

Sacredise Daily Worship

Personal Worship Resources for the Week:

28 May - 03 June 2017

Thought for the Week:

This week we're living between the Ascension and Pentecost. The Scriptures love these "in-between" times, and it is often in these times that God does some of the most transforming work. As Jesus left his disciples for the last time after the resurrection, he instructed them to wait, and promised that they would become his witnesses after they had received power. But, as Matthew's Gospel teaches, the power and authority are Christ's. It is always as a result of our connection with Jesus that we can share life and grace with others.

This is why we need to wait. Building a deep connection always takes time and intentional focus. If we try to move out into the world before we have become rooted in Christ's love and life, we will inevitably find ourselves buffeted by the chaos we encounter. Then, we may end up adopting the strategies and values of the culture around us, while still claiming the name of Jesus, without realising how we have been subtly changed. But, when we make time in our lives to root ourselves deeply in Jesus, we are more easily able to remain true to the values and mission of Jesus. This is part of what was at the heart of Jesus' prayer for the disciples in John 17.

This week we focus on waiting on Christ's gift of power, and on sinking our roots deep into the life of Jesus.

Sunday 28 May 2017

Reading: John 17:1-11

Reflection: After taking three chapters of John's Gospel (as we now have it) to give one last sermon for his disciples, Jesus then turned to prayer. He carried his followers in his heart, and brought them and their needs to God with great compassion and love. As we read the first part of Jesus' prayer we notice two specific requests. The first is that his disciples would experience the eternal life they had received by knowing God through Jesus. The life of God is found in union with God, and so Jesus prays for his followers to remain in

union with God. The second request was that his followers would be one with one another. Once again we see that our loves for God and one another are completely interrelated.

Jesus' plea for the disciples to be united is linked with his prayer that they would be protected by the power of God's name. This does not imply that God's name is like a magic spell we can throw at evil. It refers to being aligned with God's purposes, values, priorities, and mission. As we align ourselves with God's name in this way, so we enjoy protection because our immersion in God's life keeps us from choosing what is destructive and dangerous. It also means that we will share life with others who have embraced God's ways, and so we will find unity.

How can you choose to find life by being united with God and with other God-seekers today?

Practice for Today: The practice of gathering with other believers for worship is a profound way to live out Jesus' prayer. In our worship we are united with God, and our hearts are captured by God's values and priorities. But, we are also united with those who worship with us, and we learn to become one people of God. Make every effort to attend a service of worship today.

Breath-Prayer for Today: As I worship you, O God, make me one with you, and with my sisters and brothers in Christ.

Monday 29 May 2017

Reading: 1 Peter 4:1-6

Reflection: Could it be true that suffering frees us from the power of sin? That's what the writer of today's passage is saying, and it's an important truth. The sin he is speaking about is living our lives in a way that ignores the pain of the world, and that seeks only to gratify our own immediate desires. There is no compassion, discipline, wisdom, or reflection in this kind of life, and it ends up being destructive. But, once the way of Jesus has taken hold of us to such an extent that we are willing to experience physical suffering for its sake, we no longer want to waste our lives in such meaningless behaviour. We would rather give ourselves to make a contribution to the world, and to draw others into the just and gracious life of God.

The writer notes that when we have made the shift away from living according to the world's way, our former friends may slander us. The reason is that we fall out of step with the values and actions of society, and we give ourselves to what is lasting, what is meaningful, and what is life-giving. Verse 6 is translated differently by different versions of the Bible, and the meaning is not completely clear, but it teaches that everyone is ultimately tested against the standards of God's Spirit. Those who embrace the ways of the Spirit are alive. Those who do not are dead. And it is these "dead" ones who most need to hear the message of Christ's new way of being and living.

How can you live in the Spirit's life today? Who needs you to share that life with them?

Practice for Today: When our lives proclaim the mission and message of Jesus, we will come into conflict with those who are invested in the systems of this world. As we grow increasingly out of step with the world's values and priorities, we inevitably become disruptive influences, whether we mean to or not. But, as we live with grace and compassion, and seek to share Christ's life with others, we proclaim the Gospel and call others to measure their lives against Jesus' way. Today let your life proclaim the Gospel.

Breath-Prayer for Today: As I embrace your way, Jesus, so I fall out of step with the world, and I share your life with others.

