

Devotions for the Week of June 23, 2019

LARGE-PRINT

2nd Sunday after Pentecost

North East United Methodist Church

Rev. Dr. Drew M. Christian

Sunday, June 23, 2019

Read Acts 14:8-18.

Paul and Barnabas approach a man who has been crippled since birth in the city of Lystra. Paul observes that "*he had faith to be healed*" and tells him to stand up. The crippled man stands up and leaps. He is healed.

Jesus said, "*Truly I tell you, if you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it will move. Nothing will be impossible for you*" (Matthew 17:20). Think how small a mustard seed is and yet Jesus said if our faith was at least that deep, that strong, we could move mountains. Paul saw in the crippled man in Lystra "*faith*," a faith that was at least "*as small as a mustard seed*" for it moved mountains in his life, healing his bones, allowing him to walk and leap.



How often do we lack faith? I hear it all the time in the church. Where are we going to get the money for that? How can we take on a new ministry now? We don't have the people to get that ministry done? We tried that once before and it didn't work? People are leaving, what are WE going to do? How can we help people on the other

side of the world when we cannot even meet our own budget? How will we ever make it? How will the church survive?

Over two decades of ministry I have often walked out of church meetings asking, "Where is our faith?"

Do you have "*faith as small as a mustard seed*?" Do you have "*faith to be healed*?" Do you have faith to move mountains? Are you focused on the problem or are you focused on God, knowing that for God, the One who created the universe and placed the stars in the sky, there is nothing He cannot handle? Do you believe Jesus when He said, "*Truly I tell you, if you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it will move. Nothing will be impossible for you?*"

If not...if your faith is lacking...pray one of the most heartfelt prayers in scripture. In Mark 9, a father comes to Jesus for help. The father explains to Jesus that his boy is "*possessed with a spirit which makes him mute; and whenever it seizes him, it slams him to the ground and he foams at the mouth, and grinds his teeth and stiffens out...If You can do anything, take pity on us and help us.*" Jesus replies, "*If you can? All things are possible to him who believes.*" And then the father, responds with one of the most heartfelt, honest, responses in scripture, "*I do believe; help my unbelief.*"

If your faith is lacking...if you find yourself depending on your own strength to fix things rather than God...if you often find yourself worrying about things...believing that

things will not work out...seeing no way for a victory...cry out like the father in Mark 9, "*I do believe; help my unbelief.*" Ask God to increase your faith to the "*size of a mustard seed,*" to help you trust Him with all things, for He is God and He is good and He loves you so! If there is a specific area in your life right now that you are struggling with, give it over to God and trust Him with it...have faith...believe...know that with faith, with God, "*nothing will be impossible for you.*"

Monday, June 24, 2019

Read Acts 14:8-18.

When the people saw what had happened they want to make sacrifices to Paul and Barnabas. They assume that the two of them are gods who have come to earth in human form. Where would they get this idea?

There was a legend in Lystra. It was a story told about a time that Zeus and Hermes came to earth in disguise. No one in the land showed them hospitality except two old peasants, Philemon and his wife Baucis. As a result, the whole population except for Philemon and Baucis was wiped out by the gods. Philemon and Baucis were made the guardians of a splendid temple and were turned into two great trees when they died. So when Paul healed the crippled man, the people of Lystra were determined not to make the same mistake again and quickly wanted to show respect and hospitality and worship to these gods come to earth by sacrificing to them.

Paul and Barnabas react in disgust. They show their revulsion to the blasphemous false worship by tearing their clothes, a sign of mourning and remorse. They make it clear to the people of Lystra, *"We too are men of like passions with you."* And instead of allowing people to focus their attention on them, they attempt to refocus them on God. They cry out, *"We are bringing you the good news which tells you to turn from these empty things to the living God, who made heaven and earth and sea and all that is in them."*

They want to turn the people from their idols just as God wants to turn us from our idols today. This is why the very first commandment is *"You shall have no other gods before me"* (Exodus 20:3).

In biblical terms, idolatry is worship of anything other than God. Colossians 3:5 links idolatry with covetousness; when we want something so much that we covet it, the thing has become an idol. We seek it rather than God. The idols in my life are all those things which I demand for joy and significance.

Our idols today are not Zeus and Hermes, or figures carved in wood, but things that at times are much more subtle. Idols surround us, competing for our attention more than God. Money, sports, work, pleasure, approval, patriotism, famous people, church, and family can all become idols. Anything at all can become an idol once it becomes a substitute for God in our lives.

Kyle Idleman, in his book, gods at war, explains that there are several questions we can ask to see if we are

worshipping idols in our lives. Take time to work through these questions.

(1) What disappoints you?

Idleman writes, "Disproportionate disappointment reveals that we have placed intense hope and longing in something other than God."

(2) What do you complain about the most?

If you constantly complain about finances than maybe money is an idol in your life. If you constantly complain about what people think of you perhaps what people think matters more than it should. If you constantly complain about the kind of year your sports team is having perhaps sports has become your god.

