

DAILY DEVOTIONS

Year 2, Semester 1

⁴ *Make me to know your ways, O LORD;
teach me your paths.*

⁵ *Lead me in your truth and teach me,
for you are the God of my salvation;
for you I wait all the day long.*

Psalm 25 : 4 - 5

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Year 2

Semester 1

1. GOOD INSTRUCTION IS AN INVESTMENT FOR THE FUTURE (Proverbs 2)
2. "YOUR KINGDOM COME!"
3. THE MOST HIGH IS SOVEREIGN OVER THE KINGDOMS OF MEN (Daniel)
4. THE GOSPEL TAKES HOLD IN EUROPE (Paul's 2nd journey)
5. NO OTHER NAME BY WHICH TO BE SAVED!
6. BE CONTENT (Thanksgiving)
7. SOBER MARINERS
8. REJOICE IN GOD'S COMPASSION (Jonah)
9. A MAN OF INTEGRITY (Joseph)
10. "YOU MEANT IT FOR EVIL, BUT GOD USED IT FOR GOOD" (Joseph)
11. "YOU SHALL NOT KILL."
12. LONGING FOR THE FUTURE (2 Peter 3)
13. SERVE THE LORD WITH ALL YOUR HEART
14. THE HOLY SPIRIT IN THE OLD TESTAMENT
15. GOD THE SON IN THE OLD TESTAMENT
16. SING TO THE LORD (Songs of Moses & the Lamb)
17. SEEK FIRST THE HONOUR OF THE KING (Matthew 6)
18. WHAT IS GOD'S KINGDOM LIKE? (Parables)

GOOD INSTRUCTION IS AN INVESTMENT FOR THE FUTURE

We are at the beginning of a new year of instruction. For some students this is their first year in high school, for others this is old hat, for again others this is the beginning of their last year. As teachers we may wonder what this new school year will bring. No matter what grade we are in, or what task we have, we all have to grow in the fear of the Lord. This is why we start our days with God's Word, praise and prayer. This first week we will pay attention to the significance of good instruction.

Wednesday, Sept. 5

The LORD gives wisdom

As we seek wisdom or understanding we need to realize that wisdom is a gift from the LORD. He has also determined the way in which we receive it.

Proverbs 2:1-8

² My son, if you receive my words
and treasure up my commandments with you,
² making your ear attentive to wisdom
and inclining your heart to understanding;
³ yes, if you call out for insight
and raise your voice for understanding,
⁴ if you seek it like silver
and search for it as for hidden treasures,
⁵ then you will understand the fear of the Lord
and find the knowledge of God.
⁶ For the Lord gives wisdom;
from his mouth come knowledge and understanding;
⁷ he stores up sound wisdom for the upright;
he is a shield to those who walk in integrity,
⁸ guarding the paths of justice
and watching over the way of his saints.

Discussion

1. Verses 1-4 is a conditional sentence: "if you then". What is the condition? Discuss the way this should function in our lives? What are we to do?
2. The expression "the fear of the LORD" is well-known. What does it mean? Try to be specific.
3. Vs. 6 gives the reason for the previous sentence. What is the reason? In connection with this: What is "wisdom," "knowledge" and "understanding" in the Bible? In which way does the LORD give these things? What does this first sentence (vss.1-5) teach us about our prayers?
4. What do we say about the LORD in vs. 7-8? Why do we need a shield and a guard?
5. What is the connection between understanding "the fear of the LORD" and our work at school? What does this passage teach us about God and about ourselves?

Sing: Ps. 101 : 1, 2

Lunch: Prov. 3 : 1 - 4

Thursday, Sept. 6

Wisdom will protect you

The previous sections ended with the promise that the LORD will protect the faithful ones. This is explained further in today's passage. He uses wisdom to protect us.

Proverbs 2:9-15

⁹ Then you will understand righteousness and justice
and equity, every good path;
¹⁰ for wisdom will come into your heart,
and knowledge will be pleasant to your soul;
¹¹ discretion will watch over you,
understanding will guard you,

¹² delivering you from the way of evil,
from men of perverted speech,
¹³ who forsake the paths of uprightness
to walk in the ways of darkness,
¹⁴ who rejoice in doing evil
and delight in the perverseness of evil,
¹⁵ men whose paths are crooked,
and who are devious in their ways.

Discussion

1. Vs. 9 begins with “Then,” connecting today’s passage to yesterday’s. To what does this “then” refer? What will “then” happen and why?
2. How does discretion protect us? Why do we need this protection? Why does our society not want to hear about a sinful nature?
3. How much do we realize that we need to stand on guard? Keep in mind vs. 12-15. How can education help us in this regard?
4. What is Reformed education and why are thankful for it?

Sing: Ps. 101: 3, 4

Lunch: Prov. 3 : 9 - 12

Friday, Sept. 7

Wisdom gives life

Proverbs continues to extol the virtues of wisdom.

Proverbs 2:16-22

¹⁶ So you will be delivered from the forbidden woman,
from the adulteress with her smooth words,
¹⁷ who forsakes the companion of her youth
and forgets the covenant of her God;
¹⁸ for her house sinks down to death,
and her paths to the departed;
¹⁹ none who go to her come back,
nor do they regain the paths of life.
²⁰ So you will walk in the way of the good
and keep to the paths of the righteous.
²¹ For the upright will inhabit the land,
and those with integrity will remain in it,
²² but the wicked will be cut off from the land,
and the treacherous will be rooted out of it.

Discussion

1. What is the “it” of vs. 16? What will “it” do? From what does it “save” you? Why is this important?
2. We are surrounded by sexual temptations. Do we realize the dangers of it? It may seem innocent in a way, but this passage teaches otherwise. Your future is at stake. Do we also realize that the problem is first of all in us, in that we give in? Think of Lord’s Day 52 q/a 127. How would you help a friend who is giving in to these sexual temptations?
3. What does it mean to you to walk in the ways of good men (vs.20)?
4. The theme for this week was: Good instruction is an investment for the future. Explain how the passages we reflected on have made this clear to you. What is good instruction? How are you investing in your future?

Sing: Ps. 101 : 5, 6

Lunch: Prov. 3 : 33 - 35

“YOUR KINGDOM COME!”

The Lord Jesus teaches us to pray, Your Kingdom Come. As the first part of the explanation in the Heidelberg Catechism shows, this implies that we ask to be ruled more and more by the Spirit and Word of our Lord Jesus Christ. To quote from Proverbs 2, the Kingdom of God comes in that we “walk in the ways of good men and keep to the paths of the righteous.” We will look at five aspects in connection with this petition and it try to find how this should function in our prayers. We need to be taught to pray. The Lord Jesus gives this petition to teach us.

Monday, Sept. 10

The LORD reigns!

The expression “the Kingdom of God” refers to the Kingship of God. He rules supreme. Psalm 97 is one of the many Psalms that speak of his royal majesty. As subjects of this King, we must know the glory of our King.

Psalm 97:1-12

- ¹97 The Lord reigns, let the earth rejoice;
let the many coastlands be glad!
- ²Clouds and thick darkness are all around him;
righteousness and justice are the foundation of his throne.
- ³Fire goes before him
and burns up his adversaries all around.
- ⁴His lightnings light up the world;
the earth sees and trembles.
- ⁵The mountains melt like wax before the Lord,
before the Lord of all the earth.
- ⁶The heavens proclaim his righteousness,
and all the peoples see his glory.
- ⁷All worshipers of images are put to shame,
who make their boast in worthless idols;
worship him, all you gods!
- ⁸Zion hears and is glad,
and the daughters of Judah rejoice,
because of your judgments, O Lord.
- ⁹For you, O Lord, are most high over all the earth;
you are exalted far above all gods.
- ¹⁰O you who love the Lord, hate evil!
He preserves the lives of his saints;
he delivers them from the hand of the wicked.
- ¹¹Light is sown for the righteous,
and joy for the upright in heart.
- ¹²Rejoice in the Lord, O you righteous,
and give thanks to his holy name!

Discussion

1. Why should the earth be glad? What is “being glad” in this regard? If the earth is glad, than we should even more be glad. Why? Are we?
2. What is the response of Zion? (Vs. 8) Why? (Vs. 9-11)
3. How much are we aware of the majesty of our King? How does this function/show in our lives? Reflect on how this Psalm speaks of the majesty of God.
4. What are we asking when we pray “Your Kingdom Comes?” Try to be specific in light of this passage.