Tuesday 30 May 2017

Reading: Psalm 99

Reflection: In the "in-between" times when we find ourselves waiting for God to act, the greatest temptation is to believe that God has abandoned us. When God's timing does not match ours (and it seldom does) we may think our prayers are fruitless. But, today's Psalm offers encouragement that can sustain us through the waiting times. It starts by affirming that God is the monarch over all creation who deserves our praise and honour. God acts with justice and righteousness establishing fairness on the earth. Then, the Psalm reminds God's people of great leaders of the past who trusted God – Moses, Aaron and Samuel. God answered them and appeared to them, and to God's people, in the pillar of cloud. God forgave, but also "punished" (disciplined) God's people when they went wrong.

It may not feel like the world is becoming more just and fair. It may not seem like God is hearing us. It may even feel, at times, like all we receive is "punishment" from God. But, if we are able to shift our focus away from our own struggles for a moment, we can see that the world is slowly becoming more just and compassionate. There's a long way to go, but history does show a gradual move toward fairness. As we reflect on our world, we may also see our own spiritual leaders, and notice how they trust in God and how God seems to work through them. Then, after looking around, we can return to our own problems with greater faith and patience.

How can you allow your reflections on the world to strengthen your faith and your patience today?

Practice for Today: A simple, but difficult, practice is to learn to see the world through the lens of God's presence and Reign. Although the news reports may frame events in one way, when we begin to allow the Scriptures – particularly the prophets – to shape our view of the world, we begin to understand events differently. As our "seeing" matures, we begin to recognise God's work even in unexpected places, and we discover a new sense of faith, and a new ability to wait patiently for God's purposes to work out in our lives. Today let the Bible teach you to see with Jesus' eyes.

Breath-Prayer for Today: Give me eyes that see the world as you do, O God.

Wednesday 31 May 2017

Reading: John 3:31-36

Reflection: It is not clear in today's reading who the speaker is. Just before this reading, John the Baptist's disciples questioned him about Jesus, and he told them that Jesus needed to increase while he needed to decrease. The words of today's passage follow on from that statement and the important message of this passage is that Jesus is the one who was sent by God, and to whom we are called to listen. Jesus' words are God's words, and he bears witness to realities that only he has seen. He is the one through whom God's Spirit works, and through whom God's Spirit is given. Which means that life is found in union with Jesus.

It is unfortunate that we have reduced this call to life to a short prayer, and membership in a particular religion. John's words could not be further from this idea. For John the life of Jesus is seen in the new reality that Jesus called the Reign of God. When we embrace the mission, values and priorities of God's Reign we discover a quality of life that is rich and full and vibrant. But, when we reject God's ways, our lives inevitably end up being smaller and poorer. So, the call to believe is a call to embrace a whole new way of living, of thinking, of behaving, and of interacting with others. In this time of waiting and reflecting, we do well to consider what it means for us to believe in Jesus, and how this faith is being revealed in our lives.

How can you respond to Jesus by embracing his new way of being in a fresh way today?

Practice for Today: Following Jesus is not something we do once, in a moment of decision and prayer. It is a daily commitment, and a daily process of growing more like Jesus in his actions and priorities. This means that each day we need to renew our choice to live the Jesus way. Some days this will be easier than others, but when we can renew our commitment even when we don't feel like it, we truly begin to experience the sustaining life of God. Today, make a new commitment to follow Jesus in every facet of your life.

Breath-Prayer for Today: I renew my commitment to you and your way, Jesus.

Thursday 01 June 2017

Reading: Exodus 19:1-9a

Reflection: When God called Moses to liberate the people from Egypt, God instructed him to bring the people to Mount Sinai, where they would encounter God and learn whose they were. But, there was also another purpose at work here. For Moses to do the job he had been called to, the people needed to know that he was speaking God's words, and acting in God's power. It needed not to be about Moses, but about God working through God's appointed leader. This was not an ego trip for Moses, and it did not guarantee that Moses would always get everything right. It was simply a question of Moses' legitimacy being made clear, and God enabling the prophet to win the people's trust. Unfortunately, as you read the

wilderness story, it is clear that even a dramatic encounter with God was insufficient to allay the people's doubts of Moses. They frequently failed to trust him and obey his direction.

It must have been comforting for Moses, in the tough times when he faced the people's anger and refusal to follow his wise counsel, to have such a clear sense of call and empowerment by God. He knew that he didn't always get everything right - he sometimes allowed his anger and pride to get the better of him - but he always knew that God had appointed him and given him the power to always have the people's best interests at heart. As we prepare to remember God's gift of the Spirit, Moses reminds us that God's Spirit is given to empower us to love and serve those around us. We do not receive the Spirit for our own sakes, but in order to live as channels of God's grace and life. Like Moses, we won't always get it right, but in the power of the Spirit, we can learn to love and serve as Jesus did.

