

LARGE-PRINT

Devotions for the Week of November 19, 2017

North East United Methodist Church

By Rev. Dr. Drew M. Christian

Sunday, November 19, 2017

**Read Exodus 16: 1-11; Exodus 23: 20-33;
2 Chronicles 7:14.**

This week, as we celebrate Thanksgiving, we take a look at how our lives are giving “*Thanks*” to God...how we are worshipping our Creator and Redeemer. A few years ago, my good friend, John A. Groves, preached a message and spoke of how we must recognize where we have fallen and turn back, humbly seeking out God and turning from the behaviors that are contrary to God’s Word.

John A. began by talking about the Israelites and how they “*grumbled and complained*” along the way, even though God released them from bondage, guided them by fire at night and cloud by day, fed them in the wilderness, had an angel lead them and prepare the way. Yet, over and over, they complained and fell away from God.

Are we very different? Consider how God has blessed us, leading the pilgrims from England, bringing them across the oceans through many “*dangers, toils and snares,*” to discover a country. God watched over us as our country was formed, fought for independence and freedom, and founded its government on Christian principles. But what has happened?

Greed, lust, arrogance, selfishness...Moral decay has plagued our nation. Even the church has not been immune. Like the Israelites, we too complain, fall back into sin, and fail to give God the thanks God so richly deserves. In what ways

have we as a people, as a church, as a nation, turned our backs on God?

God promises to hear us and heal us if we “*pray, seek His face, and turn from our wicked ways.*” Thanksgiving is a time to turn back to God, to remind ourselves of all God has done for each of us and of the devotion our Creator deserves. It is a time to repent, to turn back, to quit grumbling, to seek forgiveness, to give thanks, and to praise God...to “*raise our head and lift up our hands and thank God for sending us His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him shall not perish but have everlasting life.*”

Monday, November 20, 2017

Read Joshua 24: 16-27; 2 Kings 22 & 23: 1-3.

I can still hear many people shouting in their hearts that morning, after my friend John A.’s message, like the Israelites, “*Count us in: We too are going to worship GOD. He's our God.*” Yet, we know the Israelites fell time and time again and many did “*evil in the sight of the Lord.*”

We, too, have experienced such a fall. All excited about our faith, ready to go the distance for God, only to find ourselves failing to do those things we committed to...only to find ourselves acting in ways we know God would disapprove of...only to find ourselves coming up short when it comes to where we want to be as a Christian, as a follower of Christ.

Joshua takes a large stone and places it under an oak tree. He says, “*This stone is a witness against us. It has heard every word that GOD has said to us. It is a standing witness against you lest you cheat on your God.*”

Throughout scripture, men and women often set up monuments, piled up stones, built something to remind them of

what God had done in their lives, to remind them of their commitment to the Lord. Like the Israelites, we are a forgetful people. No matter how convicted we are, no matter how many wonderful experiences of God we have (remember the Israelites saw the Red Sea parted, the ten plagues, manna from heaven, the walls of Jericho fall, water from the rock...the list goes on and on), we will forget. We will find ourselves falling away unless we constantly remind ourselves...unless we are intentional about remembering all God has done and our commitment to Him.

This is one of the purposes of the church...to remind us of all God has done in our lives, what the Lord requires of us, and our commitment to God; to keep us focused so we will hopefully not lose our way. But we must have reminders between Sundays as well.

We live in a country where some want to erase the many reminders we have erected on our government monuments, our courthouses, and our currency. If these reminders are crossed out, chiseled away, will there come a day that God will be forgotten like in the time of Josiah, when God's Word had been lost, and the nation had fallen away, idols had been erected, people were living lives displeasing to God and God's anger was raging.

Once God's Word was recovered, Josiah had the people covenant together to obey and follow God faithfully and obediently.

What reminders, pillars, have you set up to focus your thoughts and hearts on God throughout the week, helping you not to forget the One who has given you so much, the One whom you have committed your life to and sworn to love and serve? Do you have another Christian to hold you accountable,

so you do not fall? What safeguards have you put in place so you do not forget?

Tuesday, November 21, 2017

Read Psalm 11; Psalm 31:1-3; Isaiah 26:4.

If the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do?" Patrick Henry once stated, *"It cannot be emphasized too strongly or too often that this great nation was founded, not by religionists, but by Christians; not on religions, but on the Gospel of Jesus Christ. For this very reason peoples of other faiths have been afforded asylum, prosperity, and freedom of worship here."* George Washington, in declaring a National Day of Thanksgiving, wrote, *"Whereas it is the duty of all nations to acknowledge the providence of Almighty God, to obey His will, to be grateful for his benefits, and humbly to implore His protection and favor...."*

Like the psalmist, may we take *"refuge in the Lord."* Not only as a nation, but also as an individual. If our foundation is destroyed...if we allow the world's temptations and stresses to lead us away from the ROCK on which we have built our faith, we will fall. Let us seek God, acknowledge His leadership in our lives, and *"implore His protection and favor."*

Wednesday, November 22, 2017

Read Psalm 100; Ephesians 5:18-20, I Chronicles 29:13.

The Psalms are full of thanksgiving, praising God for His wonderful works, His mighty deeds, His miraculous gifts. Many times we get so caught up in the hustle & bustle of the day, the problems that we face, that we fail to give God thanks for His many, many blessings.

Think of it this way.

