THE LIVING WORD OF PENTECOST

A DEVOTIONAL GUIDE AUGUST 7 - AUGUST 13

SEASON AFTER PENTECOST

Proper 14

Where does your heart go to feel secure?

In this Sunday's Gospel text in Luke 12:32-40, Jesus tells His disciples, "Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has been pleased to give you the kingdom. Sell your possessions and give to the poor. Provide purses for yourselves that will not wear out, a treasure in heaven that will never fail, where no thief comes near and no moth destroys. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."

Jesus is teaching us that true security is found in the Kingdom of heaven. No earthly possessions can give us the protection and care we receive from our Father in Heaven. God alone is worthy of our heart's devotion.

This theme of trust in God and the futility of trusting in false saviors is driven home across the Old Testament and New Testament readings for the week.

Psalm 33:12-22 warns us of the folly of trusting in military might, saying, "No king is saved by the size of his army; no warrior escapes by his great strength. A horse is a vain hope for deliverance; despite all its great strength, it cannot save. But the eyes of the Lord are on those who fear Him, on those whose hope is in His unfailing love."

Job 21 teaches us that the prosperity of wealth is futile, for the prosperity of the wicked "is not in their own hands."

Ecclesiastes 6:1-6 instructs us that the ability to enjoy wealth and possessions is a gift from God.

There is a thread that weaves together Genesis 11, Acts 7, and Romans 9 about the way God called Abraham, who trusted that God's word would not fail. He is a God who can be trusted from generation to generation.

Sunday's lectionary readings reinforce that what God is seeking is faith, not bare sacrifices.

In Isaiah 1 and Psalm 50, the Lord reminds us that the rams, fattened animals, the cattle on a thousand hills, every bird, insect, and animal in the forest belongs to Him! We may think that we offer these as sacrifices at great cost to us, but each one actually belongs to the Lord.

What the Lord desires and commends in Abraham in Hebrews 11 is faith—a confidence in what we hope for and assurance of what we do not see. The remainder of Hebrews 11 gives us example after example of people waiting for God's provision, looking for a country of their own that God has promised.

We can trust in God's faithfulness, which is a key theme of Psalm 89. Love and faithfulness go before the Lord, marking the way.

The readings in 2 Chronicles 33-34 teach us that even a rebellious nation can know the forgiveness and goodness of God because God is faithful. And Jeremiah 33 reminds us that the Lord keeps His covenant promises to His people. They cannot be broken.

The only legitimate source of security for our hearts is God alone. He is faithful even when we are faithless. Will this faithful God who gave His only Son Jesus for our salvation be the sole source of your security?

Our final reading for the week in Luke 12:41-48 asks us how we will respond to a God who has been faithful to us and left us to do His work. While Jesus has gone away, will we trust Him and work for His kingdom? Or will we look for security in earthly things that can't provide protection and care?

Jesus says, "From everyone who has been given much, much will be demanded; and from the one who has been entrusted with much, much more will be asked."

FOR PRAYER & REFLECTION

Will you hear the word of the Lord?

Isaiah 1:10 begins with, "Hear the word of the Lord." This was a startling word: "Stop bringing meaningless offerings" (1:13)! Somewhere along the line the people had separated love of God from love of others; they had slipped into using worship times for their own glory instead of God's. If God's glory was their goal, they would care for who He cares for (especially the fatherless and the widow).

Hear the word of the Lord, friend. God does not care about your tithe, your expressive worship, or your dedication to your church or country if your words and actions neglect the needs of your neighbors.

Will you hear the word of the Lord?

In Luke 12:32, the Lord Jesus says, "Don't be afraid, little flock, for your Father has been pleased to give you the kingdom." This was a comforting word. As Jesus instructed them on being ready for service, He assured them that their Father had put the resources of heaven in their hands.

Hear the word of the Lord, friend. God enjoys giving you everything you need to live the life He calls you to lead.

Will you hear the word of the Lord?

This week, invite the Spirit to startle you out of habits of self-centered worship and living. Ask the Spirit: How do I use my hands, my phone, my money, my time for self-preservation instead of justice?

As you listen to the Spirit about that question, invite the Spirit to soothe you with Jesus' words from Luke 12:32. Follow up with this question: How can I use my hands, my phone, my money, and my time to invest in heaven?



SCRIPTURE

READINGS FOR THE WEEK

Thursday

Psalm 50:1-8, 22-23; Isaiah 9:8-17; Romans 9:1-9

Friday

Psalm 50:1-8, 22-23; Isaiah 9:18-10:4; Acts 7:1-8

Saturday

Psalm 50:1-8, 22-23; Isaiah 1:2-9, 21-23; Matthew 6:19-24

Sunday

Psalm 50:1-8, 22-23; Isaiah 1:1, 10-20; Genesis 15:1-6; Psalm 33:12-22; Hebrews 11:1-3, 8-16; Luke 12:32-40

Monday

Psalm 11; Isaiah 2:1-4; Hebrews 11:1-7

Tuesday

Psalm 11; Isaiah 24:1-13; Hebrews 11:17-28

Wednesday

Psalm 11; Isaiah 24:14-23; Luke 12:41-48

Why do the daily readings begin on Thursday?

The daily readings for each week begin on Thursday and end on the following Wednesday. The Thursday through Saturday readings prepare the reader for the Sunday ahead. The Monday through Wednesday readings reflect on what was presented on Sunday.

The Morning Liturgy

Opening Scripture

The Lord is in His holy temple; let all the earth keep silence before Him.

Habakkuk 2:20

Opening Prayer (based on Psalm 51)

Open my lips, O Lord, and my mouth shall proclaim Your praise. Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from Your presence, and take not Your Holy Spirit from me. Give me the joy of Your saving help again and sustain me with Your bountiful Spirit. Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit: as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. *Amen*.

Scripture Reading (read Psalm and Gospel text here)

Period of Silence

Confessing Our Faith (Apostles' Creed)

The Lord's Prayer

The Collect (Proper 14)

Grant to us, Lord, we pray, the spirit to think and do always those things that are right, that we, who cannot exist without You, may by You be enabled to live according to Your will; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, forever and ever.

Amen.

A Midday Prayer

Blessed Savior, at this hour You hung upon the cross, stretching out Your loving arms: Grant that all the peoples of the earth may look to You and be saved; for Your mercies' sake. *Amen*.

An Early Evening Prayer

Lord Jesus, stay with us, for evening is at hand and the day is past; be our companion in the way, kindle our hearts, and awaken hope, that we may know You as You are revealed in Scripture and the breaking of bread. Grant this for the sake of Your love. *Amen.*

A Bedtime Confession and Prayer

Most merciful God, we confess that we have sinned against You in thought, word, and deed, by what we have done, and by what we have left undone. We have not loved You with our whole heart; we have not loved our neighbors as ourselves. We are truly sorry and we humbly repent. For the sake of Your Son Jesus Christ, have mercy on us and forgive us; that we may delight in Your will, and walk in Your ways, to the glory of Your Name.

Amen.

Visit this place, O Lord, and drive far from it all snares of the enemy; let Your holy angels dwell with us to preserve us in peace; and let Your blessing be upon us always;

through Jesus Christ our

Lord. Amen.

