back to God asking for Him to save us without truly repenting. God doesn't just want words from us, and then for us to just turn back to the same sin.

God desires that we ask for forgiveness, but he also wants us to turn away from our idols. He doesn't want to see us suffering but to experience his mercy, we must let go of the actions and lifestyles that are contradictory to His perfect will. What sin are you continuing to struggle with today that prevents you from wholly focusing your heart on God?

Prayer

Lord, help me to identify the idols in my life that prevent me from a heart that is fully satisfied in you. May I not be filled with worldly affections but instead be full of the Holy Spirit.

Amen.

NOTES

DAY 91

Judges. 11-12 • Psalms. 50 • 2 Cor. 1

Scripture Reading

Troubles and Comfort

2 Corinthians 1:1-11

TODAY'S FOCUS

Scripture Reading

Indeed, we felt we had received the sentence of death. But this happened that we might not rely on ourselves but on God, who raises the dead.

2 Corinthians 1:9

The apostle Paul and his missionary companions experienced many hardships in their travels. For example, Paul writes in 2 Corinthians 1, "We were under great pressure, far beyond our ability to endure, so that we despaired of life itself. Indeed, we felt we had received the sentence of death." How did Paul pull through such hardships and persecution? He said that God comforted him and gave him power to overcome them.

Everyone needs consolation. When we need consolation, we can rely on God to comfort us and provide what we need.

Even so, God allows us to face difficult troubles in our lives at times. And when that happens, we can look back to the experiences of other believers, like Paul and his companions and we can be encouraged that God gave them the comfort and strength to carry through.

We must rely on God, not on our own power. When we realize that God knows our situations and that we totally depend on him, we can trust God with our souls and lives. Our destiny is safe in his hands.

There is working power in prayer. Who works when we pray? God. Notice that Paul doesn't pray by himself, but that he asks the church to pray too. God comforts us, answers our prayers, and often works miracles when we face hardships. We can trust our faithful, comforting God each day.

Prayer

Comforting God, guide us to pray each day, walking together in faith and knowing that we are safe in Your hands. In Jesus. Amen.

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Notes

This image shows a blank sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