- If you own just one Bible, you are abundantly blessed. One-third of the world does not have access to even one.
- If you woke up this morning with more health than illness, you are more blessed than the million who will not survive the week.
- If you have never experienced the danger of battle, the loneliness of imprisonment, the agony of torture or the pangs of starvation, you are ahead of 500 million people around the world.
- If you attend a church meeting without fear of harassment arrest, torture, or death, you are more blessed than almost three billion people in the world.
- If you have food in your refrigerator, clothes on your back, a roof over your head and a place to sleep, you are richer than 75% of this world.
- If you have money in the bank, in your wallet, and spare change in a dish someplace, you are among the top 8% of the world's wealthy.

Take time today to simply give God thanks. Sit with God for fifteen-thirty minutes and talk with Him and say “Thank You” for the many blessings in your life, especially for God’s love and forgiveness.

Thursday, November 23, 2017...Happy Thanksgiving!

Read Psalm 9:1-2; Psalm 92; Psalm 105:1-7.

The first Thanksgiving in the fall of 1621 was a bountiful feast, but an inventory taken afterwards in preparation for winter

proved that the Pilgrims had grossly overestimated their harvest. The only way they could possibly get through the winter was to cut in half the already meager weekly rations. To make matters worse, soon after in November, arrived the ship *Fortune* with 35 new settlers and absolutely no provisions – no food, bedding, cookware or warm clothing...by 1623, after two years of bad harvest and harsh winters, much death and hardship, history records the Pilgrims being reduced to a daily ration of five kernels of corn apiece. Yet William Bradford wrote, “*By the time our corn is planted, our victuals are spent, not knowing at night where to have a bite in the morning, and have neither bread nor corn for 3 or 4 months together; yet bear our wants with cheerfulness and rest on Providence.*”

The harvest of 1623 was almost wiped out. A six-week drought began in June and the crops turned brown and were slowly withering away. They turned to the only hope they had – intervention by God, and appointed a solemn day of humiliation and prayer. They assembled one July morning under a hot, clear sky and for nine hours prayed. Their prayers were answered the next morning, and for the next two weeks said Winslow, *“distilled such soft, sweet and moderate showers...as it was hard to say whether our withered corn or drooping affections were most quickened and revived.”*

It turned out to be a double blessing from above, for that same month arrived the ships *Anne* and *Little James* with 60 new settlers and for a change – loaded with provisions. The harvest that year of 1623 proved to be one of their best. It also promised a new beginning for our Pilgrim ancestors, for they never again faced starvation.

Two hundred years ago in Plymouth, on Forefather’s Day, December 1820 on the occasion of the Bi-Centennial of the

Landing of the Pilgrims a tradition was started...to set 5 kernels of corn on one's plate before the Thanksgiving meal...remembering our ancestors who with very little to eat still gave God thanks and when all seemed lost and the harvest wiped out, they knelt and called on God to intervene and save them...and God did...Not only did God save our pilgrim ancestors, God founded this great country and has brought each of us blessing after blessing.

Let us set 5 kernels on our plate this Thanksgiving and not only remember how God protected those who first came to this country and sat at the table that first Thanksgiving, but let us take time before eating the Thanksgiving meal to give thanks for five blessings in our lives, one blessing for each kernel of corn. Let us say "Thank you" to God for those blessings and then let us show God we are truly thankful by living lives that make a difference for Him, that help and point others to Jesus Christ, our greatest blessing.

Friday, November 24, 2017

Read Mark 5: 21-34; I Timothy 6: 11-16; Hebrews 12:2.

Max Lucado writes, *"If I can just touch his clothes," she thinks, 'I will be healed.'...Healing begins when we do something. Healing begins when we reach out. Healing starts when we take a step. God's help is near and always available, but it is only given to those who seek it. Nothing results from apathy. The great work in this story is the mighty healing that occurred. But the great truth is that the healing began with her touch. And with that small, courageous gesture, she experienced Jesus' tender power. Compared to God's part, our part is minuscule but necessary. We don't have to do much, but we have to do something. Write a letter. Ask forgiveness. Call a*

counselor. Confess. Call Mom. Visit a doctor. Be baptized. Feed a hungry person. Pray. Teach. Go. Do something that demonstrates faith. For faith with no effort is no faith at all. God will respond. He has never rejected a genuine gesture of faith. Never. God honors radical, risk-taking faith.”

Therefore, let us look “*away from all that will distract to Jesus*”. Let us “*pursue*” righteousness and godliness. Let us reach out and touch the hem of His cloak for if we “*draw near to God,*” God will “*draw near to us.*”

Saturday, November 25, 2017

**Read Jeremiah 33:2-3; Luke 11:2-13; John 13:13-4;
James 5:16; I John 5:14-5.**

My friend John A. closed his message that Sunday morning with “*If 350 million people would simultaneously bow their knee, repent and give thanks, not because we feel obligated to do it but because we want to do it, we would feel the mighty power of God’s healing hands overnight.*”

The Bible tells us that one day we will all bow. Romans 14:11, “*It is written, ‘As surely as I live,’ says the Lord, ‘every knee will bow before me; every tongue will confess to God.’*” Wouldn’t it be great, if we didn’t wait until God returned, the clouds parted, a new age dawned? As we get ready to begin the season of Advent, let us spend some time on our knees before the Lord, seeking His forgiveness and strength, giving God thanks, drawing close to Him for healing for our nation, our community, our families, and ourselves.

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