

Daily Walk on the Rock



St. Paul Lutheran Church

“Your Refuge from the Storm”

Date: December 3, 2023

Text: 1 Corinthians 1:3-9; Mark 13:24-37

Theme: Here With Us...To Give Us Hope

Day 1: Monday—What’s Next? When you hear the question, ‘what’s next?’ what comes to mind: Christmas, the next chore on your to-do list, tomorrow’s news-paper headlines, or something totally different? Our theme texts remind us that beyond Jesus’ birth, death, resurrection, and ascen-sion is Jesus’ return. Is this something you await with eager expec-tation; does it create hope in your heart; are you afraid; do you even ponder his coming again? Pray the Spirit will enable you to hear God’s word for you, today, as you read Mark 13:24-37; John 14:1-6; Acts 1:6-12; and 1 Corinthians 1:3-9. What do the texts teach us about how we should live today, in light of his coming again? Spend time in prayer.

Day 2: Tuesday—Look beyond the Manger!

Read Luke 2:1-7 and John 1:14 and reflect on Getty/Townend lyrics: “In Christ alone, who took on flesh, fullness of God in help-less Babe...” (*2001 Thank you Music*) Do you stand in awe of God who became man because of an ineffable love for us? And yet, we mustn’t linger indefinitely at the manger, gazing at the sweet, holy infant, for the cross was already looming. Read Simeon’s words in Luke 2:21-35 and Paul’s in Philippians 2:6-11. Paul’s words not only look back to the cross but also speak of Jesus’ glorification and exaltation. And there is more; read Job 19:25-27 and Revelation 22:20. Pray you will joyfully celebrate Jesus’ birth and his promise to return.

Day 3: Wednesday—Do Not Be Afraid!

Sometimes we read Scripture passages that speak of tribulation, natural disasters, persecution, and things to come with fear and trembling. But hear Jesus say, “Do not be afraid” and allow God’s promises to strengthen your heart as you read Matthew 10:28-31, 38-39; Mark 13:24-37; John 14:27-29; and 1 Corinthians 1:3-9. In what do you find your peace, hope, and security? Jesus warns us that life will not be easy (*John 16:33*) but he promises us his abiding presence (*Matthew 28:20; John 15:4*). Use Deuteronomy 31:8 and Isaiah 26:3-4 to guide your prayer.

Day 4: Thursday—Hope!

For many, there is much anticipation as Christmas approaches, but are we excited and do we eagerly await Jesus’ return? Are our hearts filled with hope for the future, not because of circumstanc-es, but because of Jesus? Biblically, hope is not wishful thinking; it is confident expectation. Ponder this as you read Mark 13:24-37;

Romans 8:1-4,14-25,31-39; 15:13; and 1 Corinthians 2:9. Con-sider memorizing Romans 8:24-25 and 15:13. Pray using Edward Mote’s lyrics: “My hope is built on nothing less than Jesus’ blood and righteousness...when all around my soul gives way, He then is all my hope and stay...On Christ, the solid rock I stand...”

Day 5: Friday—We Worship the King

Begin today’s devotional time by praying Charles Wesley’s lyrics: “Come, Thou long-expected Jesus, born to set Thy people free; from our fears and sins release us; let us find our rest in Thee...Born Thy people to deliver, born a child and yet a King, born to reign in us forever, now Thy gracious kingdom bring...” Read Matthew 2:1-2,10-11; John 17:1-5,24; 1 Timothy 6:11-16; and Revelation 17:14. Do you, like the Magi, seek Jesus, so that you might worship him? Do you, like Wesley, pray that Jesus will reign in your life; do you honor Jesus as King and Lord? How does this affect our desire to heed Paul’s words in 1 Corinthians 1:4-9? Be alert and pray.

Day 6: Saturday—How then Shall We Live?

It is easy to thrill as we consider the baby in the manger, but are we willing to be Jesus’ disciples? What is the cost of discipleship? Read Matthew 5:43-44; 6:19-21; 10:38-39; 25:31-40; 28:18-20 and John 13:12-17,34-35; 15:8-13,16-17. How does this talk of discipleship relate to Jesus’ exhortations to “Be alert!” or “Keep awake!” and “Watch!” (*Mark 13:32-37*)? How does your life re-lect your response to Jesus’ words, “each with his work/assigned task” (*Mark 13:34*)? Jesus is coming again; pray you will work and watch as you wait expectantly.

Day 7: Sunday—“Come, Lord Jesus!”

