



▶ DAILY DEVOTIONAL.

Saturday & Sunday, 11/24-25/18

Series Title: Staying in Love With God

Ephesians 1:15-23, New International Version (NIV)

Thanksgiving and Prayer

For this reason, ever since I heard about your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all God's people, I have not stopped giving thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers. I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better. I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in his holy people, and his incomparably great power for us who believe. That power is the same as the mighty strength he exerted when he raised Christ from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms, far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every name that is invoked, not only in the present age but also in the one to come. And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way.

TODAY'S VERSES

*For this reason, ever since I heard about your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all God's people, I have not stopped giving thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers.
(Ephesians 1:15-16 NIV)*

Traditionally, the letter to the Ephesians is thought to be written by Paul (while in prison) to the church at Ephesus. However, the format of the letter does not follow Paul's style, which includes a greeting that identifies Paul's relationship with the recipients. Therefore, it appears this letter is written by one of Paul's disciples after Paul's death to a group of churches. I think that makes this letter even more relevant for us today. It is timeless.

Family Activity: Phones put away. TV off. Gather together to listen and learn from each other. What do you think it means to believe in Jesus? How do people show love for people? What can you do to thank these people – pray for them, write a note, draw a picture. Share with someone how his/her love for people shares God's love.

Monday, 11/26/18

Ephesians 1:17

I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better. (NIV)

But I do more than thank. I ask — ask the God of our Master, Jesus Christ, the God of glory — to make you intelligent and discerning in knowing him personally ... (The Message Bible)

Before one stays in love with God, one falls in love with God. There also seems to be a progression in prayer. Prayer often starts with either requests or thanksgiving. As wonderful as thanksgiving is, sometimes we get stuck there, as though Jesus is the king of Hallmark, and only has an expectation of getting thank you notes.

The scripture today reveals there is more than giving thanks to God. The writer (disciple) is also praying the reader will get to know Jesus personally. This means getting to know Jesus spiritually, learning what Jesus wants from us, growing closer to understanding God's intent for our lives, maturing into God's love for us through Jesus.

- All healthy relationships are built on more than thanksgiving. What are some characteristics of a healthy relationship with children, family, friends?
- What do you see as potential ways you can deepen your relationship with Jesus?

Prayer: Dear God, I do thank you for Jesus; for his life, and his love. Sometimes I wonder what you want me to do with this love. I wonder how to share your love, how to live a Christian life with integrity, how to know Jesus personally. Today I pray you will open my eyes, my ears and my heart to experience Jesus' love so completely, I can do nothing but share love by being the unique person you created me to be. In the name of Jesus, Amen.

Tuesday, 11/27/18

Ephesians 1:18 (NIV)

I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in his holy people ...

As many of you know, *hope* is my favorite word. Emily Dickinson writes this:

*Hope is the thing with feathers
That perches in the soul,
And sings the tune without the words,
And never stops at all...*

What is this *hope* to which Jesus calls us? There is the perspective that this *hope* is for eternal life, life in heaven. There is another understanding of *hope* that prevails throughout the New Testament, especially in the Gospels. This *hope* is about the redemption of all of creation, bringing creation back into relationship with God. This *hope* has to do with justice. With a faith grounded in *hope*, we live as people focused on justice, redemption and righteousness now. We strive to treat people fairly. We work towards food, clothing and healthcare for all people. We seek mercy, forgiveness and love for all.

- How can you bring *hope* into your life?
- Name some ways you can offer *hope* for others. (You may need to give up something!)

Prayer: God of hope, thank you for those who took the time to record the story of creation, the life of Jesus, and the way Jesus continued to influence followers after his death, resurrection and ascension. As we look back, we see how you are a God of hope, who does not give up on any of your creation. Help us to see ways to mend brokenness, heal wounds, and be people of hope. In the name of Jesus, Amen.

Wednesday, 11/28/2018

Ephesians 1:19b-21

... and his incomparably great power for us who believe. That power is the same as the mighty strength he exerted when he raised Christ from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms, far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every name that is invoked, not only in the present age but also in the one to come. (Eph. 1:19b-21 NIV)

God raised him from death and set him on a throne in deep heaven, in charge of running the universe, everything from galaxies to governments, no name and no power exempt from his rule. And not just for the time being, but forever. He is in charge of it all, has the final word on everything. (Eph. 1:20-21 MSG)

It's Saturday, November 17 as I write this. In a few hours, I will finish officiating at two funerals in 24 hours. Yesterday, when Pastor Steve spoke at Karen Gay's service, he shared how we have this hope that joy comes from sorrow.

