

Devotions for the Week of May 5, 2019

LARGE-PRINT

3rd Sunday of Easter

North East United Methodist Church

Rev. Dr. Drew M. Christian

Sunday, May 5, 2019

Read Revelation 7:9-17.

It is believed John received his revelation and wrote down what he saw to the seven churches in the Roman province of Asia around 95 AD during the reign of the Emperor Domitian. Domitian demanded that people worship him and great persecution erupted against Christians during his reign. It is believed that during Domitian's reign a law was enacted that stated, "*That no Christian, once brought before the tribunal, should be exempted from punishment without renouncing his religion.*" Numerous martyrs suffered during Domitian's reign including Simeon, bishop of Jerusalem, who was crucified, and Timothy, disciple of Paul and bishop of Ephesus, who was beaten to death with clubs.

But in the midst of this persecution, God shares with His people, through John, words of encouragement.

"After this I saw, and, behold, a great crowd, so great that none could count its number, drawn from every race and from all tribes and peoples and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes and palms in their hands." These are those who have endured persecution, tribulation, and suffering. John

is telling the church that the glory one will experience in the end will be worth all the suffering. Paul spoke this message in Romans 8:18, "*I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us.*"

William Barclay writes, "*It is in victory that the faithful finally arrive in the presence of God and of the Lamb. They appear not weary, battered and worn, but victorious. The white robe is the sign of victory; a Roman general celebrated his triumph clothed in white. The Palm is also a sign of victory.*"

The people from all nations and races shout, "*Salvation belongs to our God.*" It is God who has brought them through their trials and tribulations. It is God who has delivered them. God did not deliver them from trouble but delivered them triumphantly through trouble to the other side and to glory. John writes, "*They will not hunger any more, nor will they thirst any more; the sun will not fall on them, nor any heat; because the Lamb who is in the midst of the throne will be their shepherd, and will lead them to springs of living water; and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.*"

Sit for a moment with God and just reflect on the glory to come. Reflect on the crowds, the multitudes of men, women, and children, many who suffered in this life, together singing praises to God. Reflect on what that scene will look like, feel like. No more hunger, no more thirst, no more tears. Joy unspeakable. No more

suffering. Immersed in love. Give God thanks for the glory to come.

Monday, May 6, 2019

Genesis is the book of beginnings and Revelation is the book of consummation. Revelation describes God's divine plan of redemption coming to fruition. Take time to read through the following scriptures and compare the world of Genesis to the world of Revelation, the new creation that is yet to come. There will be a day when evil will be defeated once-and-for-all, a New Jerusalem will rise, and those of us who profess Jesus will be in the presence of God and "*shall see his face.*" What a hope! What a vision!

Genesis 1:1.....	Revelation 21:1
Genesis 1:5.....	Revelation 21:25
Genesis 1:16.....	Revelation 21:23
Genesis 2:17.....	Revelation 21:4
Genesis 3:1.....	Revelation 20:10
Genesis 3:6-7.....	Revelation 21:27
Genesis 3:8-10.....	Revelation 21:3
Genesis 3:13.....	Revelation 20:10; 22:3
Genesis 3:16.....	Revelation 21:4
Genesis 3:17.....	Revelation 22:3
Genesis 3:19.....	Revelation 22:5
Genesis 3:23.....	Revelation 21:25
Genesis 3:24.....	Revelation 22:14
Genesis 3:24.....	Revelation 22:4

Tuesday, May 7, 2019

Read Psalm 100.

Psalm 100 reminds me of our church's mission statement: **The North East United Methodist Church, through our personal COMMITment to Jesus Christ, is striving to be a GROWing and vital congregation, actively SERVing God, the community, and one another.**

Psalm 100 calls us to mission. "*Serve the Lord with gladness.*" That's "*SERVing*," offering Him to the world, being the hands and feet of Christ. "*Know that the Lord, He is God.*" That's "*GROWing*" in Him, understanding who He is and His call on our lives. "*Enter into His gates with thanksgiving.*" That's "*COMMITment*," gathering together in worship and fellowship, having unwavering dedication to His Church, to the body of Christ.

Regardless of the church we attend, as Christians we are called to gather together, grow in our relationship with Christ, and go out into the world serving those in need, helping them to see and know the love of God through our actions. Take time to pray and reflect on how you are fulfilling this mission. Take time to reflect on the following questions:

- *How are you gathering to know God and other Christians?
- *Are you faithful in your attendance in worship?
- *Are you part of a small group?
- *How are you growing in your relationship with Christ?
- *Are you studying the Bible with others?

