



Worship at Home

Liturgy, Prayers, Scripture, and Devotions blessed to turn your home into a Holy Place. God is with you, always! Read, listen, pray, and give thanks. A thankful heart opens the door of the troubled mind to Grace Greater than all Our Fear!

Holy Week Meditations and Preparations for Easter

Pastor: The Word of God for the People of God!

People: Thanks be to God.

Read each verse. Yes, out loud!
Reading out loud brings God's Word to Life. Give it the breathe of Life. Give it volume. Give it feeling. Let it take root and life in you.

Read the passage three times. Listen for a Word from God that stands out. Underline the word. It is God's gift to you. God's Word is like a seed of mercy, grace, or love planted in your mind.

Holy Wednesday

John 12:27-28

Now is my soul troubled. And what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour? No, for this purpose I have come to this hour. Father, glorify thy name...

Father, glorify Thy name. In these few words I hear Jesus heart and mind come together to place His faith in God's will, purpose, or choice for Jesus' life.

Jesus teaches us to say the same thing to the Father. In the Lord's prayer we say, Father...thy Kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth¹ as it is in heaven.

One of the questions people often ask is, “What is God’s will?” Let’s try using the Bible Dictionary’s definition of the word. “Will” means choice. Therefore, Jesus teaches his disciples to pray, Father, thy choice be done; done on earth as it is in heaven.”

Jesus tells His disciples that he has come to this hour for the sole purpose of choosing to glorify the Father’s Name. Jesus prays in order to speak and act in the way that reflects God in Heaven.

Looking ahead to John 14: 8-12, we now have eyes to see and ears to hear Jesus answer Philip’s request. Phillip said, “Lord, show us the Father, and we shall be satisfied”. Jesus says that he has always showed them the Father. He speaks the words he hears His Father say and does the works He see his Father do!

Where does Jesus go to hear the Father and see what the Father is doing? I contend the place is prayer. In Matthew’s Gospel, Jesus says we do not need many words or elegant speak! Friends, ask the Father the questions on your mind. Ask the Father about the memories, feelings, and emotions weighing on your heart. Ask and then listen. Listen until God gives you spiritual-ears to hear God’s still small voice. Friends, experiencing God and knowing facts and memorizing verses are worlds apart. Do not fear!!! “Truly, truly, I say to you, he who believes in me will also do the works I do...” (John 14:12)

What are your core, essential, foundational beliefs in Christ Jesus?

Mine are as follows:

- Jesus is God in flesh; born of Mary.
- Jesus suffered all sin. He Humbled himself to hear and see the Father prior to speaking and acting. He shows me God’s mercy through forgiveness
- Jesus died. The penalty of sin’s death is blotted away. Mercy fulfills the Law of Moses.
- Jesus rose to life-eternal. His resurrection ushers in the New Covenant. (See Jeremiah 31: 31-34). Therefore his resurrection fulfills the Prophets.
- Jesus poured out His Holy Spirit on all Flesh. The Holy Spirit gives us eyes to see this world with the Love God has for the people of this world. The Holy Spirit gives us ears to hear what the Father would have us say and do to fulfill the Great Commandment.
- These core beliefs prepare me for prayer. Sometimes I am simply obedient to Scripture. Other times I deny myself, trust these core beliefs by faith in Christ’s saving work. Still other times I spend time praying, without words, becoming as still as the Father’s still small voice. The answers come with great fear and trembling. Abiding in God’s presence causes fear in my heart and mind. My heart and mind remember the wounds of sin. Such fear turns to Awe; trembling, in indescribable joy of being washed in God’s Love.

Maundy Thursday

**John 13: 8-11 and
34**

Peter said to him, You shall never wash my feet. Jesus answered, If I do not wash you, you have no part in me. Simon Peter answered him, Lord, not my feet only but also my hands and my head. Jesus said to him, He who has bathed does not need to wash, except for his feet. .. "A New Commandment I give to you, that you love one another; even as I have loved you, that you also love one another."