Sing: Ps. 97

Lunch: Psalm 98

Tuesday, Sept. 11

Submit to our King

“So rule us by your Word and Spirit that more and more we submit to you.”

Colossians 2 : 1 - 8

² For I want you to know how great a struggle I have for you and for those at Laodicea and for all who have not seen me face to face, ² that their hearts may be encouraged, being knit together in love, to reach all the riches of full assurance of understanding and the knowledge of God's mystery, which is Christ, ³ in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. ⁴ I say this in order that no one may delude you with plausible arguments. ⁵ For though I am absent in body, yet I am with you in spirit, rejoicing to see your good order and the firmness of your faith in Christ.

⁶ Therefore, as you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him, ⁷ rooted and built up in him and established in the faith, just as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving.

⁸ See to it that no one takes you captive by philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition, according to the elemental spirits^[a] of the world, and not according to Christ.

Discussion

1. What is Paul saying in vs. 6? The believers must continue to live in Christ, in accordance with what they have learned about Christ, namely, that he is their Lord. What does this mean?
2. What does it mean to:
 - be rooted in him?
 - be built up in him?Are we? Can we? How?
3. What else is part of it? To be strengthened in the faith as you were taught; overflowing with thankfulness. Are we?
4. What does it mean to submit to Christ? How are we to do this? Why do we have to do this “more and more”? Is this not discouraging, in the sense that it is never enough?
5. Submission requires spiritual strength. Do you agree or disagree? How does the world look at submission?
6. What are we asking when we pray “Your Kingdom Comes?” Try to be specific in light of this passage.

Sing: Hy. 26

Lunch: John 15 : 1 - 4

Wednesday, Sept. 12

“Preserve and increase your church.”

Acts 2:38-47

³⁸ And Peter said to them, “Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. ³⁹ For the promise is for you and for your children and for all who are far off, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to himself.” ⁴⁰ And with many other words he bore witness and continued to exhort them, saying, “Save yourselves from this crooked generation.” ⁴¹ So those who received his word were baptized, and there were added that day about three thousand souls.

⁴² And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. ⁴³ And awe came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were being done through the apostles. ⁴⁴ And all who believed were together and had all things in common. ⁴⁵ And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need. ⁴⁶ And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts, ⁴⁷ praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved.

Discussion

1. The situation of this passage is right after Pentecost, the outpouring of the Holy Spirit.
2. In vs. 41 we read about 3000 people who were added to the number of the church that day. How come? What does this tell us about the “increase” of the church?
3. In vs. 47 we read that the Lord preserves and increases his Church? Note what the believers are doing. What does this mean? How can we do this?
4. How did this preservation and increase show? See Vs. 44-47

5. When we hear the words “preserve and increase your church” we tend to think of mission. This is not incorrect, but as the text shows, it starts in the local congregation: being devoted to the teaching of the apostles and fellowship. Why is this so important? What are we doing in this regard?
6. When we hear the word “increase” we tend to think of numbers. Is this correct? Numbers in themselves are not a proof of the coming of God’s kingdom.
7. This increase also refers to increase in love, knowledge, fellowship. How can we increase in this regard?
8. What are we asking when we pray “Your Kingdom Comes?” Try to be specific in light of this passage.

Sing: Hy. 61
Lunch: Acts 9:28-31

Thursday, Sept. 13

Destroy the enemy.

“Destroy the works of the devil, every power that raises itself against you, and every conspiracy against your holy Word”

Romans 16 : 17 - 20

¹⁷ I appeal to you, brothers, to watch out for those who cause divisions and create obstacles contrary to the doctrine that you have been taught; avoid them. ¹⁸ For such persons do not serve our Lord Christ, but their own appetites, and by smooth talk and flattery they deceive the hearts of the naive. ¹⁹ For your obedience is known to all, so that I rejoice over you, but I want you to be wise as to what is good and innocent as to what is evil. ²⁰ The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.

Discussion

1. How does this passage connect to the petition “Your Kingdom Come?”
2. What does Paul urge the brothers to do? Why? What is wrong with these people?
3. How do these words of Romans 16 function in our lives? Do we meet such enemies as well? Can you mention some current “conspiracies against God’s Word”? What does this mean for our prayers?
4. What are we asking when we pray “Your Kingdom Comes?” Try to be specific in light of this passage.

Sing: Hy. 52 : 1, 3
Lunch: Acts 9 : 4-6; 11-15

Friday, Sept. 14

Longing for the fullness.

“Do all this until the fullness of your Kingdom comes, wherein you shall be all in all.”

Romans 8 : 22-25

²² For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now. ²³ And not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. ²⁴ For in this hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what he sees? ²⁵ But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience.

Discussion

1. Vs. 22 says that this whole creation is groaning. Why? Do you “hear” it? Can you give examples?
2. Vs. 23 says that we are groaning too. Why? Do you? Can you give examples?
3. How does this passage help us in this “groaning?” What does it mean to hope? What does it mean to be patient?
4. What is the fullness of God’s Kingdom? What does it mean that he will be all in all?
5. What are we asking when we pray “Your Kingdom Comes?” Try to be specific in light of this passage.
6. How has this theme helped you in your prayers? Share your thoughts with others.

Sing: Hy. 41
Lunch: John 16 : 19 - 22

THE MOST HIGH IS SOVEREIGN OVER THE KINGDOMS OF MEN

The book of Daniel is about the coming of God's Kingdom. In a time when the kingdom of Israel was being destroyed by the Babylonians and the house of David seemed to have come to an end, the LORD shows that he continues to bring his Kingdom. Daniel functions within this context. Although we can learn much from Daniel, the Book of Daniel focuses on the LORD. He reveals his royal majesty and faithfulness in Daniel's life and work. With Daniel we believe in and serve the same God and Father. This week we will deal with the first part of this book. It will be too much to deal with each chapter as a whole, but as we look at a small part we should keep in mind the whole picture. Although the students will be familiar with these histories, it may be helpful to briefly outline the context.

Monday, Sept. 17

Healthy meals - vegetables and water

In the opening chapter of Daniel we see how the enemy is aiming his attack on the youth of the church. If he is able to make them assimilate then he is scored a victory. He has the same aim today!

Daniel 1:11-16

¹¹ Then Daniel said to the steward whom the chief of the eunuchs had assigned over Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, ¹² "Test your servants for ten days; let us be given vegetables to eat and water to drink. ¹³ Then let our appearance and the appearance of the youths who eat the king's food be observed by you, and deal with your servants according to what you see." ¹⁴ So he listened to them in this matter, and tested them for ten days. ¹⁵ At the end of ten days it was seen that they were better in appearance and fatter in flesh than all the youths who ate the king's food. ¹⁶ So the steward took away their food and the wine they were to drink, and gave them vegetables.

Discussion

1. Who was Daniel? What did the king of Babylon want to do with these young men? Why?
2. Why did these four young men resist? What does this teach us?
3. How does the LORD bless the obedience of his subjects?
4. How difficult can it be to obey God in a godless society? What is our strength in this regard? Why would the devil want us to be like the world? Do you find it difficult to be different? Explain.
5. Explain the connection with the petition of the previous week.

Sing: Ps. 62 : 4, 7

Lunch: John 15 : 18 - 21

Tuesday, Sept. 18

Interpreting dreams

The LORD shows His royal glory in His triumph over the astrologers. The future is in his hand.

Daniel 2:44-47

⁴⁴ And in the days of those kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that shall never be destroyed, nor shall the kingdom be left to another people. It shall break in pieces all these kingdoms and bring them to an end, and it shall stand forever, ⁴⁵ just as you saw that a stone was cut from a mountain by no human hand, and that it broke in pieces the iron, the bronze, the clay, the silver, and the gold. A great God has made known to the king what shall be after this. The dream is certain, and its interpretation sure."

⁴⁶ Then King Nebuchadnezzar fell upon his face and paid homage to Daniel, and commanded that an offering and incense be offered up to him. ⁴⁷ The king answered and said to Daniel, "Truly, your God is God of gods and Lord of kings, and a revealer of mysteries, for you have been able to reveal this mystery."

Discussion

1. What did the king see in his dream? Vs. 45 says: "The great God has shown the king what will take place in the future." What will take place?
2. When did what the dream showed happen? Or is it still future? It happened in Christ. It will be completed on the day Christ will return.
3. How do we see the power of this kingdom today? Think also of the last words of Art. 27 B.C.
4. What does this chapter teach us about the power of God?