What does Scripture say about God’s promises in Isaiah 40:8; 55:10-11; Mark 13:31; John 17:17; 2 Corinthians 1:20; and Rev-elation 19:6-9; 22:6? Do you believe God’s Word? When we read Jesus’ words in Matthew 24:36,42-44; 25:1-13; Mark 13:24-37 and Revelation 22:7,20, do we pray, “Amen. Come, Lord Jesus.”? Do we, do you, long for Jesus’ return? Spend time in prayer, then sing or pray the 12th century Latin hymn, “O Come, O Come, Emmanuel”: “O come, Thou, Dayspring, come and cheer our spirits by Thine advent here; disperse the gloomy clouds of night, and death’s dark shadows put to flight...Rejoice, rejoice, Emmanuel...”



St. Paul Lutheran Church

“Your Refuge from the Storm”

LifeGroup

January 21, 2024

Psalm 19 and 1 Timothy 4:6-16

Community

Welcome each other and spend some time catching up.

THEME FOR TODAY

We all have influence in the lives of others, which makes us all leaders at some level. Christian leaders are invited to work out in the gymnasium of God’s Word and find ways to strengthen our lead.

WHAT DO WE WANT OUR SMALL GROUP TO KNOW?

Jesus is indeed our leader, and, like all great leaders, Jesus leads by example. He didn’t just tell us to serve, he served. He didn’t just tell us to sacrifice, he made the ultimate sacrifice. He didn’t just tell us to love, he loved us unconditionally. Far more than a teacher, Jesus both models a new way of living and empowers us, shaping us through the work of the Holy Spirit for a new way of living by giving us new life.

WHAT DO WE WANT OUR SMALL GROUP TO DO?

We want each person, by God’s grace, to be a servant leader influence in the life of someone else during the coming week. We want them to consider how uniquely gifted they are for leadership, identify a specific person to influence, and then act on that impulse.

ICEBREAKER QUESTIONS

Who would you consider to be a leader that you have followed in your life? Why did you choose to follow this leader? What, exactly, did your following entail?

PRAY TOGETHER

God, we want to follow you and change the world by being living change-agents. We want to trust in your grace to change our lives. As we study your word today, show us, by your example, how to lead into service, love, and sacrifice. As your community of faith, allow us to influence one another in ways that transform the world. Amen.

Content

For today’s study we’ll take one verse at a time, read it, read the context, and then discuss it together.

Paul likely met Timothy on his first missionary journey. He was so impressed with the young man that he became Timothy’s mentor. The two of them worked together to start the church in Ephesus. When Paul needed to leave Ephesus, he realized that the community struggled with many problems and was not ready to be left on its own. Paul left Timothy to establish local leadership, and confront and correct false teaching. Paul’s letter was meant to encourage and further instruct Timothy on the assignment he was given. In this passage, Paul is calling Timothy to be an example of growing in Christian maturity for the believers in Ephesus.

Read 1 Timothy 4:6

[6] Paul is borrowing language from Stoic educational theory. “These instructions” probably refer to the content of Paul’s letter and “words of faith and the sound teaching” probably refer to the “catechesis” that was being used in the early church. Basically, Paul was calling on Timothy to be a teacher of the basics of the faith.

DISCUSS: How would you define the basics of the faith? How have you been nourished by them?

Read 1 Timothy 4:7

[7] Profane myths and old wives’ tales are contrasted with the sound teaching mentioned in verse 6. We don’t know the content of these myths, but they were probably some form of false teaching. At the very least, they were a distraction, like daytime television.

DISCUSS: What silly myths do we love to pursue?”

Read 1 Timothy 4:8

[8] Paul liked sports metaphors (hey, he was a guy!) and uses the metaphor of training in a gymnasium. But rather than working out to build biceps, the author is encouraging Timothy to train for “godliness.” In classical Greek, this word meant proper respect for the gods. Here it means that training our lives through spiritual disciplines will reflect God’s character as seen in Jesus.

DISCUSS: What spiritual disciplines are most life-giving for you? Why?

Read 1 Timothy 4:9

[9] It is not certain if this verse refers to what precedes (verse 8) or what follows (verse 10). Exactly how our training in godliness benefits us for the next life is a mystery.

DISCUSS: What do you think? What saying is this phrase referring to?

Read 1 Timothy 4:10

[10] We toil, struggle, and work out because of our certain hope in God for eternal life. Otherwise our labor would be futile. Universal salvation is proclaimed in this verse, in the sense that Jesus died to redeem the entire creation from sin and death. Some read an even further level of universalism into the phrase “especially (not exclusively) those who believe.” Others read this to mean that salvation is efficacious only for those who believe.

DISCUSS: To what end are you toiling and striving? Is it possible to describe this?

Read 1 Timothy 4:11

[11] Perhaps Timothy was a timid young man, and so Paul urges Timothy to command and teach these things to the Ephesian Christians.

DISCUSS: What things do you think Timothy is being urged to teach?

Read 1 Timothy 4:12

[12] How young Timothy was is unknown. The Greek word can refer to anyone up to the age of 40. In any event, Paul urges Timothy to earn the respect of others based on his behavior. Leadership is influence, and the strongest influence is a strong example.