- *Are you reading the scriptures daily?
- *What is your devotional life like? Your prayer life?
- *In what ways are you going into the world, putting your faith into action?
- *What ministries or missions are you serving in?
- *What ministries or missions could you help out, reaching those who come in the doors of the church and those beyond those doors?
- *How might you better fulfill and live the mission of North East United Methodist Church?

Wednesday, May 8, 2019

Read Acts 13:15-16; 26-33.

Paul is given the opportunity to speak at the synagogue at Pisidian Antioch. He shows how Israel was chosen by God and that God's plan for Israel and the world has reached its climax in Jesus Christ. Paul tells those listening that because the rulers and those who dwell in Jerusalem did not know Jesus, "*nor even the voices of the Prophets which are read every Sabbath,*" they condemned him even though no cause for death was found.

There's a song called, "*Have you seen Jesus my Lord?*" The lyrics read as follows:

*Have you seen Jesus my Lord?
He's here in plain view.
Take a look, open your eyes.
He'll show it to you.*

*Have you ever looked at the sunset
With the sky mellowing red,
And the clouds suspended like feathers
Then I say...
You've seen Jesus my Lord.*

*Have you ever stood at the ocean
With the white foam at your feet,
Felt the endless thundering motion?
Then I say...
You've seen Jesus my Lord.*

*Have you ever looked at the cross,
With a man hanging in pain.
And the look of love in his eyes?
Then I say...
You've seen Jesus my Lord.*

*Have you ever stood in the family
With the Lord there in your midst
Seen the face of Christ on each other?
Then I say...
You've seen Jesus my Lord.*

The Jewish leaders, those who condemned Jesus, could not see that this was the Savior, the Lord. Jesus fulfilled forty-eight of the Old Testament prophecies, many written thousands of years before His birth. But the

leaders could not see because Jesus did not look the way, act the way, speak the way they expected. Even though they knew the prophecies, their traditions, preferences, expectations and position overshadowed the truth.

I have experienced this often in the church. I was just speaking to a member of one of the congregations I served years ago. He told the story how they started praying years before I arrived for revival. They prayed for vibrant worship, young families with children filling the pews, and unchurched people coming to a saving relationship with Jesus Christ.

I had the wonderful privilege of serving the church during a time that God chose to bring revival. Young families, unchurched men and women, flooded the congregation. Our church was in the top-ten churches in the Conference bringing people in on Profession of Faith. The member I was speaking with described how several of the people that were part of that prayer group, who had prayed for such revival, once it happened ended up leaving the church. Why? Because it did not look like what they had pictured in their minds. What God did looked different than they expected. The people coming were different. The worship was changing. The make-up of the congregation was changing. The way things were done was no longer the same. In their minds this was not what they prayed for.

For many people during the time of Jesus, Jesus was not what they had prayed for. He was not the conquering hero of their hopes. They could not see beyond their

expectations. They could not see beyond the picture in their minds of how God would show up. They got so lost in their traditions and position and expectations that they failed to even recognize the words of the prophets coming true in front of them.

Take time to reflect on how at times you also might have your own expectations of how Jesus will show up. Do you have traditions that you could never believe God would change or challenge? Do you truly want the church to grow? What happens when people show up that are not like you? Perhaps of a different race? A different social class? Will you see Jesus in their arrival? What if worship begins to look different, the make-up of the congregation begins to look different? Are you willing to allow Jesus to show up in ways that may not look like what you expect or perhaps even prefer? Will you see Jesus? Will you open your eyes and see Jesus in your midst or will you, like so many during the time Jesus walked the earth, miss Him?

Thursday, May 9, 2019

Read John 10:22-30.

Jesus' words should bring us great comfort. *"My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me. And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand. My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of My Father's hand."*

Nothing can "*snatch*" us out of the Father's hand.

I remember helping my boys cross a busy street or hike the cliffs in Shenandoah when they were young. I held their hand. I never depended upon their grip even though I would tell them to "hold on tightly." I depended upon my grip on their hand. If they fell, I would be the one who would pull them up. If a car suddenly appeared around the corner, it would be my grip that would pull my son to safety.

It is not our grip on God that keeps us safe. It is God's grip on us. The hands that shaped the mountains and oceans and placed the stars in the night sky hold us. Paul writes in Romans 8:39, "*Nothing shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.*"

Is there something in your life knocking you down? Do you at times feel like you are falling? Do you ever feel like God can't love you after such a mistake? Do ever feel like the world is closing in and it's going to win, it's going to defeat you?

"...no one is able to *snatch*" YOU "*out of the Father's hand.*" If you have a relationship with God through Jesus Christ, be assured that He has His hand on you. God has you in His grip and He can be trusted.