5. Astrologers were important people in the Babylonian society. The LORD puts them to shame. What does this tell us?
6. Do the events in the world scare you? How can we draw comfort from this chapter? See Hy. 41.

Sing: Ps. 46 : 3

Lunch: Acts 28 : 28 - 31

Wednesday, Sept. 19

One extra in the fire

This chapter shows the triumph of our LORD over the religion of Babylon. Babylon's religion is self-glorification.

Daniel 3:24-29

²⁴ Then King Nebuchadnezzar was astonished and rose up in haste. He declared to his counselors, "Did we not cast three men bound into the fire?" They answered and said to the king, "True, O king." ²⁵ He answered and said, "But I see four men unbound, walking in the midst of the fire, and they are not hurt; and the appearance of the fourth is like a son of the gods."

²⁶ Then Nebuchadnezzar came near to the door of the burning fiery furnace; he declared, "Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, servants of the Most High God, come out, and come here!" Then Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego came out from the fire. ²⁷ And the satraps, the prefects, the governors, and the king's counselors gathered together and saw that the fire had not had any power over the bodies of those men. The hair of their heads was not singed, their cloaks were not harmed, and no smell of fire had come upon them. ²⁸ Nebuchadnezzar answered and said, "Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, who has sent his angel and delivered his servants, who trusted in him, and set aside the king's command, and yielded up their bodies rather than serve and worship any god except their own God. ²⁹ Therefore I make a decree: Any people, nation, or language that speaks anything against the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego shall be torn limb from limb, and their houses laid in ruins, for there is no other god who is able to rescue in this way."

Discussion

1. Why would the king have made this statue? Do we see this human pride also today? Give examples how we feel pressure to bow before this "image" of man?
2. Why would the three men not bow before the statue? The LORD only must we worship. How did the three men receive help? The LORD sent his Angel. How does this apply to us?
3. It says of the three men that "They trusted in him [the LORD] and defied the king's command and were willing to give up their lives rather than serve or worship any god except their own God." Did they know what was going to happen? What does that teach us about trusting God?
4. What is the outcome? What does this teach us about God?

Sing: Ps. 66 : 4, 5

Lunch: Luke 4 : 5 - 8

Thursday, Sept. 20

The writing on the wall

The LORD triumphs over the blaspheming of His Name.

Daniel 5:22-31

²² And you his son, Belshazzar, have not humbled your heart, though you knew all this, ²³ but you have lifted up yourself against the Lord of heaven. And the vessels of his house have been brought in before you, and you and your lords, your wives, and your concubines have drunk wine from them. And you have praised the gods of silver and gold, of bronze, iron, wood, and stone, which do not see or hear or know, but the God in whose hand is your breath, and whose are all your ways, you have not honored.

²⁴ "Then from his presence the hand was sent, and this writing was inscribed. ²⁵ And this is the writing that was inscribed: Mene, Mene, Tekel, and Parsin. ²⁶ This is the interpretation of the matter: Mene, God has numbered the days of your kingdom and brought it to an end; ²⁷ Tekel, you have been weighed in the balances and found wanting; ²⁸ Peres, your kingdom is divided and given to the Medes and Persians."

²⁹ Then Belshazzar gave the command, and Daniel was clothed with purple, a chain of gold was put around his neck, and a proclamation was made about him, that he should be the third ruler in the kingdom.

³⁰ That very night Belshazzar the Chaldean king was killed. ³¹ And Darius the Mede received the kingdom, being about sixty-two years old.

Discussion

1. The situation: the city of Babylon was surrounded by the Medes, yet Belshazzar makes a great feast.
2. At what point did the hand writing appear on the wall? Vs. 2-4. As they were drinking from the cups taken from the temple in Jerusalem while praising their own gods. What does this teach us about the zeal of our God?
3. What does this hand writing say? What does this teach us about God's involvement in world events?
4. How do we see in this passage the victory of our God over the blasphemy of Babylon? We are surrounded by Babylon's blasphemy of the living God as well. What is our comfort and hope?

Sing: Ps. 2 : 1, 2

Lunch: Rev. 13 : 1 - 5

Friday, Sept. 21

The lion's den

The triumph of our Lord in the public worship of his Name.

Daniel 6:19-23

¹⁹Then, at break of day, the king arose and went in haste to the den of lions. ²⁰As he came near to the den where Daniel was, he cried out in a tone of anguish. The king declared to Daniel, "O Daniel, servant of the living God, has your God, whom you serve continually, been able to deliver you from the lions?" ²¹Then Daniel said to the king, "O king, live forever! ²²My God sent his angel and shut the lions' mouths, and they have not harmed me, because I was found blameless before him; and also before you, O king, I have done no harm."²³Then the king was exceedingly glad, and commanded that Daniel be taken up out of the den. So Daniel was taken up out of the den, and no kind of harm was found on him, because he had trusted in his God.

Discussion

1. Why did Daniel end up in the lion's den?
2. There is in this history a public element. Why did Daniel continue to pray in public? The temple in Jerusalem is finished. The daily prayer in the temple is finished. This prayer continues here, through Daniel. The discussion can focus on the function and importance of the public prayer in our worship services. See also the Prayers in the Book of Praise.
3. What do we learn from this history? The prayer for God's kingdom cannot be stopped. His kingdom comes in its power upon our prayer. Do we pray enough for the coming of God's kingdom?

Sing: Hy. 55

Lunch: Rev. 8 :1 - 5

THE GOSPEL TAKES HOLD IN EUROPE

The coming of God's kingdom in spite of the opposition of the devil is clearly revealed to us in the book of Acts. The Lord sends his servants with the gospel. The gospel meets resistance, but yet triumphs in the end. This week we will pay attention to Paul's second missionary journey. Keep in mind what happened after the first journey, the council at Jerusalem. Acts 15 ends: Paul and Silas went through Syria and Cilicia, strengthening the churches. Chapter 16 : 5 So the churches were strengthened in faith and grew daily in numbers. It will be helpful to have a map available. We will not deal with every stop Paul made, but pay attention to a few highlights. The lunch readings will be used to "fill in" more information.

Monday, Sept. 24

Come over to Europe and help

Paul begins his second missionary journey by revisiting the churches in Asia Minor.

Acts 16 : 1 - 10

¹6 Paul came also to Derbe and to Lystra. A disciple was there, named Timothy, the son of a Jewish woman who was a believer, but his father was a Greek. ²He was well spoken of by the brothers at Lystra and Iconium. ³Paul wanted Timothy to accompany him, and he took him and circumcised him because of the Jews who were in those places, for they all knew that his father was a Greek. ⁴As they went on their way through the cities, they delivered to them for observance the decisions that had been reached by the apostles and elders who were in Jerusalem. ⁵So the churches were strengthened in the faith, and they increased in numbers daily. ⁶And they went through the region of Phrygia and Galatia, having been forbidden by the Holy Spirit to speak the word in Asia. ⁷And when they had come up to Mysia, they attempted to go into Bithynia, but the Spirit of Jesus did not allow them. ⁸So, passing by Mysia, they went down to Troas. ⁹And a vision appeared to Paul in the night: a man of Macedonia was standing there, urging him and saying, "Come over to Macedonia and help us." ¹⁰And when Paul had seen the vision, immediately we sought to go on into Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel to them.

Discussion

1. Paul re-visited the cities where he had worked during his first journey. Why would he do this? See verse 5. Does this teach us something about mission work?
2. We meet Paul's young helper, Timothy. Why would Paul allow him to be circumcised?
3. From here Paul travels north. It says that the Spirit of Jesus would not allow them to enter Bithynia. Why would Paul want to go to Asia? Perhaps, because there were old ties between the Middle East and the Far East. In the Far East civilization and culture had developed much further than in the West.
4. What do we learn from vs. 6 and 7 about the Holy Spirit? The Spirit does not allow them to go to Asia. The Spirit has another purpose in mind. He determines the course of the Word.
5. What was the meaning of the dream? The Lord told Paul to go to Europe. That the gospel came to our ancestors is indeed by the providence of God. This is a wonderful example of what we confess in Canons of Dort I, 3. Also today we cannot plan the direction and progress of the gospel. We make plans, but in the awareness that the Spirit will direct it according to His will.
6. In verse 10 the narrative goes into the "we" form. Why? Luke has joined them there at Troas.

