

Pastors Devotions for August 30 - September 4, 2021

Friday - September 4, 2021

Devotional Series: Portals of Prayer (July—September 2021)

Scripture: Ephesians 4:1-24

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Today's devotion is based on Ephesians 4:5-6 – “One Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.” Paul talks about a unity that God brings into existence through His means of grace. In this particular context, it's the call – the proclamation of the Gospel – and Baptism.

As Luther writes in explaining the 3rd Article of the Apostles' Creed, we cannot by our own reason or strength come to Christ or believe in Him except the Holy Spirit calls us by the Gospel and enlightens us with His gifts. And so we have been called through God's Word and especially through His Word joined to the waters of Baptism. By God's work through His Word joined to the waters of Baptism, we have been united together with Jesus in His death and life.

We have been joined together – all of us – with Jesus our Lord. He is the one Lord and Savior. There is no other. And that unity is His gift to us. Paul exhorts us to maintain that unity through the bond of peace. And that bond is the forgiveness that we have received through Jesus' blood. His sacrifice for our sins brings us peace with God and with one another. That bond of peace is the only weapon that we have or that we need to maintain the peace that is ours in Christ.

We don't get to choose our family. God is the One who calls that into existence. But we do get to choose how we live together with the family of God. And God, through Paul, offers tangible choices: “. . . walk in a manner worthy the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.”

-Pastor Harmon

Friday - September 3, 2021

Devotional Series: Portals of Prayer (July—September 2021)

Scripture: Ephesians 3

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

The author of today's devotion from the Portals of Prayer talks about the mystery of the Gospel. Ephesians 3:19 – “Know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God” – is used as the basis for her meditation.

To know the love of Christ is what is called revealed knowledge in contrast to the natural knowledge of God. The natural knowledge of God is what we can know through His creation. He is powerful. He is intelligent. He is the Creator.

Our conscience also tells us that He is Judge. God has written His law in the hearts of all people. As a result, our conscience alternately accuses or defends us. That law tells us that God is angry when we violate His law. And so our natural instinct is to do something to make up for our bad behavior. Unfortunately, the natural knowledge of God won't ever bring us peace. We are left with an angry God who needs to be appeased.

The revealed knowledge of God – the mystery of the Gospel – is that God has done the work to set us free not only from the guilt and shame associated with bad behavior, but also from the sinful condition that we inherited from Adam. Adam's sin condemns us to eternal death. So, God sent His only Son into the world so that He could take our place under that curse and do all that was needed to remove that curse from us.

The love of Christ is made known through His Word and on the cross. On that cross, Jesus took our sinful nature and put it to death (the death that Adam deserved). He died that death in our place so that we could live in peace with God – so that we could be forgiven. That God Himself would do that for us is indeed a mystery. And it is the hope that sustains us through the struggles of this life.

-Pastor Harmon

Thursday - September 2, 2021

Devotional Series: Portals of Prayer (July—September 2021)

Scripture: Ephesians 2

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Today's devotion is based on Ephesians 2:8-9 – “For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast.” The author focused on boasting and how that is usually done to build up the one doing the boasting.

The author does make the point that we can and should boast in Christ. We can and should talk about His saving work done for us. We can and should boast in Christ's victory over sin and death. We can and should share the news of that victory with others. We can and should do all of that.

But we also need to be on our guard that we don't boast about Christ to build ourselves up. And maybe that's the real downside of boasting. It's hard to boast even in the works of others without using it as a means to lift ourselves above others. That was a problem in the church in Corinth where divisions were being made because some followed Paul, others Apollos and others Jesus.

There are no distinctions in the body of Christ. We are all the same in Christ. And we are all the same in our sinful flesh. We don't boast because we have nothing to boast about. What we have received from God through faith in Jesus Christ is His gift to us. We did nothing to deserve that gift. There is nothing in any of us that merits such a gift.

