

Devotions for the Week of June 16, 2019

LARGE-PRINT

Father's Day

North East United Methodist Church

Rev. Dr. Drew M. Christian

Sunday, June 16, 2019

Mrs. John B. Dodd, of Washington, first proposed the idea of a "father's day" in 1909. Mrs. Dodd wanted a special day to honor her father, William Smart. William Smart, a Civil War veteran, was widowed when his wife (Mrs. Dodd's mother) died in childbirth with their sixth child. Mr. Smart was left to raise the newborn and his other five children by himself on a rural farm in eastern Washington state. It was after Mrs. Dodd became an adult that she realized the strength and selflessness her father had shown in raising his children as a single parent.

The first Father's Day was observed on June 19, 1910 in Spokane Washington. At about the same time in various towns and cities across American other people were beginning to celebrate a "father's day." In 1924 President Calvin Coolidge supported the idea of a national Father's Day. Finally in 1966 President Lyndon Johnson signed a presidential proclamation declaring the 3rd Sunday of June as Father's Day.

Father's Day has become a day to not only honor your father, but all men who act as a father figure. Stepfathers, uncles, grandfathers, and adult male friends are all be honored on Father's Day.

Take time to make a phone call, write a letter, go visit, and say "thank you" to, not only your biological father, but all those men who have made a huge difference in your life, who have

been a father figure to you, teaching and guiding you on your life journey. If you are at odds with your father or the memories are not pleasant, pray for him and ask God to show you how to forgive. If your father has gone on from this life, take time to reflect, forgive, and pray, giving thanks to your “Heavenly Father” who will never “*leave nor forsake you.*”

Monday, June 17, 2019

Read Isaiah 9:1-7.

What powerful words through the prophet Isaiah. Israel is told that Assyria would soon invade...judgment would come... the lands of Zebulun and Naphtali would soon, not only be invaded, but annexed by Tiglath-pileser III. Israel had been unfaithful...they had turned to occult practices...they had turned away from God.

Yet, despite Israel’s rejection of God, the Creator shows divine grace. There will be light again. Not only that, a child will be born...and His name will be “*Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father...*” Everlasting Father.

How often our earthly fathers can let us down or we, as fathers, can let down our children? How often we lose our earthly fathers to old age and disease, no longer able to talk to them, to seek advice and guidance?

Yet, God makes it very clear through the prophet Isaiah, that Jesus Christ will always be a Father who we can count on to listen and help us discern what to do in our lives AND Jesus Christ will always be around, for all eternity, never leaving us.

What a gift? Not only did God send His very own Son, Jesus Christ to die for us, to teach us, to show us God’s Amazing

love and grace, but God also made sure to help us understand that Jesus would ALWAYS listen, understand, and walk with us.

Israel needed to hear this message of hope in times of turmoil, oppression, and war. They needed a Father figure that would not turn away from them, which would care for them, wrap His arms around them and protect them. Israel needed someone who would not leave them quickly behind, but would stand firm, would be there for the duration.

Don't we also need an "Everlasting Father," a Christ who will comfort us and stay with us, who will teach us and never leave us, who will show us the way and never stop loving us.

Give thanks tonight for Jesus Christ, God's greatest gift, not wrapped in paper but wrapped in a manger. Give thanks that Jesus, the Everlasting Father, is and will be always with you, through both joys and trials. Give thanks that you can crawl up in His lap like a child does to his/her father. Give thanks that you can seek advice and guidance from Him. Give thanks that you have a Savior you can, just like a father, depend on. Give thanks.

Tuesday, June 18, 2019

Read Joshua 24: 1-15.

Read over "The Resolution" from the film, *Courageous*. In the film, four men commit to these words and begin the journey to attempt to live them out in their marriages and with their children. These words speak to both men and women, and challenge us from God's Word to live "courageous" lives, lives that will honor God and our family.

We must strive to be the best men and women, the best fathers and mothers, we can be? We must strive to love our kids

and to be a father/mother figure to those who do not have fathers and mothers to guide and love them...to be the heroes our children and the world need.

The Resolution

I do solemnly resolve before God to take full responsibility for myself, my wife, and my children.

I will love them, protect them, serve them, and teach them the Word of God as the spiritual leader of my home.

I will be faithful to my wife, to love and honor her, and be willing to lay down my life for her as Jesus Christ did for me.

I will bless my children and teach them to love God with all of their hearts, all of their minds, and all of their strength.

I will train them to honor authority and live responsibly.

I will confront evil, pursue justice, and love mercy.

I will pray for others and treat them with kindness, respect, and compassion.

I will work diligently to provide for the needs of my family.

I will forgive those who have wronged me, and reconcile with those I have wronged.

I will learn from my mistakes, repent of my sins, and walk with integrity as a man answerable to God.

