



▶ DAILY DEVOTIONAL.

Saturday/Sunday, 3/2-3/19

“Who Do You Follow?”

John 6:60-71

On hearing it, many of his disciples said, “This is a hard teaching. Who can accept it?”

Aware that his disciples were grumbling about this, Jesus said to them, “Does this offend you? Then what if you see the Son of Man ascend to where he was before! The Spirit gives life; the flesh counts for nothing. The words I have spoken to you — they are full of the Spirit and life. Yet there are some of you who do not believe.” For Jesus had known from the beginning which of them did not believe and who would betray him. He went on to say, “This is why I told you that no one can come to me unless the Father has enabled them.”

From this time many of his disciples turned back and no longer followed him.

“You do not want to leave too, do you?” Jesus asked the Twelve.

Simon Peter answered him, “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. We have come to believe and to know that you are the Holy One of God.”

Then Jesus replied, “Have I not chosen you, the Twelve? Yet one of you is a devil!” (He meant Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot, who, though one of the Twelve, was later to betray him.)

This passage is part of a larger passage wherein Jesus is teaching in the synagogue at Capernaum. To the Jews gathered there, Jesus is teaching that he is the Bread of Life, and that whoever eats of his flesh and drinks of his blood remains in him, and he in them. Jesus is alluding to the life found only in him; something we celebrate in the Lord's Supper. In this, Jesus is widening the circle of who can inherit God's life and promises to include “whoever.” Jesus' promise is not just for the few, but for all who would remain in him. Many of Jesus' followers who heard what Jesus was saying had a problem with his teaching, so they walked away from Jesus. So, Jesus turns to the apostles and asks them if they want to leave, too. Peter responds by asking Jesus to whom they will go; that Jesus has the words of eternal life and is the Holy One of God.

This past week has been one of great challenges and heartache in the United Methodist denomination. In the midst of the brokenness, may we seek to get to the heart of our faith and seek Jesus, the Holy One of God, the One who has the words of eternal life. My prayer is that we, as a church, would be able to answer the question, “Who do you follow?” with conviction and assurance. May we seek to be Jesus' disciples, walking faithfully with him. May we provide a wide circle in our local context for “whoever” is seeking him, to encounter the life-giving presence of Jesus. This week, may you be blessed by the Source and Object of our hope, Jesus Christ.

Blessings in Christ,
Pastor Jake

Monday, 3/4/19

“Where Is Your Faith?”

Luke 8:22-25

One day Jesus said to his disciples, “Let us go over to the other side of the lake.” So they got into a boat and set out. As they sailed, he fell asleep. A squall came down on the lake, so that the boat was being swamped, and they were in great danger. The disciples went and woke him, saying, “Master, Master, we’re going to drown!”

He got up and rebuked the wind and the raging waters; the storm subsided, and all was calm. “Where is your faith?” he asked his disciples. In fear and amazement they asked one another, “Who is this? He commands even the winds and the water, and they obey him.”

- Throughout our lives, we often experience the winds and waves that threaten to swamp us. Not only do we experience this as individuals, but as a community, as well. In these times, fear and mistrust can overtake us. Jesus continually asks us, “Where is your faith?” This is a pointed question that we, as disciples, must ask ourselves during times of trial and turmoil. The reality is that Jesus is not only *our* Lord, but is Lord of all of creation; even the winds and waves obey him. May we experience Jesus’ calm in the midst of life’s storms as we trust in him.
- Think about/discuss a time when you have experienced a “storm” in your life. What was your first reaction? In what ways did you experience God’s presence? What do you think it looks like to trust Jesus in the midst of life’s storms?

Prayer: Holy God, you are the calm in our lives whenever we are confronted with the wind and the waves. Enable us, by your Spirit to place our faith fully in you this day, and the days to come. In Jesus’ name. Amen.

Tuesday, 3/5/19

“Unity”

Romans 15:1-9a

We who are strong ought to bear with the failings of the weak and not to please ourselves. Each of us should please our neighbors for their good, to build them up. For even Christ did not please himself but, as it is written: “The insults of those who insult you have fallen on me.” For everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through the endurance taught in the Scriptures and the encouragement they provide we might have hope.