Out of love, God made His choice – His unconditional choice. He chose to love us and redeem us and bring us home. He came to us in our brokenness to call us by name and to offer us His life and love. He came to restore to us what was lost when Adam sinned. Ephesians 2:10 tells us that we are God’s workmanship. He raised us from death in sin to life in Him. And He is at work to conform us to the image of His Son.

That’s all gift. Rejoice in that gift.

-Pastor Harmon

Wednesday—September 1, 2021

Devotional Series: Portals of Prayer (July—September 2021)

Scripture: Ephesians 1

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

In today’s devotion based on Ephesians 1:7 – “In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace” – focuses on what God has promised to us in Christ. We have been redeemed and forgiven.

What does redeemed mean? It means that we have been bought back. From whom were we bought back? We were bought back from the devil. How did he come to own us? Because of Adam’s sin, we, as his descendants, were born under his curse. We were under the power of the devil and held captive by sin and death.

But God paid the price to set us free. The Son of God took on human flesh and shed His blood to buy us back – to rescue us from the devil’s chains. His life was the ransom that had to be paid to set us free. We have been delivered from the dominion of the devil and brought into a restored relationship with God through the forgiveness of our sin.

Jesus paid the price to set us free and then came to us through His Word joined to the waters of Baptism to unite us to Himself. We now live under Him. He is now our Lord. In contrast to the devil, Jesus’ dominion over us brings us life and salvation. Under His dominion we now live as blood bought children of God. That is God’s promise and it is our hope.

-Pastor Harmon

Tuesday—August 31, 2021

Devotional Series: Portals of Prayer (July—September 2021)

Scripture: Isaiah 66:10-14

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

In these trying times where fear continues to grip our nation, the author of today’s devotion from Portals of Prayer, share a word of hope. In fact, the word that he shares is our only hope for such trying times. When the world around us seems out of control, we

turn our gaze to the one who triumphed over sin and death. We turn to Christ who is the Light of the world.

“In his closing words, Isaiah returns to the theme he began with in chapter 40, God’s comfort for His people. For a second time (Isaiah 49:15), the prophet compares God’s love for us with the tender love of a mother for her child. There is probably no greater example of human love than the image of a mother comforting her crying child with tender words and warm embrace.

But even the inspiring love of a mother pales in comparison with the overwhelming devotion of our heavenly Father, who loved us so much that He offered His Son on the cross as the perfect and complete sacrifice for our sins and our salvation. Three days later, He brought immeasurable comfort to Jesus’ grieving followers by raising Jesus from the dead, victorious over the powers of darkness and death.

By faith in our crucified and risen Savior, we possess the comfort the world cannot give, including the comfort of knowing that our Lord is with us always, and the assurance of knowing where we will spend eternity. We now have the privilege of sharing these life-changing promises with those who do not know Jesus as their Lord and Savior.”

-Pastor Harmon

Monday—August 30, 2021

Devotional Series: Portals of Prayer (July—September 2021)

Scripture: Isaiah 65:17-25

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Today’s devotion is entitled “Life in the Meantime.” The author talks about the promises of God that sustain us during the trials and troubles of this life. And there is no lack of trials and troubles to endure. The past year and a half has been one trial after another. And it doesn’t seem like it’s coming to an end anytime soon.

We could put our hope in reason and logic. We could rely on the people whose vocation it is to solve problems that arise. But most of what we are dealing with has an emotional basis, so logic and reason generally have little impact in such situations.

The only true alternative available to us are the promises of God made YES in Jesus Christ. He took on Himself Adam’s curse. He was condemned in our place. He died the death that both God’s Law and sin demands. He endured the one trial from which there is no escape. No amount of logic or good works could rescue us. If God didn’t intervene, we would all be lost.

But God stepped in. He died so that we could live. His blood was the ransom price that had to be paid to set us free from sin and death. His blood paid the debt that we, as descendants of Adam, owed to God. He died and then rose again. He swallowed up death in His life. The empty tomb is the guarantee that all that God has promised to us will be fulfilled. We have been united together with Christ in Baptism and there is

nothing in all of creation that can separate us from God's love. The trials of this world
can't touch that

-Pastor Harmon