Who needs you to live as an empowered servant of God and neighbour today?

Practice for Today: When we pray for others, we seek to surround them with God's grace and compassion. But, in a sense, we also pray for ourselves, because we are the ones whom God will call to answer our prayers. Our words, hands, gifts, and presence are the tools God will use to touch and heal the ones for whom we pray. This is why we constantly need to be filled with God's Spirit, and why our prayers should always include an invocation of the Spirit's presence and power. Today, as you pray for others, invite God's Spirit to empower you to be the answer to your prayers.

Breath-Prayer for Today: Fill me with your Spirit, O God, that I may be the answer to the prayers I pray for those around me.

Friday 02 June 2017

Reading: Romans 8:14-17

Reflection: After exploring, through Romans, how our sin and brokenness have separated us from God and brought destruction on our world, the apostle Paul proclaims the work of Christ, which frees us and heals us and makes us children of God. Then, in Chapter 8 he speaks about the promised gift of the Holy Spirit who fills us,

show us that we are God's children, and empowers us. When we receive God's Spirit we know that we no longer need to be slaves to our fear, or to the oppression of any person or system, or to a vindictive God. Rather we are children with an intimate relationship with God. We are united with God, and we have constant access to God's presence and resources – God's glory.

The encouragement and inspiration of Paul's words offers such joy and confidence that we may wish he had stopped there. But, he didn't. If we are to share in God's glory, we must also share in God's suffering. This may sound contradictory, but the God of glory is also the God who suffers, and it is in the suffering that God's glory is most perfectly revealed. When Jesus died, forgiving his executioners, and ensuring that his widowed mother was well looked after, he revealed God's true nature. When we look at Jesus we see that God is infinitely loving, infinitely forgiving, infinitely healing, and infinitely welcoming. If we want to be in union with God, then we will need to become like this God in all of these ways - which means that we too will grieve and suffer for the sake of love. Only then does God's nature shine out from us to touch others.

How can you reflect the infinite grace and glory of God today?

Practice for Today: In order to reflect and experience God's glory, we need to be aware of God's glory and we need to open ourselves to receive the gift of God's Spirit. This is the work of the practice of praise. As we praise God, we become aware of God's nature, and we experience God's Spirit filling us with God's presence. And as we gaze on God's glory, we become like the God we praise, so that God's glory is revealed in us. Today, allow your praises to give you a new vision of God's glory and grace.

Breath-Prayer for Today: I praise you, O God, for your glory and grace that you desire to shine through me.

Saturday 03 June 2017

Reading: Psalm 33:12-22

Reflection: It is very tempting to place our hope and security in the things of this world. For the Psalmist in today's reading that meant strong armies and horses. For us it may mean large bank accounts,

high walls, connections with networks of important people, or strong weapons. But, while these things may appear to make us safer, they actually do not. Time and again our history reveals that faith and love are far more secure than all the power and money we can accumulate. There is nothing that can protect us from life's grief and pain, but there are some things that can enable us to navigate them with grace and even joy. And this is why the Psalmist claims God as his hope and shield. When things get tough, it is only God's presence and power that can sustain us and carry us through.

The final words of this song are a prayer for God's unfailing love to surround God's people. It is really more of an affirmation that God's love does surround us. This weekend, as we celebrate the gift of God's Spirit, we remember that God was so eager to have intimate union with us that God came in human flesh. But, more than that, God found a way to take up residence within us and ensure that God's love is always at our centre. Now, even in the worst of times, we can find our security in God and we can live as those who share God's love wherever we may. And, if anything can heal us from what threatens us, it's the unfailing love of God.

How can you enjoy and express God's unfailing love in your life today?

Practice for Today: Love is not about how we feel. Love is about what we do. When Jesus calls us to love our friends, neighbours and enemies, he's not saying we should feel a certain way, but that we should act a certain way - in the best interests of those we love. This love is practical, and seeks to make the life of others more whole and joyful. If we can find a way to do this even with our enemies, we really do make the world a safer, kinder place. Today, seek to treat everyone with love and kindness.

Breath-Prayer for Today: As you surround me with your unfailing love, O God, so I seek to share love with others.

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