Jesus' hour has arrived. He humbles himself before the disciples the same way he humbles himself before God. See how God's will is done on earth as it is in heaven! I hear Jesus saying the first step to choosing God's will on earth as it is in heaven is humility. God chose to Humble God's self to be born of Mary! Jesus humbled himself by handing himself over to be betrayed, judged, condemned, even to death on a tree of shame and guilt. (See Philippians 2)

Remember, the one who believes in Jesus will do the same things as he! Peter objects! What King in his right mind humbles himself before the people he leads? Peter is blinded by the way of the world. Like Peter we too are blinded to Jesus' Way of bringing His Kingdom on earth as it is in heaven. When Peter comprehends that his choice excludes him from having a part IN Christ, he changes his mind but keeps his focus on worldly ways. Literally, Peter says, Lord give me a bath.

No! Water is an outward sign of God's inward Grace! The Inward Grace is revealed to our neighbor's through our humility, but first we humble ourselves to be washed in Jesus' humility, mercy, grace, and love! I experience humility as an intentional CHOICE to deny the way of my heart and mind to act in accord with one or more of my core beliefs. Obedience requires humility. Too often I am tempted to hold my neighbor in obedience to my thoughts and feelings rather than being obedient to Christ. Yet, even so, God is faithful, through Jesus Christ, to send His Holy Spirit to lead me to Faith in Christ's Name, not my arrogance born of right thinking and fact checking. Trusting the work of the Holy Spirit in the lives of my neighbor is an act of humility also. More and more I appreciate the moments when I am humble enough to deny my thoughts and emotional fears and enter my soul to hear what God has to say about His Word, Son, and Salvation.

I contend the Holy Spirit leads us through humility to obedience, faith, and soul-prayer. The Holy Spirit is in all things, through all things, and present in all things to glorify the Father and lead us to choose God's choices that reveal, mercy, faith, and love.

Where in your thinking and emotions do you hear God calling you to be humble? How does this act of humility reflect the Humility of Christ?

Good Friday

John 18:17

The maid who kept the door said to Peter, Are you also one of this man's disciples. He said, I am not.

What happened to Peter? Peter watches in horror! His Lord faces the rulers of the world, the crowd, and the institution of religion. Jesus told Peter he would deny him. Who hasn't done something similar? Guilt, shame, and blame are often cast upon us by virtue of the crowd with which we identify and associate. Some call it survival of the fittest. At the end of the long night of condemnation and punishment, Peter denied Jesus. Peter let fear blind him from humility that reflects God's mercy.

I have long said that human fear blinds us to faith in Christ. Through this Lenten Journey, God has shown me that Humility and denying self functions like the threshold of the door that opens into the Kingdom of God.

I challenge us to be aware that Peter's denial of Jesus was solely to save himself. Again, Jesus told Peter that he would deny him three times. Moreover, Jesus told Peter that he would have no part in Him unless he humbled himself to be washed! Jesus does the washing with the Holy Spirit.

Indeed, we wash in water. It cleanses the body of worldly filth. Consider the cleansing power of the human heart and mind being washed in Christ's mercy, grace, and love. When the cock crowed, Peter's eyes and ears were opened with confession, the act of Humility.

It is a right and good thing to confess our sin. That is to name it. How else may the Spirit open our eyes to that which we must deny within ourselves? The Holy Spirit nudges our hearts and minds with the specifics. The more specific we are with our confession, the clearer our sight becomes in seeing Christ's suffering as an act of humility that offers us ears to hear God's mercy. Only with ears to hear Jesus' suffering as God's act of humility will we deny ourselves and take up our cross. I experience carrying my cross as the humble act of forgiving my neighbor as Christ forgives me.

Again, I may only give witness to my experience. Sometimes I humbly forgive my neighbor out of sheer obedience. Other times I forgive because I have faith that since Christ forgives me, Jesus will also forgive my neighbor. In other words, I trust God, and move on. (Sometime after "dusting off my feet." After all, forgiveness is not reconciliation.)

