

"The Gift of Community" written by Audrey Cundey

Monday, December 3, 2018

Psalms 90: 1-2. *"Lord, you have been our dwelling place in all generations. Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever you had formed the earth and the world, from everlasting to everlasting you are God."* God is our home; He has been from the very beginning and will be forevermore. No matter our sins, God will not turn away from us, for we are His children despite our mortality. The psalmist continues in verses 3-4, *"You turn us back to dust and say Turn back, you mortals. For a thousand years in your sight are like yesterday when it is past, or like a watch in the night."* We are but dust to God's eternal gaze, but still He loves us and shelters us, for He is our everlasting God. Prayer: God, our Lord, our Father, our Home. Grant us Your love, for we are a community in need of your presence. We pray for your everlasting embrace, for we are but dust and You are the One who continues to shape us. Amen.

Tuesday, December 4, 2018

Revelation 22:12-13. *"See, I am coming soon; my reward is with me, to repay according to everyone's work. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end."* Jesus' words are a promise, for his reward is to sit with him, by his Father's side, in an eternal community of believers that begins and ends with Jesus. He is God's chosen son who communed with us on earth and desires to continue in Heaven. Revelation 22:14-15: *"Blessed are those who wash their robes, so that they will have the right to the tree of life and may enter the city by the gates. Outside are the dogs and sorcerers and fornicators and murderers and idolaters, and everyone who loves and practices falsehood."* To be baptized and washed anew is to gain entrance to Heaven, while those who sin are left outside, forbidden access to God's great Kingdom. Revelation 22:16 *"It is I, Jesus, who sent my angel to you with this testimony for the churches. I am the root and the descendant of David, the bright morning star."* This testimony, spoken by Jesus to the church, gives the people insight as to the true nature of his journey, giving God's people the chance to enter the Kingdom of God, despite their sin. Prayer: God, help us to focus on you; the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end this Advent season.

"The Gift of God's Word" written by Robbie Schwartz

Wednesday, December 5, 2018

During the season of Advent, we focus our lives on the coming of Christ. That is to say that we focus and celebrate the past. But in Malachi 3:1-4 we are reminded that there is a future component to the gift of God's word: that there will be a second coming. We are reminded that first there will be a messenger, then the Lord will come to His temple. At the time that we are celebrating the birth of Christ, we must also remember that there is another part to the story that is yet to be written. And with that in mind, and something that we should keep in mind every day, is to ponder the fact of whether we are ready for that second coming. During the season of Advent, it is easy for us to lead the life of a good Christian. But unlike when I was sitting in back of grade school doing what I knew to be wrong because the teacher wasn't looking, God looks at our whole life's work. He will come with glory to judge the quick and the dead, and in doing so, no life shall remain unchanged.

Thursday, December 6, 2018

While I like to think of myself as a well-read individual, I must readily admit that I had to look up what was meant in Malachi 3:1-4

when it talks about a refiner's fire or a launderer's soap. Afraid these are just no common practices anymore, but in inferring their meaning into the context of the reading, it is the fact that when the Lord returns here on Earth, the time of His coming is not something that will easily be endured. As Christ endured pain and hardships leading up to His death, we must understand that despite being God's chosen, there still lies evil within us that will need to be cleansed for our own good and well-being. It is hard to comprehend during a time that we are engulfed with images of baby Jesus, which with it brings in ideas of peace, serenity and goodwill. But when the end of time arrives, as judgment is rendered on the guilty and deliverance to the faithful, we must be prepared to repent our sins and be cleansed in preparation to stand before God.

Friday, December 7, 2018

There is so much peace to be found when we look up to the sky. While God has certainly painted a wonderful landscape here on Earth, it is those heavenly bodies that seem to always add a sense of serenity that can't be found anywhere else. While Luke 1:68-79 is a text about promises kept and prophecies to come, it is the sentence where the rising sun comes from the heavens to shine light in darkness that I was instantly drawn to. Often when I am driving home on a cloudy day, seeing the sun peek through the clouds, rays of light directed straight onto a spot on Earth, I find myself asking God to let that light be shining on someone who truly needs it this day. And even on the hottest of days, there is something calming about a serene sunrise or sunset. And it is in these simple snapshots of life where we can find the tender mercy of God knowing that He will guide our feet onto the path of peace.

Saturday, December 8, 2018

In Philippians 1:3-11 is a line that has remained with me since my first communion class: he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus. I remember it because Pastor Torgler used an analogy that sixth-grade me could relate to: just because a soccer player has amazing talent doesn't make him a great player. It is what he chooses to do with that talent that makes him a great player. God has instilled goodness in us but it is not until we choose to act on that goodness, until we speak to the glories that God has given us each and every day, until we do more than read His word but also live it, therein lies what we are tasked with to be a good Christian. God exists in our lives each and every day, and while He will carry on His good works through us, there is much we can do and should do that goes beyond attending church and giving when the offering plate comes around. How can we lie passive when God works through us?

Sunday, December 9, 2018

While it is easy to find readings in the Bible that could have greater meaning today, the last few verses of Philippians 1:3-11 perhaps need to be read from the mountaintops to people today. It is a prayer offered that love may bound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight, that one may be able to discern what is best and may be pure and blameless. I always find religion and politics to be a one-way road in that what I believe often influences my ideals but politics in no way should ever affect my faith. Of course in today's world we are inundated with politics despite our best efforts to avoid it all. And it is easy to see how the absence of love has seemingly resulted in the dearth of knowledge and lack of insight. It seems our works to the glory and praise of God is lost along the road between politics and religion.