



▶ DAILY DEVOTIONAL.

Saturday/Sunday, 10/13-14/18

“The Healthy Church”

Acts 15:25-34

About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the other prisoners were listening to them. Suddenly there was such a violent earthquake that the foundations of the prison were shaken. At once all the prison doors flew open, and everyone’s chains came loose. The jailer woke up, and when he saw the prison doors open, he drew his sword and was about to kill himself because he thought the prisoners had escaped. But Paul shouted, “Don’t harm yourself! We are all here!”

The jailer called for lights, rushed in and fell trembling before Paul and Silas. He then brought them out and asked, “Sirs, what must I do to be saved?”

They replied, “Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved — you and your household.” Then they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all the others in his house. At that hour of the night the jailer took them and washed their wounds; then immediately he and all his household were baptized. The jailer brought them into his house and set a meal before them; he was filled with joy because he had come to believe in God — he and his whole household.

Monday, 10/15/18

“The Body of Christ”

1 Corinthians 12:12-27

Just as a body, though one, has many parts, but all its many parts form one body, so it is with Christ. For we were all baptized by one Spirit so as to form one body — whether Jews or Gentiles, slave or free — and we were all given the one Spirit to drink. Even so the body is not made up of one part but of many.

Now if the foot should say, “Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body,” it would not for that reason stop being part of the body. And if the ear should say, “Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body,” it would not for that reason stop being part of the body. If the whole body were an eye, where would the sense of hearing be? If the whole body were an ear, where would the sense of smell be? But in fact God has placed the parts in the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be. If they were all one part, where would the body be? As it is, there are many parts, but one body.

The eye cannot say to the hand, “I don’t need you!” And the head cannot say to the feet, “I don’t need you!” On the contrary, those parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, and the parts that we think are less honorable we treat with special honor. And the parts that are unpresentable are treated with special modesty, while our presentable parts need no special treatment. But God has put the body together, giving greater honor to the parts that lacked it, so that there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other. If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it.

Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it.

- A healthy church is one that is unified in Jesus and Spirit-led. We often use the words “Body of Christ” to refer to the Church. In that, many of us understand that simply to mean that we are a collection of people in Christ Jesus; that we are the “Body of Christ” only symbolically. However, Paul explicitly states that we, the Church, *are* the Body of Christ — not symbolically, nor as a sign — but, the actual physical Body of Christ here on earth. Moreover, each of us is a part of the Body and we each play a crucial role in how the Body lives, moves and works in the world. What do you think it means for us to live as the Body of Christ; Christ’s physical presence on earth?
- Paul also makes the case that, though unified in Christ as the one Body, we all have varied and different roles to play within the one Body. What is your role within the Body? What gifts do you have to offer the church as a whole?

Prayer: Holy God, we thank you for making us all so differently, and yet have made us to be your one, unified Body. Help us to identify and use the varied gifts you have given us to build up the other members of your Body, and to witness to you and your coming kingdom. In Jesus’ name. Amen.

Tuesday, 10/16/18

“Worship”

John 4:21-24

“Woman,” Jesus replied, “believe me, a time is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. You Samaritans worship what you do not know; we worship what we do know, for salvation is from the Jews. Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in the Spirit and in truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks. God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in the Spirit and in truth.”

- For Jews and Samaritans, worship of God was relegated to a specific place, whether on a mountain or in the temple. They believed that God was only to be found in these places. The rituals and traditions that surrounded these places and their worship there had, over time, replaced the true nature of the worship for which God’s people were created. In and through Christ, we learn the true nature of worship: worship is not tied to a specific place or set of rituals, but is undertaken in the Spirit and truth. What do you think it means to worship in Spirit and truth?
- A healthy church is one that worships in Spirit and in truth. However, sometimes we can approach worship in much the same way as the Jews and Samaritans; simply attending to the ritual aspects of it and going through the motions. Or, we get caught thinking that worship can only happen in a certain way or place. How do you best experience God’s presence through worship? In what ways can you prepare yourself to experience the presence of God through worship, no matter where or how it takes place? How might you worship in Spirit and truth throughout your week?

Prayer: Holy God, our hearts are restless until they rest in you. Help us to rest in you by giving ourselves over to worshipping you in Spirit and truth no matter when or where. Empower us by your Spirit to live lives of worship in your presence. In Jesus’ name. Amen.

Wednesday, 10/17/18

“Spiritual Growth”

Ephesians 4:11-16

So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.

Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of people in their deceitful scheming. Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of him who is the head, that is, Christ. From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.

- Continuous spiritual growth is another marker of a healthy church. Paul, here, points to the spiritual life as one of growth and maturity; of continuously growing and moving forward. What we are growing/maturing/moving forward toward is Christ-likeness. Paul also makes clear that moving toward Christ-likeness, being made like Jesus, involves growing and maturing in love.

Understood in this way, spiritual growth becomes a lifelong journey of growing in our knowledge and love of God, and of other people. However, there is so much that can get in the way or distract us from experiencing such growth. What are some of the roadblocks or distractions you face in your spiritual journey?

- How have you experienced growth in your spiritual life over the past year? In what ways do you consider yourself spiritually mature? What are some areas of your spiritual life that you could experience further growth? What are some practical steps you can take to work on that area of your spiritual life?

Prayer: Holy God, we thank you for making us in your image and for working in us by your Holy Spirit to fully remake that image within us. Bring to light areas of our lives that we need to focus on to experience growth in you. Empower us by your Spirit to continue to pursue your will in our lives and to be made more and more like Jesus. In His holy name. Amen.

Thursday, 10/18/18

“Generosity”

2 Corinthians 9:6-9

Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously. Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to bless you abundantly, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work. As it is written:

*“They have freely scattered their gifts to the poor;
their righteousness endures forever.”*

- A healthy church is one that gives of itself generously. Generosity is generally not something that comes naturally to most of us. It is something we learn and therefore must practice. Tithes and offerings are just one way that we practice being generous with what God has blessed us with. What other things have you been blessed with over the course of your life? How can you give of those gifts in order to practice being generous?

- Generosity is a spiritual practice that originates with the heart. As we grow and mature in our spiritual lives, our hearts open up more and more so that every day becomes an opportunity to live a generous life, reflecting Christ. As you think about your day ahead, what are some specific ways that you can practice generosity with your time, money, prayers, presence, witness, etc.?

Prayer: Holy God, you show us what generosity is in and through Jesus, and through the gifts you continually pour out upon us. Create in us generous hearts, that we might reflect the love of Christ upon everyone we encounter. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Friday, 10/19/18

“Service”

Mark 10:42-45

Jesus called them together and said, “You know that those who are regarded as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”

- These are Jesus' words to the disciples after James and John approach him about sitting at his right and left whenever Jesus establishes his kingdom. This was a request made out of ignorance and a desire to gain position and prominence. They simply didn't yet know the nature of Jesus' kingdom. So, Jesus tells them. He says that even he, the Messiah, came not to be served, but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many. Jesus is providing us with the model for how we are to approach life and the world around us. We are called to lives of service. A healthy church is one that gives of itself in service to God and other people. How do you serve God and other people in your day-to-day life? What is one specific act of service you can do for someone else today? What steps can you take toward growing/maturing in a life of service?

Prayer: Holy God, we thank you for the ways you give of yourself for us. Empower us, by your Spirit, to model our lives after Christ; living lives of service, not just occasionally, but every day. In Jesus' name. Amen.

**This week's devotional was written by Pastor Jake Schneider
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