



Worship & Weekly Devotional Notes

St Luke's - Albury
Home of FRONTIER
Ps. David Grulke

THIRD SUNDAY IN LENT (Purple)
The Heavens Declare the Glory of God
March 4, 2018



Whether you're a visitor or have been with us for a long time, it is exciting for us to gather together as one in the presence of the Lord to Worship and be fed by him.

These Devotional Notes are for your spiritual journey. We encourage you to re-read this week's readings, say the gathering and missional prayer daily, reflect on the sermon, read the coming lessons, and work through the study guide.



As Disciples we need to pray daily, read our Bibles, worship weekly, serve others, develop spiritual friendships, and give generously.



Perhaps it was as David gazed into the sky with a sense of wonder and awe that the Holy Spirit inspired him to write the words of today's Psalm, "The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims His handiwork" (Psalm 19:1). When we turn our eyes heavenward and see the brightness of the sun, the glow of the moon, or the multitude of stars, we can sense that there is more than meets the eye. Creation reveals that a Creator must be behind this wonderment! God's Word shows us that creation bears witness to the triune God—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. David is right, "the heavens declare the glory of God."

GATHERING PRAYER:

O God, whose glory it is always to have mercy, be gracious to all who have gone astray from Your ways and bring them again with penitent hearts and steadfast faith to embrace and hold fast the unchangeable truth of Your Word; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

READINGS: (PAGE REFERENCE ESV)

OLD TESTAMENT READING Exodus 20:1–17 (The Ten Commandments) (p61)

EPISTLE 1 Corinthians 1:18–31 (“We preach Christ crucified.”) (p952)

HOLY GOSPEL John 2:13–22 (23–25) (Jesus drives the money-changers from the temple.) (p887)



MISSION PRAYER

While we pray the Lord’s Prayer as a gift from Jesus teaching us how to pray, there is only one prayer our Lord has commanded his church to actually pray.

37 Then he said to his disciples, “The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. 38 Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field.” (Matthew 9:35-38)
Together, let us ask the Lord of the harvest to send us out to be his people to the world in which we live.

Stop & Pray twice each day:

Lord of The Harvest, we know the need is great and there are too few to pursue the task we face. Move us by your Holy Spirit and Jesus' compassion and love towards those we know who are open to you. Send workers, yes even us, into your harvest field. Amen

(Imagine what could happen if every congregational member set an alarm to pray this every day at a specific time??)

STEWARDSHIP THOUGHT: What's your interest?

Today's gospel might be entitled "House of Prayer... House of Trade". The church has always looked for ways of raising money for religious purposes. Sometimes we have forgotten true priorities. Denominations and parishes as well as individuals enjoy investment income. Being possessors of surplus money, we are content when interest rates are high. Nowadays we hear complaints that my church's income has been reduced since interest rates went down.

Of course, if you are poor, have no money to invest and are compelled to borrow, you feel very differently indeed. C.S. Lewis in his book *Christian behaviour* reminds us that three great civilisations, the Greeks, the Jews of the Old Testament and Christian teachers of the Middle Ages all condemned the very thing on which so many of us and perhaps, our churches, have based our lives and our futures - excessive interest taking.



Luke 18:1-18 – Prayer – praying persistently in hope.

We seem to be losing the idea of saving for something we need or desire. Today, it's all about how quickly you can acquire it, and who's going to be the quickest to provide you with the money. The idea of saving up for something, of persevering with what you have until you can afford something better, seems to be gone. We live in a world that tells us our immediate desires can be satisfied now, why wait. But you know, when we had to save up for something, when we had to wait, the day we managed to have the ability to acquire it was a special day, a day we celebrated.

Such an impatience seems to have crept into our spiritual life as well. We don't know what it is like to persevere, to endure, to wait on the Lord. We expect the Lord to act in our time and space, to respond when we ask him to, to fulfil our every need when and wherever we desire it. We get angry, disillusioned, disappointed, and frustrated with God when he doesn't respond in our time or as we want him to. It is even the case that some people lose faith over this and walk away from the loving grace of our heavenly Father.

The problem, however, is not God's it is us. We don't know what it is like to persist in prayer. That's why Luke records the story of the persistent widow. Day after day she comes to the judge who neither fears God or respects his fellow citizens. She knows this, and yet she continues until he relents and gives her the justice she is asking for. If an arrogant and self-consumed judge gives justice, surely God will answer the prayers of his people. In Hebrews the writer reminds us that because of Jesus we can freely and confidently approach the throne of grace, where we will find mercy and help in time of need (Heb 4:16). We don't have a distant and remote God, but one who invites us into his presence to chat with him about the things going on in our lives, and the lives of those around us.

We fool ourselves if we think, however, that God answers on our terms. Your heavenly Father already knows what you need, he's just waiting for you to catch up. When we persist in prayer, we are allowing the Spirit to gradually align us to see God's intent for our lives. In Mt 7:7ff Jesus invites us to ask, to seek, to knock, and God will give, you will find, and the door will be opened. If we sinners know how to give good gifts, then why should we expect anything less from our Father.

I know of stories of people praying for their unchristian spouse, or friends, day after day, month after month, year after year. When this person suddenly shows an interest in the faith, asks to join them at church, or wants to know more about "this bible guy call Jesus", I have been stunned by their surprise. I ask them, didn't you tell me you were persistent in prayer? And hasn't God now begun to answer that prayer? Why are you surprised? When they ask why ow, my response is always, God has done this at a time when both of you are ready to join him, perhaps your prayer was as much about changing you as it was changing them.

Persistent prayer is a wonderful thing. It happens when God continually nudges you with a specific person, or need, or situation. It happens when you remain faithful and continue to place others before God. God always acts, but He does it in his time and when his purposes are fulfilled. Our challenge is to persist in the full knowledge that our hope in prayer is never unanswered.



Preparing for next Week

FOURTH SUNDAY IN LENT (Purple)

The Big Two

March 11, 2018

READINGS FOR NEXT WEEK: (PAGE REFERENCE ESV)

OLD TESTAMENT READING Numbers 21:4–9 (Moses and the bronze serpent) (p129)

EPISTLE Ephesians 2:1–10 (God raised us up with Christ.) (p976)

HOLY GOSPEL John 3:14–21 (The Son of Man must be lifted up.) (p888)



Ephesians 2:1–10 (God raised us up with Christ.)

1. What was one of the best gifts you received as a child? What made it special for you?
2. What does it mean to be “dead to sin”: helpless? Guilty? Lifeless? What has caused this death?
3. What has God done to fix the problem? Why must He take the initiative? What comparisons does Paul make between Christ’s experience (1:20-23) and ours (v.5-7)?
4. From v.8-10, which is more important: grace or works? Why is “faith” itself a “work” or a “gift”? Why?
5. If you had to climb your way up to heaven on a ladder of good works, what rung would you be on? Why?
6. Accepting God’s solution to your sin problem, what good works do you think God has in store for you? Why?

Prayer:

Dear Father, our lives are a mess. The sin which corrupts me, the desires that make me follow anything but you, consume my life. But I give thanks to you for sending Jesus. Because of him, and the grace you show me because of him, I have hope. Let my faith be based on you and you alone, so that despite myself, I can be reassured of a place in your presence for eternity. Amen.

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