Sing: Hy. 48 : 2

Lunch: Acts 15 : 36 - 40

Tuesday, Sept. 25

First converts

The dream which Paul had seen seemed to indicate that Europe was longing for the gospel. When Paul comes people are not waiting for him and do not seem all that eager to hear him. Europe did not think it needed the gospel. The gospel does not go the way of the large crowds, but is directed by the Lord.

Acts 16 : 11 - 15

¹¹So, setting sail from Troas, we made a direct voyage to Samothrace, and the following day to Neapolis, ¹²and from there to Philippi, which is a leading city of the district of Macedonia and a Roman colony. We remained in this city some days. ¹³And on the Sabbath day we went outside the gate to the riverside, where we supposed there was a place of prayer, and we sat down and spoke to the women who had come together. ¹⁴One who heard us was a woman named Lydia, from the city of Thyatira, a seller of purple goods, who was a worshiper of God. The Lord opened her heart to pay attention to what was said by Paul. ¹⁵And after she was

baptized, and her household as well, she urged us, saying, "If you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come to my house and stay." And she prevailed upon us.

Discussion

1. Why would Paul go to the river? Usually he went to the synagogue. The Jewish community must have been so small that they had no synagogue. The faithful Jews would often meet at a river.
2. What happened on the Sabbath? See verse 13
3. Who is Lydia? What does it mean that she is a worshipper of God? To be worshiper of God means that she knew the O.T. and was committed to serving the God of Israel. She was not a total unbeliever. She did not know about the Lord Jesus Christ.
4. What does she say to Paul and his company? See verse 15. Note that fellowship follows the acceptance of the gospel and is a response to the preaching.

Sing: Hy. 48 : 3, 4

Lunch: Acts 16 : 16 - 24

Wednesday, Sept. 26

Singing in prison

Acts 16 : 25 – 34

²⁵About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them, ²⁶and suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken. And immediately all the doors were opened, and everyone's bonds were unfastened. ²⁷When the jailer woke and saw that the prison doors were open, he drew his sword and was about to kill himself, supposing that the prisoners had escaped. ²⁸But Paul cried with a loud voice, "Do not harm yourself, for we are all here." ²⁹And the jailer called for lights and rushed in, and trembling with fear he fell down before Paul and Silas. ³⁰Then he brought them out and said, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" ³¹And they said, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household." ³²And they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all who were in his house. ³³And he took them the same hour of the night and washed their wounds; and he was baptized at once, he and all his family. ³⁴Then he brought them up into his house and set food before them. And he rejoiced along with his entire household that he had believed in God.

Discussion

1. Why did Paul and Silas end up in jail? How do you see the opposition of the devil in this event? Note also that more often when Paul comes in new territory he meet with evil spirits. The Lord Jesus met them as well, and He too did not want them to broadcast His name. Why?
2. What was the physical condition of Paul and Silas? What did they do in prison? Why?
3. The Lord shows that He is in control. What is the meaning of earthquakes in Acts, or in the Bible?
4. What is the result? What does this teach us about the progress of the gospel in this world?

Sing: Hy 55 : 1, 2

Lunch: Acts 16 : 35 – 40

Thursday, Sept. 27

The gospel foolishness for the wise

Athens was the cultural centre of the world, in those days. The apostle doesn't bypass it, but brings the gospel there as well. In doing so he challenges the philosophy of man.

Acts 17 : 22 - 34

²²So Paul, standing in the midst of the Areopagus, said: "Men of Athens, I perceive that in every way you are very religious. ²³For as I passed along and observed the objects of your worship, I found also an altar with this inscription, 'To the unknown god.' What therefore you worship as unknown, this I proclaim to you. ²⁴The God who made the world and everything in it, being Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in temples made by man, ²⁵nor is he served by human hands, as though he needed anything, since he himself gives to all mankind life and breath and everything. ²⁶And he made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined allotted periods and the boundaries of their dwelling place, ²⁷that they should seek God, and perhaps feel their way toward him and find him. Yet he is actually not far from each one of us, ²⁸for

""In him we live and move and have our being";
as even some of your own poets have said,
""For we are indeed his offspring.'"

²⁹ Being then God's offspring, we ought not to think that the divine being is like gold or silver or stone, an image formed by the art and imagination of man. ³⁰ The times of ignorance God overlooked, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent, ³¹ because he has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed; and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead."

³² Now when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked. But others said, "We will hear you again about this." ³³ So Paul went out from their midst. ³⁴ But some men joined him and believed, among whom also were Dionysius the Areopagite and a woman named Damaris and others with them.

Discussion

1. How come did Paul end up in Athens? He had to flee Macedonia, and had to leave Silas and Timothy behind. In Athens he would wait for them. Again not a planned stop.
2. What was the significance of Athens? Centre of culture and philosophy. Centre and human wisdom.
3. Try to summarize what Paul says. What do we learn from this about the way we addresses unbelievers. How would you talk to unbelievers?
4. In 1 Corinthians 1: 18- 25 Paul contrasts God's wisdom with the wisdom of man. Discuss the way that passage connects to Acts 17.

Sing: Ps. 115 : 4, 5

Lunch: Acts 18 : 1 - 4

Friday, Sept. 28

An open door in Corinth

The church of Corinth is well known to us because of the two letters we have in the Bible addressed to them. Corinth was a centre of commerce, but also a city known for its immorality.

Acts 18 : 9 - 17

⁹ And the Lord said to Paul one night in a vision, "Do not be afraid, but go on speaking and do not be silent, ¹⁰ for I am with you, and no one will attack you to harm you, for I have many in this city who are my people."¹¹ And he stayed a year and six months, teaching the word of God among them.

¹² But when Gallio was proconsul of Achaia, the Jews made a united attack on Paul and brought him before the tribunal, ¹³ saying, "This man is persuading people to worship God contrary to the law." ¹⁴ But when Paul was about to open his mouth, Gallio said to the Jews, "If it were a matter of wrongdoing or vicious crime, O Jews, I would have reason to accept your complaint. ¹⁵ But since it is a matter of questions about words and names and your own law, see to it yourselves. I refuse to be a judge of these things." ¹⁶ And he drove them from the tribunal. ¹⁷ And they all seized Sosthenes, the ruler of the synagogue, and beat him in front of the tribunal. But Gallio paid no attention to any of this.

Discussion

1. How did Paul begin his work in Corinth? With the Jews. Why? Should mission to Jews have more attention among us?
2. At what point and in which manner did he leave the synagogue? In general, at what point can you leave people who do not want to listen to the gospel?
3. How long did Paul stay in Corinth? See vs. 11. Why could he stay this long? Vs. 9 & 10
4. What do the Jews do to stop the gospel? What is the accusation against Paul and the church? What should be the task of the government with regard to the church and the preaching of the gospel? See article 26 BC.

Sing: Ps. 56 : 2, 4

Lunch: Acts 18 : 18 - 23

NO OTHER NAME BY WHICH TO BE SAVED!

Last week we learned about Paul's missionary work. It is true that Paul has a special office as apostle, but as believers we are all called to testify of the hope we have and to share our faith with others. This week we hope to reflect on this task.

Monday, Oct. 1

"I will gather still others to them besides those already gathered."

When God made His covenant with Abraham, He said that He would make Abraham a blessing for the nations (Genesis 12:1-3). The LORD's aim is all the nations, not just Israel. Israel's task was to preserve the promise and proclaim it. Israel did not always live up to this task, but from the prophecies in the OT we learn that God does not abandon the nations.

Isaiah 56 : 1 - 8

⁵⁶ Thus says the Lord:

"Keep justice, and do righteousness,
for soon my salvation will come,
and my righteousness be revealed.

² Blessed is the man who does this,
and the son of man who holds it fast,
who keeps the Sabbath, not profaning it,
and keeps his hand from doing any evil."

³ Let not the foreigner who has joined himself to the Lord say,
"The Lord will surely separate me from his people";
and let not the eunuch say,
"Behold, I am a dry tree."

⁴ For thus says the Lord:

"To the eunuchs who keep my Sabbaths,
who choose the things that please me
and hold fast my covenant,

⁵ I will give in my house and within my walls
a monument and a name
better than sons and daughters;
I will give them an everlasting name
that shall not be cut off.