(3) Where do you make financial sacrifices?

The Bible says that where your treasure is that is where your heart is. Where your money goes shows what god is winning your heart.

(4) What worries you?

Whatever it is that wakes you, or keeps you up at night, has the potential to be an idol.

(5) Where is your sanctuary?

Where do you go when you are hurting? Do you go straight to God? Or do you go to the fridge for comfort food? The television for

escape? To the phone to vent? Where we go when we are hurting says a lot.

(6) What infuriates you?

Do you get mad when someone cuts you off in traffic, embarrasses you, doesn't treat you with respect? Can you not stand to lose? Maybe your quick temper reveals the oldest idol of them all - the god of me.

(7) What are your dreams?

Do your daydreams give God glory or do they reveal future visions of your own glory, fame, and fortune?

Tuesday, June 25, 2019

Read Ezekiel 16:32.

God is speaking through the prophet Ezekiel to Israel. Israel is worshipping other gods. They have turned from the one true God. God describes this idolatry as adultery. Kyle Idleman writes, "*The pain of having an unfaithful partner is surely one of the most agonizing human experiences. It's the ultimate betrayal. Yet, this is how we are described when we reject the love of God for cheap substitutes. God is the betrayed lover.*"

As you walk through this world of modern gods, God will speak. God will challenge you constantly with two words: "*You Choose.*" You choose between me and money. You choose between me and your career. You choose between me and that relationship. You choose between me and the house. You choose between me and

your music preferences, your favorite television show, a sporting event, your traditions.

Idleman writes, "*If you keep watch over your own heart, you'll face those dichotomy moments, those fork-in-the-road moments. He won't give you the option of making him one of many. There is no room there for anyone or anything but himself. That's how much he loves you.*"

What areas of your life is God challenging you...is God saying, "*You Choose.*" Pray and ask God to help you let go of the things of this world that have a hold on you. Pray and ask God to help you choose Him!

Wednesday, June 26, 2019

Read Joel 2:21-27.

When disaster strikes we usually either turn to God or turn away. During the time of the prophet Joel, the people of Judah and Jerusalem experience a locust plague of millions and millions. The insects consume every green plant, grain crops, grapevines, fruit trees, and even the grass where the sheep grazed. There are no emergency food supplies or relief agencies to help the people during the famine that follows. Is there any hope?

It may not be a locust plague but all of us have had disaster strike and we too wonder, "Is there any hope?"

The prophet Joel lets us know that "Yes, there is hope" for we have a mighty and awesome God. Joel cries out, "*Fear not...Do not be afraid...Be glad...*" Joel lets Israel and us know that God will "*restore*" you...you "*shall*

eat in plenty and be satisfied"...you "shall never be put to shame."

Know that whatever you might be dealing with...whatever plague, tragedy, heartache you might be going through...God can "*restore*" you. God can bring new life. God will rain His grace upon you. Call out to Him. Trust in His timing. Wait patiently and with faith. God will deal "*wondrously with you*" as He has His people throughout history and you will know once more that He is "*the Lord your God And there is no other.*"

Thursday, June 27, 2019

Read Revelation 21:22-22:5.

How often have you tried to imagine what heaven must be like? Just take time to reflect on these verses from John's Revelation, this picture of heaven. A city with no need of light, no night, nothing that defiles allowed to enter, a pure crystal river of water of life, the throne of God, the tree of life with its leaves for the healing of the nations, the face of the Lamb of God. Just read and re-read these verses. Picture it. Bask in it.

Pray for those you know who do not know Jesus. Pray for them that they would come to know the Savior so one day they will experience this heavenly realm described in John's Revelation. Invite them to church. Call them tonight. Offer to pick them up and bring them.

Friday, June 28, 2019**Read John 14:23-29.**

Jesus said that those who love Him will "*keep His words*" and that those who do not love Him will "*not keep His words*."

If we have given our hearts to Jesus, if we love Him, we will not only speak these words but we will live them. We will obey. We will forgive others because Christ calls us to forgive. We will adhere to authority because Christ calls us to adhere to authority. We will not steal or lie or covet because God commands us not to do these things. We will not commit sexual sin because God calls us to remain pure outside of marriage. We will love others who are different from us and care for the poor because Christ commands it. We will give to the church and remain faithful to our church family because Christ died for the church. We will read God's Word with the purpose of trying to understand areas of our lives where God may want us to live differently, act differently, respond differently, speak differently, in obedience to Him.

Are there areas in your life where you are not keeping His words? Not living in obedience? Ask God for forgiveness and seek His strength to break from those behaviors and to "*keep His words*."

Saturday, June 29, 2019

Read and reflect on these scriptures from the Revised Common Lectionary. The scriptures for this coming week June 30th are:

- *2 Kings 2:1-2, 6-14
- *Psalm 77:1-2, 11-20
- *Galatians 5:1, 13-25
- *Luke 5:51-62

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!