Whatever it is that you are dealing with, that is knocking you around, knocking you down, give it to God tonight in prayer. Put your hand out and realize that He has placed His hand in yours. Know that He will lift you up if you lean on and trust in Him.

Friday, May 10, 2019

Read Ephesians 3:20.

One of my very favorite scriptures is Ephesians 3:20. I try to keep in mind as I go throughout each day.

I believe this scripture states a Biblical truth that so many of us often forget. We forget that God can do *"immeasurably more than we can dream or imagine."*

The only thing that limits us is our unbelief. If we truly believe God's Word, truly believe that God can do in and through us *"immeasurably more than we can dream or imagine,"* then we would not be afraid to step out and take risks for Him and His Church. We would not be afraid to go back to school, to take on a new career, to enter the mission field, to coach a Little League team, to get out of our "comfort zone" and follow God into the unknown. The problem would never be questioning if we had the abilities or the resources or the time but did we truly believe God could do *"immeasurably more than we can dream or imagine."*

God can do extraordinary things through ordinary people. All we have to do is let Him have control and trust. Whatever we can dream, God can do better. Take time tonight to dream. What are your dreams? What difference do you want to make in this world? What do you believe God is calling you to do? Give those dreams over to God and allow Him to have control of tomorrow, allow Him and trust Him to do in your life *"immeasurably more than [you] can dream or imagine."*

Saturday, May 11, 2019

Read Isaiah 43:18-19; Isaiah 42:9; Isaiah 41:10; Revelation 21:5; Proverbs 23:18; Proverbs 3:5-6.

On May 18, 1980, a 5.1 magnitude earthquake from within Mount St. Helens triggered the collapse of the mountain's north flank, releasing the largest landslide in recorded history and a volcanic eruption equal in power to 500 atom bombs. As much as a cubic mile of volcanic material shot upward and sideways. The lateral blast traveled at more than 300 miles per hour with temperatures in excess of 600 degrees F, destroying 230 square miles of forest. Within seconds, the trunks of thousands of 150-foot-tall old-growth Douglas firs snapped like toothpicks. Ash rained down over 22,000 square miles, blew more than 12 miles into the atmosphere and circled the globe in 17 days. When the ash finally cleared, the mountain was reduced by 1,313 feet.

Although the Forest Service and local authorities had worked diligently to keep visitors away, 57 people were killed. Rock, snow and ice roared down the mountain at speeds more than 100 miles per hour. Most large mammals on Mount St. Helens – mountain goats, black bears, and thousands of elk and deer as well as most fish, amphibians, insects and birds – perished.

The mountain was literally reduced to ashes...

Yet...Out of the ashes there has been rebirth and renewal. Within the crater a new lava dome began rising in 1986, rebuilding the mountain. A new glacier has established itself on the crater floor. And since early

October 2004, a second lava dome has grown at a rate as high as a dump-truck load in volume every second. At this rate, scientists estimate Mount St. Helens could return to its height before the 1980 eruption of 9,677 feet in less than 200 years – less than a blink of the eye in geologic time.

Remarkably, plant and animal life has reestablished itself far faster than expected. Beetles were among the earliest animals to return and over 300 kinds now flourish. Lupines, members of the pea family, were among the first plants to grow in the deep deposits of volcanic ash. Scientists learned that lupines drive ecological recovery by creating islands of rich nutrients that promote establishment of other plant species. Millions of new trees, elk, deer, cougars, bobcats, bears, birds and fish have also returned to the areas so profoundly altered in 1980.

We are Easter People. Jesus died, died a horrific death. Jesus was buried in a tomb carved into the rock, a large stone rolled in front of the tomb. The disciples were devastated, went back to their careers, figuring Jesus wasn't the long-awaited Messiah. But then Sunday came and the tomb was empty. Jesus appeared to His disciples, resurrected, alive.

The resurrection reminds us, ***“Never put a period where God is ready to put a comma...”*** The resurrection reminds us that God can do *“immeasurably more than we can dream or imagine.”* The resurrection reminds us that God will one day restore all of creation; therefore, we can

always have hope. We need not be afraid for nothing can, nothing ever will, “snatch” us out of God’s hand.

Give God thanks and ask Him to help you see any situation you are currently going through or will go through in the future through His eyes. Ask God to show you that He has not put a period, only a comma. New life is around the corner, the tomb is empty, God is still moving stones. God will lift you up. Hold on to hope; hold on to Him, for you are Easter People.

Don’t forget to invite someone to church, to pick them up and bring them, so they may hear the Word of God, be part of a family of faith, and come to know Jesus!