I will seek to honor God, be faithful to His church, obey His Word, and do His will.

I will courageously work with the strength God provides to fulfill this resolution for the rest of my life and for His glory.

Which parts of the Resolution resonate with you? What parts challenge you? Are there areas in which you feel you are not fulfilling your God-given role and responsibilities as a man or woman of God? Take time to pray and ask God to help you make a similar commitment to love the people in your life, to teach them about Christ, and to live for “His glory.

Wednesday, June 19, 2019

Read Matthew 1:18-25.

Joseph was somebody like us. One of the faces in the background. Joseph is introduced in Matthew 1: 16 as “*Joseph,*

husband of Mary.” He was a simple tradesman, a carpenter. He doesn’t show up once Jesus goes into public ministry. He doesn’t write a book on “How to Raise a Messiah.” There are no miracles that follow him in his life. He understood little of what was happening, and he didn’t even get to see the fruit of his obedience by witnessing Jesus’ public ministry. In our Christmas plays, Joseph stands silently beside Mary, a quiet presence, an unknown voice.

Yet, Joseph showed tremendous courage. In Israel at the time, engagements were binding premarital contracts leading to marriage. During the year of engagement, the couple behaved like husband and wife (except that they did not live together or have sex). To break off such an engagement, a divorce was required. Furthermore, as stated in Deuteronomy 22 and Leviticus 20, sexual unfaithfulness during this engagement period was considered adultery, the penalty for which was death by stoning.

When Joseph found out Mary was pregnant, he knew the ramifications. He knew that Mary’s very life was in danger and decided to divorce her quietly, yet the angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and explained that Mary was carrying God’s Son. Joseph showed great courage in marrying Mary, facing personal embarrassment and being socially ostracized. Joseph believed God and married a young girl carrying a child that was not His own. Later, Joseph protected his wife and child during the early life-threatening years, escaping to Egypt from Herod and returning to Israel years later.

C. Raymond van Pletzen writes, “*Courage is cultivated by learning that God is more powerful than any threat that may come our way...Joseph had cultivated his relationship with God*

and so he was ready when the day of testing came.” Pletsen goes on to say, “Children Need Courageous Dads! Children want to be able to boast “My Dad’s bigger than your Dad!” It gives them security to know that their Dad is brave enough and strong enough to protect them. Wives Long For Courageous Husbands! One of the greatest statements of a husband’s love is when he protects her regardless of the cost to himself.”

Every Christmas we hear a story of a very courageous man who quietly stands in the background of the “greatest story ever told.” We are called to stand tall like Joseph and be men and women of courage, stepping out in faith, knowing God will walk with us, will protect us as we stand firm and protect those around us, stand up for those who cannot stand up for themselves, and stand firm in what we believe, professing Christ in a culture that ignores Him.

Pray and ask God to show you who you might stand up for, who you might walk with, how you might show courage in the situation you are facing, and how you might lift up Christ, sharing your faith with others. How might you, like Joseph, be the obedient and courageous man or woman God created you to be?

Thursday, June 20, 2019

Read Ephesians 4:22-24; Colossians 3:1-17.

This past Sunday, Father’s Day, we talked about how Paul calls us to spiritual metamorphosis...and spiritual metamorphosis is accomplished “*by the renewing of your mind.*” The word “*renewing*” also means renovation.

Paul is talking about a complete renovation. This is not about cosmetic repairs or restoration. It’s like taking a house and

completely gutting it. Walls, floors, wiring, plumbing, cabinets, bath and kitchen fixtures, roof – it is all completely new. Anyone who'd seen the house in its previous condition wouldn't recognize it now.

The Message translation puts it this way – “*everything—and I do mean everything—connected with that old way of life has to go. It's rotten through and through. Get rid of it! And then take on an entirely new way of life—a God-fashioned life, a life renewed from the inside and working itself into your conduct as God accurately reproduces his character in you.*”

John Ortberg, in his book, The Life You've Always Wanted, writes, “*The desire for transformation lies deep in every human heart. This is why people enter therapy, join health clubs, get into recovery groups, read self-help books, attend motivational seminars, and make New Year's resolutions. The possibility of transformation is the essence of hope.*”

BUT just like with the renovation of a house...we must have a plan...we must be very intentional with our goals...if we are to see the project come to fruition.

As Ortberg writes, “*It is unlikely that we will deepen our relationship with God in a casual or haphazard manner. There will be a need for some intentional commitment and some reorganization of our own lives.*”

The first two steps to this plan are found in Paul's letter to the Colossians.

Paul writes in Colossians 3:1-2, “*If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth.*” This is **STEP ONE**. We must focus

our thoughts on God. What is one thing you can do to focus your thoughts more on God each day?