May the God who gives endurance and encouragement give you the same attitude of mind toward each other that Christ Jesus had, so that with one mind and one voice you may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you, in order to bring praise to God. For I tell you that Christ has become a servant of the Jews on behalf of God’s truth, so that the promises made to the patriarchs might be confirmed and, moreover, that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy.

- Romans chapter 15 provides for us a rule of life. In it, Paul encourages the early church in Rome to be unified in Christ, despite some of their differences. These early Christians were squabbling over adherence to the Jewish dietary laws, to the detriment of the unity of the Body of Christ. Being of one mind and one voice, as a community, takes primary importance over and above any differences in understanding we may each bring to the table. Jesus calls us to accept one another, just as he has accepted us.
- What do you think it means to accept someone just as Christ has accepted you? Think of someone with whom you might have differences (a coworker, family member, neighbor, someone who shares different beliefs, etc.). How might you practice accepting them as Christ has accepted you? How might you extend to them Jesus' grace and mercy? Spend some time reflecting on how we, as a church body, can work toward being unified in Christ with other Christians with whom we might disagree.

Prayer: Holy God, we thank you for the diversity of experiences, ideas, gifts, etc., that you have created us with. Though we create divisions based on our differences, help us to seek you, together, that we may be of one mind and one voice as we glorify you. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Wednesday, 3/6/19

“Jesus’ Prayer”

John 17:20-23

“My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me. I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one — I in them and you in me — so that they may be brought to complete unity. Then the world will know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.

- What did Jesus pray? Most of us know how Jesus taught us to pray—what we call the Lord's prayer. We also encounter Jesus praying in the Garden of Gethsemane, as well as at other times in his earthly ministry. The longest prayer of Jesus that we encounter in scripture is the prayer we find in the Gospel of John, of which this passage is a part. Throughout Jesus' prayer in the Gospel of John, Jesus' main concern is to pray for his followers, and specifically for their unity. In this prayer we find that the Source and Object of unity is God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Jesus prays this so that Jesus would be “in” his followers, and his followers would be “in” him. Such a unity is God's gift, given out of his love for us.
- What do you think it means for Jesus to be “in” us? What do think it means for us to be “in” Jesus? What do you think unity looks like for us in the church?
- Jesus makes a direct tie between the unity of his followers and how he shows his love for the world. In other words, the Church's unity is a witness to God's love for all people. Spend some time reflecting on what, practically, it may look like to live this out in our community.

Prayer: Holy God, you have made us for yourself. You have made us to be one in you. We pray that you would work, by your Spirit, to unite us together in you. Holy Spirit, send us out into the world, in love, to be a witness to God's great love for us. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Thursday, 3/7/19

“The Love of God”

Zephaniah 3:17

*The LORD your God is with you,
the Mighty Warrior who saves.
He will take great delight in you;
in his love he will no longer rebuke you,
but will rejoice over you with singing.*

- God is consistent. Even in the Old Testament, we catch glimpses of the God of love fully revealed in and through Jesus Christ. Sometimes we simply need to be reminded that God is with us, God saves and delights in us, and in his love, rejoices over us. May you be reminded, today and every day, that you are surrounded by the love of God.
- Spend some time noticing how God is with you today.

Prayer: Holy God, thank you for being with us and for loving us. Thank you for delighting in and rejoicing over us, as we delight in and rejoice over you. Open our eyes, ears and heart to your presence today, and build within us your great love. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Friday, 3/8/19

“Hope”

Psalm 33:18-22

*But the eyes of the LORD are on those who fear him,
on those whose hope is in his unfailing love,
to deliver them from death
and keep them alive in famine.
We wait in hope for the LORD;
he is our help and our shield.
In him our hearts rejoice,
for we trust in his holy name.
May your unfailing love be with us, LORD,
even as we put our hope in you.*

- Hope is not something that comes from within us, from material things, or from other people or groups. Hope is a gift of the God who loves us. As such, hope draws us forward toward God. Discipleship entails a life trusting in God as we hope in his unfailing love. In the midst of strife and struggle, we are called to a life of hope.

Prayer: Let Psalm 33 be a guide for your prayers today.

*This week's devotional was written by
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