⁶ "And the foreigners who join themselves to the Lord,
to minister to him, to love the name of the Lord,
and to be his servants,
everyone who keeps the Sabbath and does not profane it,
and holds fast my covenant—

⁷ these I will bring to my holy mountain,
and make them joyful in my house of prayer;
their burnt offerings and their sacrifices
will be accepted on my altar;
for my house shall be called a house of prayer
for all peoples."

⁸ The Lord God,
who gathers the outcasts of Israel, declares,
"I will gather yet others to him
besides those already gathered."

Discussion

1. What does the LORD say to His own people? What does He say to the foreigners?
2. What was the place of the foreigner in Israel? Can you find other texts that speak about Israel's duty to care for the sojourners?
3. What does this text teach us about the plan of our God with the nations? What does this tell us about evangelism?

Sing: Ps. 86 : 2, 3

Lunch: Rev 21 : 22 - 22 : 2

Tuesday, Oct. 2**No other name under heaven**

There is urgency to the call to be a blessing to the nations, for there is no salvation apart from Christ.

Acts 4 : 5 - 21

⁵On the next day their rulers and elders and scribes gathered together in Jerusalem, ⁶with Annas the high priest and Caiaphas and John and Alexander, and all who were of the high-priestly family. ⁷And when they had set them in the midst, they inquired, "By what power or by what name did you do this?" ⁸Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, "Rulers of the people and elders, ⁹if we are being examined today concerning a good deed done to a crippled man, by what means this man has been healed, ¹⁰let it be known to all of you and to all the people of Israel that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead—by him this man is standing before you well. ¹¹This Jesus is the stone that was rejected by you, the builders, which has become the cornerstone. ¹²And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men^[e] by which we must be saved."

¹³Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated, common men, they were astonished. And they recognized that they had been with Jesus. ¹⁴But seeing the man who was healed standing beside them, they had nothing to say in opposition. ¹⁵But when they had commanded them to leave the council, they conferred with one another, ¹⁶saying, "What shall we do with these men? For that a notable sign has been performed through them is evident to all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and we cannot deny it. ¹⁷But in order that it may spread no further among the people, let us warn them to speak no more to anyone in this name." ¹⁸So they called them and charged them not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus. ¹⁹But Peter and John answered them, "Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you rather than to God, you must judge, ²⁰for we cannot but speak of what we have seen and heard." ²¹And when they had further threatened them, they let them go, finding no way to punish them, because of the people, for all were praising God for what had happened.

Discussion

1. What did the apostles do to deserve this treatment?
2. What does Peter say to the Sanhedrin about the Lord Jesus? Discuss the importance of vs. 12 and what this teaches us about evangelism.
3. What is the meaning of vs. 19 and 20? How does this apply to us? Do we all have to be able to speak about our faith with others? How can we help each other?

Sing: Ps. 118 : 1, 6

Lunch: Ephesians 2 : 19 - 22

Wednesday, Oct. 3**A slave girl and a general**

The manner in which we can share of faith with others can vary. In the history of Naaman we have a wonderful example how the LORD can use the words of a slave girl to show the power of His Word.

2 Kings 5 : 1 - 15

⁵Naaman, commander of the army of the king of Syria, was a great man with his master and in high favor, because by him the Lord had given victory to Syria. He was a mighty man of valor, but he was a leper. ²Now the Syrians on one of their raids had carried off a little girl from the land of Israel, and she worked in the service of Naaman's wife. ³She said to her mistress, "Would that my lord were with the prophet who is in Samaria! He would cure him of his leprosy." ⁴So Naaman went in and told his lord, "Thus and so spoke the girl from the land of Israel." ⁵And the king of Syria said, "Go now, and I will send a letter to the king of Israel." So he went, taking with him ten talents of silver, six thousand shekels of gold, and ten changes of clothing. ⁶And he brought the letter to the king of Israel, which read, "When this letter reaches you, know that I have sent to you Naaman my servant, that you may cure him of his leprosy." ⁷And when the king of Israel read the letter, he tore his clothes and said, "Am I God, to kill and to make alive, that this man sends word to me to cure a man of his leprosy? Only consider, and see how he is seeking a quarrel with me." ⁸But when Elisha the man of God heard that the king of Israel had torn his clothes, he sent to the king, saying, "Why have you torn your clothes? Let him come now to me, that he may know that there is a prophet in Israel." ⁹So Naaman came with his horses and chariots and stood at the door of Elisha's house. ¹⁰And Elisha sent a messenger to him, saying, "Go and wash in the Jordan seven times, and your flesh shall be restored, and you shall be clean." ¹¹But Naaman was angry and went away, saying, "Behold, I thought that he would surely come out to me and stand and call upon the name of the Lord his God, and wave his hand over the place and cure the leper. ¹²Are not Abana and Pharpar, the rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? Could I not wash in them and be clean?" So he turned and went away in a rage. ¹³But his servants came near and said to him, "My father, it is a great word the prophet has spoken to you; will you not do it? Has he actually said to you, 'Wash, and be clean'?" ¹⁴So he went down and dipped himself seven times in the Jordan, according to the word of the man of God, and his flesh was restored like the flesh of a little child, and he was clean. ¹⁵Then he returned to the man of God, he and all his company, and he came and stood before him. And he said, "Behold, I know that there is no God in all the earth but in Israel; so accept now a present from your servant."

Discussion

1. What do the words of this slave girl show about her relationship to her master (who is also her captor), and her relationship to the LORD?
2. Each miracle is a sign. Discuss the purpose of this miracle. What was the LORD teaching Israel and what is He teaching us?
3. Note the words of Naaman in vs. 15. What does this teach us about the purpose of evangelism?

Sing: Ps. 87 : 3, 4

Lunch: Luke 4 : 25 - 30

Thursday, Oct. 4

Graceful conversations

To speak about your faith is wonderful, but there should not be a clash between your testimony about your faith and your day to day talk with your friends.

Colossians 4 : 2 - 6

²Continue steadfastly in prayer, being watchful in it with thanksgiving. ³At the same time, pray also for us, that God may open to us a door for the word, to declare the mystery of Christ, on account of which I am in prison— ⁴that I may make it clear, which is how I ought to speak.

⁵Walk in wisdom toward outsiders, making the best use of the time. ⁶Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you ought to answer each person.

Discussion

1. Paul asks the Colossians to pray for him. Why would he do this? What is that they have to pray for?
2. What is the meaning of vs. 2? What is the connection between “being watchful and thankful” and prayer?
3. What do we learn from vs. 5 and 6? How should this function in our lives? What does it mean that our conversation should always be “full of grace and seasoned with salt”?

Sing: Ps. 19 : 6

Lunch: Leviticus 2 : 11 - 13

Friday, Oct. 5

Shine like stars as you hold out the word of life

Words and deeds have to go together. To reach others our speech has to be “full of grace” but so must our walk of life. We are letters of Christ to this world. We must be readable letters

Philippians 2 : 12 - 18

¹²Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, ¹³for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.

¹⁴Do all things without grumbling or disputing, ¹⁵that you may be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world, ¹⁶holding fast to the word of life, so that in the day of Christ I may be proud that I did not run in vain or labor in vain. ¹⁷Even if I am to be poured out as a drink offering upon the sacrificial offering of your faith, I am glad and rejoice with you all. ¹⁸Likewise you also should be glad and rejoice with me.

Discussion

1. What is the meaning of vs. 12-13? How are we to work out our own salvation?
2. What does this passage teach about our lifestyle? How are we to shine like stars?
3. Note that in vs. 16 this “blameless and pure” life style is called holding out the word of life. As we live godly lives we hold out the Word of life. We show that our lives are governed by this Word. How important is our lifestyle when it comes to evangelism?

Sing: Ps. 43 : 1, 4

Lunch: 2 Corinthians 3 : 2 - 3

BE CONTENT

Thankfulness is a part and parcel of a Christian's life. This thankfulness is carried by and shows in contentment. This week we will reflect on the call to be content. The more people have the less content they seem to be. Do you think this is true? How important is it to us to be or stay content and what can we do to stimulate this.

Monday, Oct. 8

The source of contentment

Proverbs 19:20-24

- ²⁰ Listen to advice and accept instruction,
that you may gain wisdom in the future.
- ²¹ Many are the plans in the mind of a man,
but it is the purpose of the Lord that will stand.
- ²² What is desired in a man is steadfast love,
and a poor man is better than a liar.
- ²³ The fear of the Lord leads to life,
and whoever has it rests satisfied;
he will not be visited by harm.
- ²⁴ The sluggard buries his hand in the dish
and will not even bring it back to his mouth.