DISCUSS: Who has been an example to you in speech and conduct?

Read 1 Timothy 4:13

[13] Paul gives Timothy his job description: read scripture publicly, teach sound doctrine, and preach (a word that carries the meaning “to exhort,” or to warn) about how to live.

DISCUSS: Why do you think these three things were so important in the formation of this faith community?

Read 1 Timothy 4:14

[14] Paul does not define the gift that Timothy has, but encourages Timothy to not forget it and to draw upon it. This verse would have encouraged Timothy by reminding him that the larger gathering of leaders recognized and confirmed his giftedness for leadership.

DISCUSS: Are you able to describe what giftedness you have? Share this with the group.

Read 1 Timothy 4:15

[15] Timothy was to practice what he preached. When people saw his growth in grace and faith, it would serve both as an example and encouragement to the Ephesian Christians.

DISCUSS: Why is it important that others see our progress?

Read 1 Timothy 4:16

[16] What Paul had called Timothy to would require careful attention, not sloppy or haphazard effort. It would also require sustained effort and perseverance. Paul was not suggesting that Timothy's efforts would bring about his own salvation and the salvation of others. Paul is probably talking about more effectively living out the implications of the salvation proclaimed in Christ.

DISCUSS: Name one way we live out the salvation proclaimed in Christ.

The power to change us has a name and a face; Jesus Christ! Sing or say the lyrics to the song *Change My Heart, O God*.

Change my heart oh God, Make it ever true.
Change my heart oh God, May I be like You.
You are the potter, I am the clay.
Mold me and make me, This is what I pray.

GOING DEEPER

Two quotations help introduce Psalm 19. The first is from the German philosopher Immanuel Kant: "Two things fill the mind with ever new and increasing wonder and awe, the more often and the more seriously reflection concentrates upon them: the starry heaven above me and the moral law within me."

The second is from the Christian writer C. S. Lewis: "I take this to be the greatest poem in the Psalms and one of the greatest lyrics in the world." The emphasis is on God's self-revelation in creation, scripture, and the human heart (from "The Bible Exposition Commentary – Old Testament").

(*Read Psalm 19.*)

NATURAL REVELATION

Just as artwork can tell us something about the artist, so does creation tell us something about the Creator. This theme of natural revelation is found in other passages, most notably Romans 1. Creation is a "wordless book" that everyone can read to know at least something about God. Verse 2 says that knowledge about God "bubbles forth" daily. It is as if the creation cannot hold back revealing the glory of the Creator. In addition, the psalm focuses on the universality of this proclamation. Everyone, everywhere "hears" this proclamation if they have eyes to see and ears to hear.

REVELATION THROUGH THE LAW

This is the dominant theme of the psalm, and it mirrors Psalm 119 in extolling the virtues and benefits of knowing and obeying God's law. In typical Hebraic parallelism, many words are used to point to the same

reality: law, testimony, precepts, commandment, fear of the Lord, verdicts. Each of these points to the Pentateuch. While our cultural context tends to look upon law as restrictive, the ancient Hebrews saw the law as a gift which separated them from other cultures, reminded them of their chosen status, and guided them into "right" living. The list of benefits of implied obedience is pretty stirring: it restores the soul, makes wise the simple, rejoices the heart, enlightens the eyes.

Ultimately these verses are not just a testimony to the law, but to the Law-Giver who exposes our sin, forgives our failures and sets our feet (and our lips) on a path that will make glad the heart of God.

DISCUSSION

The ancient Hebrews were led by the law every day. What leads you as a Christian? Give a specific example.

The law reveals our sin. In Psalm 19, how is this true? How do the words of our mouth and the meditation of our heart affect our daily living?

Application

We're all on assignment from God. We're all gifted for a specific way to influence one another. This is so important, and you'll discover great joy in this process if you'll allow God to use you. Your leadership, your influence, in someone's life could make all the difference.

This week, select one person that, by God's grace, you will seek to influence. Report back to the group next week.

PRAY TOGETHER

Come, Holy Spirit, and help us use the gifts you have given us this week to influence one person in a positive way. Teach us how to lead by your example. We want to be agents of change in this world. Help us to trust in your grace to change us and lead us into a new way of living. Amen.

ADDITIONAL CONVERSATION AND REFLECTION

Prayer: First of All

1 TIMOTHY 2:1

When Paul urged Timothy to make prayer the first priority of the congregation, he also outlined different kinds of prayers:

Supplication: asking God for our own needs.

Prayers: referring to the prayers of God's people during worship.

Intercession: raising up to God the needs of others.

Thanksgiving: expressing our gratitude for all good things.

Prayer is a remarkable gift! Through Jesus' death and resurrection, we are assured that God hears our every prayer and responds with love and grace. Try using all four forms of prayer listed above during your prayer time, both personal and in small groups this week.