Now to the question of Cheap Grace. Offering Grace is God's gift, not mine. I cheapen Grace every time I short circuit the hard work of humility that denies self. Faith says, "Look at Christ and his mercy, grace, and love. Cheap Grace says, "Look at me. See how merciful, I am. Listen to my self-righteous ways. Fore, I know the way, the truth, and the life. By faith, I receive Grace by humbling myself to say/ pray, "Father, your choice be done, not mine."

Easter Homily:

John 20: 21-23

Jesus said to them again, Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I send you. And when he had said this , he breathed on them and said, “Receive the Holy Spirit.” If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven; if you retain the sins of any they are retained.”

How long has it been? How many Easter Sundays have you been on planet earth. I am 66 years old. I have witnessed 66 Easter Sundays. This year seems like many of my 66 Easters on planet earth. I will not be in the Church Building this year! While I shall miss being with you celebrating our rich traditions, this pandemic has been a blessing.

Writing devotions three times each week has humbled me. It takes a lot of listening-prayer for the Holy Spirit to show me how to write something that can be said in 60 seconds. Yes, 60 seconds is all “Dial My Call” allows me to record. Remember, I am long winded! I feel like the Holy Spirit is teaching me something akin to formatting a large file as a “Zip File” to send via email. Imagine, 30 minutes compressed into 60 seconds.

So let me “Zip It!”

Jesus says, “Peace be with you.”

- This is God’s will. God chose to make peace.
- On the Cross God chose to humble himself to make peace with sin through mercy.
- On the Cross God chose to die. God humbled himself to death to prove that His mercy is greater than all our sin. Remember the penalty of Sin? The Law of Moses says the penalty is death-eternal! God chose to blot it out with Mercy.
- Jesus is God in a body of flesh like us. His body was buried in much the same way we bury seed. The seed dies and rises to new life. On the third day, Jesus rose to eternal life.
- In today’s passage, He says we become peacemakers by choosing to be sent as the Father sent the Son.

Friends, we have come full circle. Jesus said, “Father, glorify your name.” It takes a lot of humility to deny self, especially when we read “if you forgive the sins of any they are forgiven; if you retain the sins of any they are retained.”

Indeed, we are left with free will. The measure we give is the measure we will receive. We indeed love our

neighbor as self. Oh, wait a second; Jesus said, “love one another as I have loved you!”

How are you known by the Father? Are you known by the Father’s will or your will? Are you known by choosing our Father’s choices or your choice?. Who leads you to pray, “Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven...?” The word “will” means choice. I am learning to pray, Father, your will (choice) be done in my life on earth as it is in heaven.”

Look back at God’s choices. Some are merciful. Others are filled with Grace. They all express the Love of the Father.

Being sent as the Father sent the Son is indeed life in a rose garden. Every fragrant rose has its thorns. The Father is seen in the Son humbly wearing a Crown of Thorns and every prick of the thorn released the fragrance of God’s Salvation.

Moral of the story! When we find ourselves standing on thorny ground remember to choose to release the fragrance of salvation. Otherwise, we might beat one another to death with our club of thorns.

One in Christ,

Robert

Good News

1. Thank you for your tithes and offerings. Since sending the above letter the congregation has tithed approximately \$10,000.
2. Your Church Council approved our application for A Small Business Administration Grant. We have also applied for grant money from the legislation passed by Congress and signed by President Trump. Please thank Joyce for her hard work!
3. We continue to provide nurture and care in new and creative ways. "Home Worship" is designed to keep folks without the internet connected to the Church and the Gospel.
4. Martha Spurlock keeps us updated with prayer requests. Call her with your request!
5. The Church's Small Groups continue to meet using Zoom. It is an online network that allows us to see one another and talk in real time.
6. We are sending Devotions via "Dial My Calls" every Monday, Wednesday, and Friday. Pray for the pastor. Doing a devotion in 60 seconds is challenging.
7. I am teaching and preaching on Facebook Live. It amazes me how many people "view" our weekly message. Please help share the Gospel by "sharing" or "hosting"