

# Community of Grace

## Daily Walk for the week of September 28, 2020

### Psalm 85:10...Homecoming

Written by Pastor Matthew Henning

#### Monday September 28<sup>th</sup> God our Shepherd

“The Lord is the strength of his people; he is the saving refuge of his anointed. O save your people, and bless your heritage; be their shepherd, and carry them forever.” Psalm 28: 8-9. We are called to place our faith and trust in God each day of our lives. The image of the shepherd “carrying” sheep is an intentional one. There are times in our lives when we need to be lifted up in grace and carried through the challenges of this world and our sin. We are to trust that God will carry us and protect us. This psalm is teaching us that the eternal strength and grace of God will lift us up and out with grace. God will lift us into His kingdom with steadfast love and faithfulness. These are eternal gifts that change everything for us. Prayer: “O Good Shepherd, lift me out of despair and into hope with your love grace and mercy this day. Amen.”

#### Tuesday September 29<sup>th</sup> God has won

“And war broke out in heaven; Michael and his angels fought against the dragon. The dragon and his angels fought back, but they were defeated, and there was no longer any place for them in heaven. The great dragon was thrown down, that ancient serpent, who is called the Devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world—he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him.” Revelation 12: 7-11. This story of the great cosmic war was told to give hope to an early church suffering under persecution from the world around her. It is easy to forget in the com-

fort and welcome of our current culture that following Christ was not. Evil is real and present in our world not because it is powerful but because it has been thrown out of heaven. When we encounter evil we are to trust in the power of God’s goodness, speak out, and act out of the love and grace of God that will win because it has won already. This is why we can have hope and peace even in our broken world. Prayer: “Keep me mindful of your victory, O God, that I may continue your work in this world. Amen.”

### Celebration of Grace

Written by Kerri Lawton

#### Wednesday, September 30, 2020

Isaiah 5:1-2: “Let me sing for my beloved my love-song concerning his vineyard: Might be loved had a vineyard on a very fertile hill. He dug it and cleared it of stones, and planted it with choice vines; he built a watchtower in the mist of it, and hewed out a wine vat in it; he expected it to yield grapes, but it yielded wild grapes.” Isaiah sings a song describing God’s vineyard. God worked very hard to establish the perfect vineyard, taking care of the fertile lands and clearing the stones. All this work and yet still produced wild grapes. Even God’s expectations are set high and he’s often frustrated with the outcome. God’s vineyard is the planting of his chosen people in the holy lands, but to his dismay they turned away from him. Isaiah is speaking for God, as he sees the destructive ways of his people. He is speaking to be heard, and hopefully understood, about the truth of gods Vineyard. The love God has, as he plants good seed of hope in each of us, is

never ending. We should always be reminded of God's Vineyard and know of his tireless effort to produce a world of love and peace; justice and righteousness. Prayer: Heavenly father, we praise you for the world you brought us into. We know we are individuals making our own choices, but we depend on you and your guidance each day to choose wisely in your presence. Amen

**Thursday, October 1, 2020**

Isaiah 5:7: "For the Vineyard of the Lord of hosts is the house of Israel, and the people of Judah are his pleasant planting; he expected justice but saw bloodshed; righteousness, but heard a cry!" Continuing with "Isaiah's song of the unfruitful vineyard", he describes the house of Israel as the "Vineyard of the Lord of host." And the people of Judah as "gods pleasant planting." God, as we are today, was expecting righteousness among his chosen. Often our expectations are narrowed when we feel justice was not served. We actually see it time and again, when the righteous does not prevail. We hear the cries of those pleading for change, when actually they don't see that sometimes the change has to start within themselves. Their outlook is bleak, without looking to God to bring the change needed. God does not give up on his intentional Vineyard of life. He encourages us all to be aware and strive for justice and righteousness in all we do. Prayer: Dear Lord, you have seen the best and the worst among your creations. Help us except your words, and to encourage growth of strength and faith in our lives to bring change where needed. Amen

**Friday, October 2, 2020**

Psalm 80:7-13 "Restore us, oh God of hosts;

let your face shine, that we may be saved. You brought a vine out of Egypt; you drove out the nations and planted it. You cleared the ground for it; it took deep root and filled the land. The mountains were covered with its shade, the mighty Cedars with its branches; it sent out its branches to the sea, and its shoots to the river. Why then have you broken down its walls, so that all who pass along the way pluck its fruit? The boar from the forest ravages it, and all that move in the field feed on it." This portion of Psalm 80 repeats lessons from Isaiah 5, by using the same description of God's people as a vine from Egypt. God took care to plant where best to prosper. These lessons are so similar, each have the same meaning. Pleading to God as to why he broke the protective barriers; after all the care he took planting his precious vines. They pleaded for restoration. Perhaps God not only restores but redirects the growth of the vines he brought out of Egypt. Perhaps when breaking the barriers he offers the fruit of his labor to any and all. His gospel is planted through each of us and it has been over generations of time. We plant the seed of the gospel within our family and friends; throughout our communities with God as our harvester. Prayer: Praise to you God for your loving and caring ways. We work to please you, spreading the seeds of the gospel in all that we do. Amen

**Saturday, October 3, 2020**

Psalm 80:14-15: "Turn again, oh God of hosts, look down from heaven, and see; have regard for this vine, the stock that your right hand planted." This is a prayer for Israel's restoration. Turn again, we also pray, oh God of hosts, to the uncertainty we may

face today. Our sense of freedom and community is threatened as never before. I've had the privilege of working at Lawrenceville co-op over the past several months. The service I've seen by many, tackling every circumstance, has been impressive. The needy are numerous, but the donations have been steady as well. I see God's hand at work and the community is standing strong. Supporting each other, as best we can, is why we exist as a church family. We are a community, bound by love and compassion. As always, God is present to give us encouragement and strength. Prayer: God of hosts, restore our hope for righteousness and justice, as you restored Israel. We stand strong with your guidance before us. We pray for fear to subside and mercy granted. Amen

**Sunday, October 4, 2020**

Matthew 21:43-44 "Therefore I tell you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to the people that produces the fruits of the kingdom. The one who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces, and it will crush anyone on whom it falls." Jesus had entered the temple and was confronted by the priest and elders. He spoke several parables including "the wicked tenants". A landowner had planted a vineyard (sound familiar?) secured with a fence and watch tower. He leased it to tenants, relying on them to righteously tend to it. When harvest time came though, the tenants killed the slaves sent to collect the produce. They disrespected the landowner and ruined the trust he had in them. He then sent his own son, thinking they would show him respect, but he was slain as well. They thought they could gain his inheritance. Jesus forced the

priest to see their own place in the parable. In Matthew 21:32, Jesus reminded them that John had come to them "in the way of righteousness" and yet they did not believe him. Those who did believe, even the tax collectors and prostitutes, would enter the kingdom of God before them, because they believed in what Christ had to offer. Christ message is to be heard by all, even those who feel they are righteously serving God. Their focus should be on the creator, honoring all he is responsible for; knowing we are also responsible to continue producing a fruitful harvest. Prayer: Heavenly father, we are reminded daily of the responsibilities we share with others. Planting, caring for and harvesting the produce of righteous faithfulness, bringing us closer to God's plan. Amen