Furthermore, Paul writes in Colossians 3:5, 10, *“Therefore put to death your members which are on the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry...and have put on the new man who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him.”*

This is **STEP TWO**. There are things, behaviors, attitudes in each of our lives we must get rid of, we must give up. What current behavior or attitude in your life do you need to give up, get rid of, in order to draw closer to Christ?

Pray and ask God to give you help to take these two steps, not only today but everyday.

Friday, June 21, 2019

Read Colossians 3:12-15.

We must take on those behaviors, attitudes, and practices that are Christ-like.

Remember what John Ortberg wrote. He said, *“It is unlikely that we will deepen our relationship with God in a casual or haphazard manner. There will be a need for some intentional commitment and some reorganization of our own lives.”* We have talked about the first two steps to make a plan, toward an *“intentional commitment and reorganization of our own lives.”* Now let us look at step three.

Paul writes, *“Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering; bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do. But above all these*

things put on love, which is the bond of perfection. And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to which also you were called in one body; and be thankful.”

We are called to clothe ourselves with the things of God. What are we lacking that God wants us to take on...to add to our lives, to become part of who we are...how can we love more? Is there someone we are being called to forgive? To reach out to? Have we got involved in a small group of Christian brothers and sisters? How are we reaching out to the oppressed and needy... thinking of others? Are we showing humility? Kindness? Grace to others? Do you have a date night with your spouse each week, praying together before going to bed that night?

Take time to reflect, pray, answer the following question:
What Is One Behavior, Attitude, or Practice I Need To Take On In My Life So Christ Is At The Center Of Everything?

This is **STEP THREE**.

Saturday, June 22, 2019

Read Thru A Few Of The Following Scriptures:

**Romans 12:2; Galatians 3:28; I John 2:15-17; I
Corinthians 9:19-23; Acts 1:8; 2 Timothy 3:16;
Colossians 2:8; Colossians 2:1-3:25;
Galatians 4:1-31; I Corinthians 2:13; I Peter 2:11;
Matthew 16:18; Ephesians 6:12; I John 4:16;
I John 4:19; John 15:12.**

Again, I thought that over the next month or so, for each Saturday devotion, I would share some of the things I learned and God laid on my heart as I traveled with my brother to Eastern Europe.

Driving between Cluj and Bran, Romania, my brother and I had the opportunity to stop in the village of Bunesti and visit the fortified church there.



A fortified church, we learned, is a church built to play a defensive role in times of war. These churches were designed with thick walls, battlements, embrasures to shoot arrows through, and an outer wall surrounding the property so the villagers, with their livestock, could seek refuge within the church grounds, hopefully holding out until the battle was over.



In one of the rooms at the church in Bunesti, where people would hide, the following words were written on the wall:

“Listen! You are on the right path, if the going is slow do not despair; no old oak is felled with one stroke.”

Romania is covered with fortified churches as they were often under attack from the Ottoman Empire to the South. As I walked through this church I couldn't help wonder how the church today must fortify itself. Yes, we have had to take some precautions like locked doors and security cameras, but in America we don't need to build battlements and put slots in the church walls to fire arrows or throw rocks down on our encroaching enemies.

But we do need to fortify ourselves so we might do battle with all that is evil, unjust, and seeks to destroy, for Paul tells us, *“For our struggle is...against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.”*

Fortunately, many of us will not face a time when we have to flee our homes for fear of death and seek refuge in the church, but the church must be a fortification where people feel safe, loved, a place they can run to when they are scared or hurting or lonely and find sanctuary. Fortunately, many of us will not have to flee to the church in times of war to find a roof to sleep under and to partake of the stores of food kept there for such emergencies, but the church should be a fortification that reaches out to the homeless and hungry, providing at times basic needs of survival to members of the community it serves.

The Bible tells us the fortifications we must build... fortifications built with love, unity, diversity, prayer, and servanthood...fortifications that protect us from succumbing to the desires of this world and being held *“captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy”*...fortifications in which its

inhabitants wear the armor of God and never forget that Jesus said, “*the gates of hell would not prevail against*” the church.

Are there areas in which your church must fortify itself, areas where outsiders are not finding sanctuary and healing, where the “*desires of this world*” are infiltrating the congregation? Do members of the church put on the “*armor of God*,” bathe the church in prayer, and create a fortification to protect and surround all people with love? When someone is hurting, do they find the gates of our church open and do they find a place of refuge and support and healing?

Are you willing to take a role in guarding the gates, making sure our children hear the Word of God in the midst of a culture that often teaches the opposite? Are you willing to take a role in guarding the gates, making sure the church stays true to the Word, stands for justice, promotes unity, welcomes the outsider, and serves those in need?

Pray about how you might step up, serve, and help your church fortify itself against all that would seek to destroy it from within and without, how you might help your church create a sanctuary for the hurting, lost, and afraid.

**And 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!**