THE LIVING WORD OF PENTECOST

A DEVOTIONAL GUIDE AUGUST 28 - SEPTEMBER 3

SEASON AFTER PENTECOST

Proper 17

Humility is not a virtue that is celebrated in our culture of celebrities and influencers. We are persistently and subtly encouraged to draw attention to ourselves.

Jesus called His disciples to embrace and cultivate humility in their lives.

How is your life revealing the virtue of humility?

In this Sunday's Gospel reading from Luke 14:1, 7-14, Jesus shows us that God exalts those who humble themselves and humbles those who exalt themselves.

So many of Jesus' lessons involve meals and parties with insights on the way the participants engaged in them. As Jesus watched this particular party, he noticed how people picked seats of honor. Jesus encouraged His followers to take the lowest seats instead of exalting themselves.

He also used this occasion to encourage His disciples to give banquets where they invite the poor, crippled, lame, and blind. Just as they were taught to take the lowest seats, so Jesus suggests that, through hospitality, His followers lift the lowest on the social ladder.

As you meditate on this week's readings, watch for this theme of humility in your relationship to God and with other people.

The readings from Jeremiah denounce the ways God's people pridefully resisted God and followed their ways. In Jeremiah 12:2, the prophet says that God is always on their lips but far from their hearts. Is God just a word on our lips or the devotion of our hearts?

Pay attention to the ways God's people pridefully resist God's leading in the readings in the Book of Psalms this week from chapters 81 and 58.

What is the solution to this hard-hearted, prideful rebellion? Read Matthew 20:20-28 and consider where Jesus says, "Whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be your slave—just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many."

Jesus suggests that the way to nurture humility is to allow the self-giving power of His life to take over our hearts and motivate us to true service. Does the Gospel of sacrifice motivate you to want to give of yourself?

This theme is spelled out in direct commands in 1 Peter 3-4, where we are instructed to "love one another, be compassionate and humble" and to "offer hospitality to one another without grumbling."

Hebrews 13 reminds us to "not forget to show hospitality to strangers, for by so doing some people have shown hospitality to angels without knowing it." It also teaches, "And do not forget to do good and to share with others, for with such sacrifices God is pleased."

In Paul's instructions about appointing elders in Titus, he requires that the elder must be hospitable.

The point is clear: The Kingdom that Jesus is establishing is controlled by a set of values that run counter to the prevailing values of this world. Pride and seeking reward and comfort for oneself are to be resisted. Humility and hospitality are encouraged and rewarded.

The life and manner of Jesus modeled this as He unselfishly served and gave His life as a servant on the cross. This week, how can we begin to imagine the ways our lives can begin to reveal this virtue of humility for the good of others?

FOR PRAYER & REFLECTION

Throughout the week we experience the weightiness of forgetfulness as we read in Jeremiah 2 of ancestors straying from God: following worthless idols, defiling His land, forsaking the spring of living water. The pattern continues in Psalm 81 with people who do not want to listen to God or submit to Him, but instead prefer to live life following their stubborn hearts and unwise choices.

Psalm 112 thankfully wafts in like a breath of fresh air as we discover blessings coming from remembering the Lord and what happens when we continue to say YES to Him. God provides hope for our present and future: "They will have no fear of bad news: their hearts are steadfast, trusting in the Lord" (Psalm 112:7).

Hebrews 13 offers a partial list of tangible ways to demonstrate our YES to Jesus by loving God and loving others, beginning with this direct statement: "Keep on loving one another as brothers and sisters" (the phrase Jesus used to describe us in Hebrews 2:11). Consider the writer's staccato-like presentation of how "actions speak louder than words" in this wide array of relationships and actions:

DO NOT:

forget strangers (v. 2), commit adultery or be sexually immoral (v. 4), love money or forget to be content (v. 5), be afraid (v. 6), forget Jesus (v. 8), forget to do good and share with others (v. 16).

DO:

love one another (v. 1), show hospitality (v. 2), continue to remember those in prison; those mistreated (v. 3), honor each other and maintain purity (v. 4), be content and remember God (v. 5), have confidence in God the Father, Son, and Spirit (v. 6), remember the spoken word of God. Consider and imitate the faith of your leaders (v. 7), remember Jesus is the same yesterday, today, and tomorrow! (v. 8), continually offer a sacrifice of praise to God (v. 15), please God by loving God and loving others! (v. 16).

What seems to jump out at you with the wide range of relationships and diversity of "do this"? What types of relationships are easiest for you to love and serve? Which ones are more challenging? Why?

Pause to read Matthew 25:34-40. What stirs in your heart at the realization that serving others is serving Jesus? When was the last time you experienced this closeness with Jesus by serving others? When is the next time you hope to?

Loving God and loving others is ...
Intentional. Practical. Pure. Alert. Loyal. Worshipful.
Ask God to guide you in taking the next step in loving His way.



SCRIPTURE

READINGS FOR THE WEEK

Thursday

Psalm 81:1, 10-16; Jeremiah 11:1-17; 1 Peter 3:8-12

Friday

Psalm 81:1, 10-16; Jeremiah 12:1-13; 1 Peter 4:7-11

Saturday

Psalm 81:1, 10-16; Jeremiah 2:1-3, 14-22; Matthew 20:20-28

Sunday

Psalm 81:1, 10-16; Jeremiah 2:4-13; Proverbs 25:6-7; Psalm 112; Hebrews 13:1-8, 15-16; Luke 14:1, 7-14

Monday

Psalm 58; Jeremiah 2:23-37; Hebrews 13:7-21

Tuesday

Psalm 58; Jeremiah 3:1-14; Titus 1:1-9

Wednesday

Psalm 58; Jeremiah 3:15-25; Luke 14:15-24

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

Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ.

Philippians 1:2

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 17)

Lord of all power and might, the author and giver of all good things: Graft in our hearts the love of Your Name; increase in us true religion; nourish us with all goodness; and bring forth in us the fruit of good works; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, forever and ever.

Amen.

A Midday Prayer

Lord Jesus Christ, You said to Your apostles, "Peace I give to you; my own peace I leave with you." Regard not our sins, but the faith of Your Church, and give to us the peace and unity of that heavenly City, where with the Father and the Holy Spirit You live and reign, now and forever.

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

Almighty and most merciful Father, we have erred and strayed from thy ways like lost sheep, we have followed too much the devices and desires of our own hearts, we have offended against thy holy laws, we have left undone those things which we ought to have done, and we have done those things which we ought not to have done. But thou, O Lord, have mercy upon us, spare thou those who confess their faults, restore thou those who are penitent, according to thy promises declared unto mankind in Christ Jesus our Lord; and grant, O most merciful Father, for His sake, that we may hereafter live a godly, righteous, and sober life, to the glory of thy holy 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.