Discussion

1. What is the benefit of listening to advice and accepting instruction?
2. What is the point of vs. 21?
3. Why is it better to be poor than to be a liar?
4. What is source of contentment? Explain why.
5. Contentment is placed beside: untouched by trouble. What does this mean? Does this mean one who fears the LORD will never have trouble, or is immune to trouble? What is contentment in the face of trouble?
6. What do we learn about the sluggard in vs. 24?

Sing: Hy. 65 : 1

Lunch: Prov. 14:30

Tuesday, Oct. 9

The enemy of contentment

Ecclesiastes 4: 4 - 8

- ⁴ Then I saw that all toil and all skill in work come from a man's envy of his neighbor. This also is vanity and a striving after wind.
- ⁵ The fool folds his hands and eats his own flesh.
- ⁶ Better is a handful of quietness than two hands full of toil and a striving after wind.
- ⁷ Again, I saw vanity under the sun: ⁸ one person who has no other, either son or brother, yet there is no end to all his toil, and his eyes are never satisfied with riches, so that he never asks, "For whom am I toiling and depriving myself of pleasure?" This also is vanity and an unhappy business.

Discussion

1. What is the enemy of contentment? Envy. Do you agree that so much work and achievement of people comes from envy? Can it also rule our lives?
2. What does "toil and chasing after wind" mean? It has no lasting meaning and value.
3. Why would one handful with tranquility be better than two handfuls with toil and chasing after wind?
4. Why is there no rest for those who are ruled by envy and greed?
5. We all agree that we have to work diligently. But what do we work for? Many of the students have jobs. Is there contentment? What is the goal in our work?

Sing: Hy. 85 : 2

Lunch: Prov. 15 : 13 - 16

Wednesday, Oct. 10

The need for contentment

Luke 3 : 9 – 14

⁹Even now the axe is laid to the root of the trees. Every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.” ¹⁰And the crowds asked him, “What then shall we do?” ¹¹And he answered them, “Whoever has two tunics is to share with him who has none, and whoever has food is to do likewise.” ¹²Tax collectors also came to be baptized and said to him, “Teacher, what shall we do?” ¹³And he said to them, “Collect no more than you are authorized to do.” ¹⁴Soldiers also asked him, “And we, what shall we do?” And he said to them, “Do not extort money from anyone by threats or by false accusation, and be content with your wages.”

Discussion

1. What does John mean with the ax being at the root of the tree?
2. What is true repentance? Why is it necessary? See also Lord’s Day 33 of the Heidelberg Catechism
3. In verse 14 John speaks about contentment. What does he say? How would this apply to us?

Sing: Hy. 65 : 2

Lunch: Phil 4 : 10 - 13

Thursday, Oct. 11

The gain of contentment

1Timothy 6:6-10

⁶But godliness with contentment is great gain, ⁷for we brought nothing into the world, and we cannot take anything out of the world. ⁸But if we have food and clothing, with these we will be content. ⁹But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation, into a snare, into many senseless and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction. ¹⁰For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evils. It is through this craving that some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pangs.

Discussion

1. Paul connects godliness to contentment? What does this mean? Why would he?
2. What is the gain of contentment and godliness? Is this true in your life? How can we strengthen this?
3. Are we content with food and clothing?
4. What is the danger of being rich? Why is the love of money the root of all kinds of evil? What should be our approach to money?

Sing: Hy. 65 : 3

Lunch: 1 Tim. 6 : 11

Friday, Oct. 12

The confidence of contentment

Hebrews 13:5-8

⁵Keep your life free from love of money, and be content with what you have, for he has said, “I will never leave you nor forsake you.” ⁶So we can confidently say,
“The Lord is my helper;
I will not fear;
what can man do to me?”
⁷Remember your leaders, those who spoke to you the word of God. Consider the outcome of their way of life, and imitate their faith. ⁸Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.

Discussion

1. What is the instruction given in vs. 5? How can we do this?
2. What is the reason given? Vs. 5 - God has said I will never leave you. What is our confidence?
3. What is the basis for this confidence? Vs. 8. What does this mean?
4. To keep our lives free from love of money, we have to fill our lives with the confidence in the Lord. Our society is looking for confidence, and tries to find it in all kinds of things. We may find it in Christ.

Sing: Hy. 65 : 4

Lunch: Ps. 118 : 5 - 9

SOBER MARINERS

Bible uses several times metaphors which are connected to ships.

Monday, Oct. 15

The drunken sailor

Proverbs 23:29-35

²⁹Who has woe? Who has sorrow?
Who has strife? Who has complaining?
Who has wounds without cause?
Who has redness of eyes?
³⁰Those who tarry long over wine;
those who go to try mixed wine.
³¹Do not look at wine when it is red,
when it sparkles in the cup
and goes down smoothly.
³²In the end it bites like a serpent
and stings like an adder.
³³Your eyes will see strange things,
and your heart utter perverse things.
³⁴You will be like one who lies down in the midst of the sea,
like one who lies on the top of a mast.
³⁵"They struck me," you will say, "but I was not hurt;
they beat me, but I did not feel it.
When shall I awake?
I must have another drink."

Discussion

1. Where is a reference to ships here?
2. What does this passage teach? How are we to apply this?
3. The discussion doesn't have to be restricted to alcohol abuse, it can include all substance abuse.

Sing: Ps. 75 : 5, 6

Lunch: Eph. 5:18-20

Tuesday, Oct. 16

Free Trade?

2 Chronicles 20 : 35 – 37

³⁵After this Jehoshaphat king of Judah joined with Ahaziah king of Israel, who acted wickedly. ³⁶He joined him in building ships to go to Tarshish, and they built the ships in Ezion-geber. ³⁷Then Eliezer the son of Dodavahu of Mareshah prophesied against Jehoshaphat, saying, "Because you have joined with Ahaziah, the Lord will destroy what you have made." And the ships were wrecked and were not able to go to Tarshish.

Discussion

1. Who was Jehoshaphat? What kind of a king was he? See vss. 31 -34. He was King in Jerusalem in the time that the house of Ahab ruled in Samaria.
2. Why would Jehoshaphat want to work with Ahaziah? Note that the northern kingdom had no harbour. The kings in Samaria had to make treaties with Tyre and Sidon (Ahab) or with the Judah in the south.
3. Why is the LORD opposed to this? How does the LORD show this? See also 1 Kings 22 22:48-50.
4. What did this teach Israel about trade and how free it is? What does it teach us? Is this history also a lesson about cooperating with those who do not serve the Lord?

Sing: Ps. 48 : 2

Lunch: Isaiah 23:1 3

Wednesday, Oct. 17

The rudder directs the ship

James 3:2-9

²For we all stumble in many ways. And if anyone does not stumble in what he says, he is a perfect man, able also to bridle his whole body. ³If we put bits into the mouths of horses so that they obey us, we guide their whole bodies as well. ⁴Look at the ships also: though they are so large and are driven by strong winds, they are guided by a very small rudder wherever the will of the pilot directs. ⁵So also the tongue is a small member, yet it boasts of great things. How great a forest is set ablaze by such a small fire! ⁶And the tongue is a fire, a world of unrighteousness. The tongue is set among our members, staining the whole body, setting on fire the entire course of life and set on fire by hell. ⁷For every kind of beast and bird, of reptile and sea creature, can be tamed and has been tamed by mankind, ⁸but no human being can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison. ⁹With it we bless our Lord and Father, and with it we curse people who are made in the likeness of God.

Discussion

1. Where is here the reference to the ships?
2. What does this passage teach? How are we to apply this?

Sing: Ps. 52 : 2 (or Ps. 34:5)

Lunch: Prov.10:19-20

Thursday, Oct. 18

The anchor of hope

Hebrews 6:13-20

¹³For when God made a promise to Abraham, since he had no one greater by whom to swear, he swore by himself, ¹⁴saying, "Surely I will bless you and multiply you." ¹⁵And thus Abraham, having patiently waited, obtained the promise. ¹⁶For people swear by something greater than themselves, and in all their disputes an oath is final for confirmation. ¹⁷So when God desired to show more convincingly to the heirs of the promise the unchangeable character of his purpose, he guaranteed it with an oath, ¹⁸so that by two unchangeable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we who have fled for refuge might have strong encouragement to hold fast to the hope set before us. ¹⁹We have this as a sure and steadfast anchor of the soul, a hope that enters into the inner place behind the curtain, ²⁰where Jesus has gone as a forerunner on our behalf, having become a high priest forever after the order of Melchizedek.