Then young women will dance and be glad, young men and old as well. I will turn their mourning into gladness; I will give them comfort and joy instead of sorrow. (Jeremiah 31:13 NIV)

This is the emphasis of these verses. Over and over I hear people talk about how Jesus suffered and died for us. True. *However*, Jesus' suffering and death only has meaning when we include the resurrection. Christ has died. Christ has risen! Without the resurrection, there is no hope. I love the words in these verses from The Message Bible that give us the image of Jesus sitting on a throne *deep* in the heavens.

In the United Methodist Church, the funeral service is called: A Service of Death and Resurrection. What wonderful words! Christ has died. Christ has risen! May we so live!

- What needs to die in your life, so you might live a more meaningful, purposeful and joyful life?
- How do these verses give you a clearer understanding of what it means that Jesus comes as King? (Hint: ruling over death)

Extra credit: Listen to "Mary Did You Know?" and reflect on the words.

Prayer:

What child is this who laid to rest on Mary's lap is sleeping?
Whom angels greet with anthems sweet,
While shepherds watch are keeping?

This, this is Christ the king,
Whom shepherds watch and angels sing
Haste, haste to bring him laud,
The Babe, the Son of Mary.

Thursday, 11/29/2018

Ephesians 1:22-23

And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way. (NIV)

At the center of all this, Christ rules the church. The church, you see, is not peripheral to the world; the world is peripheral to the church. The church is Christ's body, in which he speaks and acts, by which he fills everything with his presence. (MSG)

I have gone to the eye doctor since I was in second grade. For a period of years, I had to take a peripheral vision exam. I would sit in front of a larger machine, keeping my eyes focused in the middle, and pushing a button when I saw a red light blink. It was though I was looking at stars, waiting for ones on the edges of the universe to sparkle.

Christ is not like the stars on the edge of the world. The church (the body of Christ) did not come to be as stars on the edge of the world. We, as disciples (the church), are intended to be in the middle of the world, in the center of the messiness, the pain, the sorrow, *so that* we are seen as the light of Christ. In fact, when we focus on Jesus, we see pain and suffering in our peripheral vision *through* the eyes of Christ.

Now, do verses 15-16 connect the dots?

For this reason, ever since I heard about your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all God's people, I have not stopped giving thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers.

- How might you adjust your vision to see Christ as the center of the world?
- How might the church be strengthened to be a source of hope, justice and mercy for the world?

Prayer:

PRAYER OF SAINT FRANCIS OF ASSISI

LORD, MAKE ME AN INSTRUMENT
OF YOUR PEACE.
WHERE THERE IS HATRED, LET ME SOW LOVE;
WHERE THERE IS INJURY, PARDON;
WHERE THERE IS DOUBT, FAITH;
WHERE THERE IS DESPAIR, HOPE;
WHERE THERE IS DARKNESS, LIGHT;
AND WHERE THERE IS SADNESS, JOY.

O DIVINE MASTER,
GRANT THAT I MAY NOT SO MUCH SEEK
TO BE CONSOLED AS TO CONSOLE;
TO BE UNDERSTOOD AS TO UNDERSTAND;
TO BE LOVED AS TO LOVE.
FOR IT IS IN GIVING THAT WE RECEIVE;
IT IS IN PARDONING
THAT WE ARE PARDONED;
AND IT IS IN DYING THAT WE ARE BORN TO
ETERNAL LIFE. AMEN
www.motivationalwordsofwisdom.com

Friday, 11/30/18

Here we are, at the end of the month. It hardly seems possible that we are facing December and the Christmas season.

Christ calls us to be the church, his disciples, to fall in love with him, experiencing his grace, mercy, forgiveness, love and joy. Then, he pulls us close to stay in love through prayer, worship and devotion. Then he pushes us to the corners of the world to be the church focused on his grace, mercy, forgiveness, love, and joy.

As we celebrate the birth of Christ, let us be mindful that his presence is a gift – a gift we are empowered by the Holy Spirit to share with others, as individuals and as the church.

Teresa of Avila says it best. Maybe, just maybe, these are the gifts we give this Christmas.

Christ Has No Body

Christ has no body but yours,
No hands, no feet on earth but yours,
Yours are the eyes with which he looks
Compassion on this world,
Yours are the feet with which he walks to do good,
Yours are the hands, with which he blesses all the world.
Yours are the hands, yours are the feet,
Yours are the eyes, you are his body.
Christ has no body now but yours,
No hands, no feet on earth but yours,
Yours are the eyes with which he looks
compassion on this world.

Teresa of Avila (1515–1582)

As I give thanks for you, my prayer is also that you will see the light of Christ this Christmas, fall in love with Christ, and stay in love.

***This week's devotional was written by
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