Discussion

1. What is the anchor a symbol of? How does this connect to the oath of God?
2. Usually an anchor goes down into solid ground. This one goes up because Christ went up, behind the curtain. How solid is this anchor?
3. Why is this anchor so reliable? It is anchored in Christ to the throne of God.
4. What does this passage teach? How are we to apply this?

Sing: Ps. 105 : 4

Lunch: Deut. 7:8-11

Friday, Oct. 19

Shipwrecked

1 Timothy 1:18-20

¹⁸This charge I entrust to you, Timothy, my child, in accordance with the prophecies previously made about you, that by them you may wage the good warfare, ¹⁹holding faith and a good conscience. By rejecting this, some have made shipwreck of their faith, ²⁰among whom are Hymenaeus and Alexander, whom I have handed over to Satan that they may learn not to blaspheme.

Discussion

1. Where is here the reference to the ships?
2. How can one shipwreck his faith? By not fighting the good fight and not holding on to faith and good conscience.
3. What does this passage teach? How are we to apply this?

Sing: Hy. 71 : 1

Lunch: 2 Tim. 2:17-18; 4:14-15

REJOICE IN GOD'S COMPASSION

Jonah's life story involves a ship. The LORD uses this prophet to show the greatness and wisdom of his name. The LORD's name is that he is slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love. Jonah does not want to share this name with the people of Nineveh. He will experience in his own life the truth of this name.

Monday, Oct. 22

Desertion

Jonah was a prophet in the time of Jeroboam II. It was a time of prosperity and wickedness at the same time. It will not be long after Jeroboam II that Israel will be taken by the Assyrians.

Jonah 1:1-6

¹ Now the word of the Lord came to Jonah the son of Amittai, saying, ² "Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and call out against it, for their evil has come up before me." ³ But Jonah rose to flee to Tarshish from the presence of the Lord. He went down to Joppa and found a ship going to Tarshish. So he paid the fare and went down into it, to go with them to Tarshish, away from the presence of the Lord.

⁴ But the Lord hurled a great wind upon the sea, and there was a mighty tempest on the sea, so that the ship threatened to break up. ⁵ Then the mariners were afraid, and each cried out to his god. And they hurled the cargo that was in the ship into the sea to lighten it for them. But Jonah had gone down into the inner part of the ship and had lain down and was fast asleep. ⁶ So the captain came and said to him, "What do you mean, you sleeper? Arise, call out to your god! Perhaps the god will give a thought to us, that we may not perish."

Discussion

1. What is Jonah called to do? What does this teach us about the LORD's name when it comes to this world?
2. What does Jonah do and why? Keep in mind that Nineveh was a threat to Israel at that time. Keep also in mind chapter 4:2
3. Jonah knew the name of the LORD, but did not want the people of Nineveh to repent. How do we deal with our unbelieving neighbours?
4. How does the LORD react to Jonah's escape? What does this teach us about God's Name?
5. Do we sometimes try to run away from the LORD? Why? Is it possible to run away from the LORD?

Sing: Ps. 139 : 1, 2

Lunch: Hebrews 4 : 12-13

Tuesday, Oct. 23

Arrest and execution

Jonah tries to run away as far as possible. But the LORD stops him.

Jonah 1:7-16

⁷ And they said to one another, "Come, let us cast lots, that we may know on whose account this evil has come upon us." So they cast lots, and the lot fell on Jonah. ⁸ Then they said to him, "Tell us on whose account this evil has come upon us. What is your occupation? And where do you come from? What is your country? And of what people are you?" ⁹ And he said to them, "I am a Hebrew, and I fear the Lord, the God of heaven, who made the sea and the dry land." ¹⁰ Then the men were exceedingly afraid and said to him, "What is this that you have done!" For the men knew that he was fleeing from the presence of the Lord, because he had told them.

¹¹ Then they said to him, "What shall we do to you, that the sea may quiet down for us?" For the sea grew more and more tempestuous. ¹² He said to them, "Pick me up and hurl me into the sea; then the sea will quiet down for you, for I know it is because of me that this great tempest has come upon you." ¹³ Nevertheless, the men rowed hard to get back to dry land, but they could not, for the sea grew more and more tempestuous against them. ¹⁴ Therefore they called out to the Lord, "O Lord, let us not perish for this man's life, and lay not on us innocent blood, for you, O Lord, have done as it pleased you." ¹⁵ So they picked up Jonah and hurled him into the sea, and the sea ceased from its raging. ¹⁶ Then the men feared the Lord exceedingly, and they offered a sacrifice to the Lord and made vows.

Discussion

1. How does this passage teach us that the LORD takes disobedience seriously?
2. Explain how the LORD hallows his name in what happened.

3. Why would he suggest throwing him overboard? Did Jonah know what was going to happen? Does Jonah's suggestion to throw him overboard show repentance? Should he not have said to turn the boat around? Jonah rather dies than do what the Lord wants him to do.
4. Explain the reaction of the sailors.

Sing: Ps. 107 : 9, 10

Lunch: Psalm 107: 23 - 32

Wednesday, Oct. 24

Salvation comes from the LORD

The belly of a fish is not a nice place to be, but it is a good place to learn humility.

Jonah 1:17-2:10

¹⁷ And the Lord appointed a great fish to swallow up Jonah. And Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights.

² Then Jonah prayed to the Lord his God from the belly of the fish, ² saying,

"I called out to the Lord, out of my distress,

and he answered me;

out of the belly of Sheol I cried,

and you heard my voice.

³ For you cast me into the deep,

into the heart of the seas,

and the flood surrounded me;

all your waves and your billows

passed over me.

⁴ Then I said, 'I am driven away

from your sight;

yet I shall again look

upon your holy temple.'

⁵ The waters closed in over me to take my life;

the deep surrounded me;

weeds were wrapped about my head

⁶ at the roots of the mountains.

I went down to the land

whose bars closed upon me forever;

yet you brought up my life from the pit,

O Lord my God.

⁷ When my life was fainting away,

I remembered the Lord,

and my prayer came to you,

into your holy temple.

⁸ Those who pay regard to vain idols

forsake their hope of steadfast love.

⁹ But I with the voice of thanksgiving

will sacrifice to you;

what I have vowed I will pay.

Salvation belongs to the Lord!"

¹⁰ And the Lord spoke to the fish, and it vomited Jonah out upon the dry land.

Discussion

1. Now Jonah prays! What does Jonah say in his prayer? As Jonah was going down he realized he would die and face the LORD. He experienced the punishment by the LORD (see vs.3 "your waves and breakers.")
2. In Canons of Dort, chapter 5, article 6 we confess that the LORD will not permit his own to fall so deep that they fall away. Jonah experienced the undeserved grace of the LORD. How do we experience this undeserved mercy? Remember that the Lord Jesus compared himself to Jonah.
3. How does the LORD show the greatness of his Name? The last words of verse 9 sum up the main point of this prayer.

Sing: Ps. 42 : 4, 5

Lunch: Job 41 : 1 - 11

Thursday, Oct. 25

The power of the word

Jonah is told to go to Nineveh again. This in itself shows the mercy of the LORD. The LORD has forgiven the previous disobedience.

Jonah 3:1-10

³ Then the word of the Lord came to Jonah the second time, saying, ² "Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and call out against it the message that I tell you." ³ So Jonah arose and went to Nineveh, according to the word of the Lord. Now Nineveh was an exceedingly great city, three days' journey in breadth. ⁴ Jonah began to go into the city, going a day's journey. And he called out, "Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown!" ⁵ And the people of Nineveh believed God. They called for a fast and put on sackcloth, from the greatest of them to the least of them.

⁶ The word reached^[e] the king of Nineveh, and he arose from his throne, removed his robe, covered himself with sackcloth, and sat in ashes. ⁷ And he issued a proclamation and published through Nineveh, "By the decree of the king and his nobles: Let neither man nor beast, herd nor flock, taste anything. Let them not feed or drink water, ⁸ but let man and beast be covered with sackcloth, and let them call out mightily to God. Let everyone turn from his evil way and from the violence that is in his hands. ⁹ Who knows? God may turn and relent and turn from his fierce anger, so that we may not perish."

¹⁰ When God saw what they did, how they turned from their evil way, God relented of the disaster that he had said he would do to them, and he did not do it.

Discussion

1. What does the LORD say to Jonah? Why? What does this teach us about repentance
2. What does Jonah have to say? Are we sometimes afraid to talk about judgment to unbelievers?
3. What is Nineveh's answer? What is the LORD's answer?
4. What should Israel learn from this? The Lord Jesus speaks about this in Matthew 12. The Pharisees wanted signs. They should do what Nineveh did: repent. Why can it be so difficult to accept the word, especially when it goes against our likes?
5. What do we learn here about God's Name?

Sing: Ps. 145 : 2, 3

Lunch: 1 Tim. 2:1-4

Friday, Oct. 26

How great is his name!

Jonah does not like the outcome. He has to learn a lot about the name of the LORD.

Jonah 4:1-11

⁴ But it displeased Jonah exceedingly, and he was angry. ² And he prayed to the Lord and said, "O Lord, is not this what I said when I was yet in my country? That is why I made haste to flee to Tarshish; for I knew that you are a gracious God and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love, and relenting from disaster. ³ Therefore now, O Lord, please take my life from me, for it is better for me to die than to live." ⁴ And the Lord said, "Do you do well to be angry?"

⁵ Jonah went out of the city and sat to the east of the city and made a booth for himself there. He sat under it in the shade, till he should see what would become of the city. ⁶ Now the Lord God appointed a plant and made it come up over Jonah, that it might be a shade over his head, to save him from his discomfort. So Jonah was exceedingly glad because of the plant. ⁷ But when dawn came up the next day, God appointed a worm that attacked the plant, so that it withered. ⁸ When the sun rose, God appointed a scorching east wind, and the sun beat down on the head of Jonah so that he was faint. And he asked that he might die and said, "It is better for me to die than to live." ⁹ But God said to Jonah, "Do you do well to be angry for the plant?" And he said, "Yes, I do well to be angry, angry enough to die." ¹⁰ And the Lord said, "You pity the plant, for which you did not labor, nor did you make it grow, which came into being in a night and perished in a night. ¹¹ And should not I pity Nineveh, that great city, in which there are more than 120,000 persons who do not know their right hand from their left, and also much cattle?"

Discussion

1. Why was Jonah angry? He said he had a right to be angry. Do you agree?
2. How does the LORD answer him? What does the LORD teach Jonah and us?
3. The book of Jonah ends with a question. What is the answer?
4. How does this chapter teach us the greatness of God's Name? What does this mean for us?

Sing: Ps. 117

Lunch: Matthew 12 : 41

A MAN OF INTEGRITY

In the coming two weeks we hope to deal with the last part of Genesis, the history of Joseph. A major part of Genesis deals with the life of Joseph. Joseph is prepared by the LORD for his task. This training is painful at times, but the Teacher knows best! These chapters are well known, and when reading them it is good to note how often the LORD is mentioned. The God of Joseph is also our God. Note also the place that Judah has in these chapters.

Monday, Oct. 29

The dreamer

Joseph is introduced to us. We can easily have the idea that Joseph was a spoiled child. The Bible doesn't make a negative comment about him, rather states that he is a God-fearing and upright person.

Genesis 37:2-8

²These are the generations of Jacob.

Joseph, being seventeen years old, was pasturing the flock with his brothers. He was a boy with the sons of Bilhah and Zilpah, his father's wives. And Joseph brought a bad report of them to their father. ³Now Israel loved Joseph more than any other of his sons, because he was the son of his old age. And he made him a robe of many colors. ⁴But when his brothers saw that their father loved him more than all his brothers, they hated him and could not speak peacefully to him.

⁵Now Joseph had a dream, and when he told it to his brothers they hated him even more. ⁶He said to them, "Hear this dream that I have dreamed: ⁷Behold, we were binding sheaves in the field, and behold, my sheaf arose and stood upright. And behold, your sheaves gathered around it and bowed down to my sheaf." ⁸His brothers said to him, "Are you indeed to reign over us? Or are you indeed to rule over us?" So they hated him even more for his dreams and for his words.

Discussion

1. What was Israel's relation to Joseph? Why would this be? How does this show?
2. What is the reaction of the brothers? Why? Can you understand the brothers? Did Joseph's attitude help the situation? Is Israel without blame? Would we not call this a dysfunctional family?
3. Favoritism can destroy relationships. What should we do when we come across it? How do we react when we feel that someone else is treated with greater favor? Is jealousy hard to deal with?
4. This family is no better than other families, yet the LORD has a great plan in store for them. Why? Because of His faithfulness and care for us.

Sing: Ps. 105 : 1, 2

Lunch: James 2 : 1 - 4

Tuesday, Oct. 30

Sold by his brothers

Genesis 37:23-28

²³So when Joseph came to his brothers, they stripped him of his robe, the robe of many colors that he wore. ²⁴And they took him and threw him into a pit. The pit was empty; there was no water in it.

²⁵Then they sat down to eat. And looking up they saw a caravan of Ishmaelites coming from Gilead, with their camels bearing gum, balm, and myrrh, on their way to carry it down to Egypt. ²⁶Then Judah said to his brothers, "What profit is it if we kill our brother and conceal his blood? ²⁷Come, let us sell him to the Ishmaelites, and let not our hand be upon him, for he is our brother, our own flesh." And his brothers listened to him. ²⁸Then Midianite traders passed by. And they drew Joseph up and lifted him out of the pit, and sold him to the Ishmaelites for twenty shekels of silver. They took Joseph to Egypt.

Discussion

1. Was it wise of Israel to send Joseph?
2. What did the brothers do to Joseph? Why did they do this? Did their conscience bother them?
3. Sin usually does not come alone. The one sin leads to another. Here too. Hatred leads to worse and more sins. See also vs. 32. This is why we have to fight sin in the kernel. See also L.D. 40.
4. If we cannot get along with those close to us, what should we do?

Sing: Ps. 56 : 3

Lunch: Exodus 21 : 16

Wednesday, Oct. 31

Tamar brings Judah to his senses

Chapter 38 deals with Judah rather than Joseph. A rather unsavory history. Why would this be in here? Judah is on the wrong path. In this chapter he has moved away from his family and moved in with the Canaanites. After this history we find him back in Jacob's household and he plays an important role in protecting Benjamin. The LORD uses Tamar to bring Judah to his senses.

Genesis 38 : 13-26

¹³ And when Tamar was told, "Your father-in-law is going up to Timnah to shear his sheep," ¹⁴ she took off her widow's garments and covered herself with a veil, wrapping herself up, and sat at the entrance to Enaim, which is on the road to Timnah. For she saw that Shelah was grown up, and she had not been given to him in marriage. ¹⁵ When Judah saw her, he thought she was a prostitute, for she had covered her face. ¹⁶ He turned to her at the roadside and said, "Come, let me come in to you," for he did not know that she was his daughter-in-law. She said, "What will you give me, that you may come in to me?" ¹⁷ He answered, "I will send you a young goat from the flock." And she said, "If you give me a pledge, until you send it—" ¹⁸ He said, "What pledge shall I give you?" She replied, "Your signet and your cord and your staff that is in your hand." So he gave them to her and went in to her, and she conceived by him. ¹⁹ Then she arose and went away, and taking off her veil she put on the garments of her widowhood.

²⁰ When Judah sent the young goat by his friend the Adullamite to take back the pledge from the woman's hand, he did not find her. ²¹ And he asked the men of the place, "Where is the cult prostitute who was at Enaim at the roadside?" And they said, "No cult prostitute has been here." ²² So he returned to Judah and said, "I have not found her. Also, the men of the place said, 'No cult prostitute has been here.'" ²³ And Judah replied, "Let her keep the things as her own, or we shall be laughed at. You see, I sent this young goat, and you did not find her."

²⁴ About three months later Judah was told, "Tamar your daughter-in-law has been immoral. Moreover, she is pregnant by immorality."^[a] And Judah said, "Bring her out, and let her be burned." ²⁵ As she was being brought out, she sent word to her father-in-law, "By the man to whom these belong, I am pregnant." And she said, "Please identify whose these are, the signet and the cord and the staff." ²⁶ Then Judah identified them and said, "She is more righteous than I, since I did not give her to my son Shelah." And he did not know her again.

Discussion

1. Why would Judah want Tamar to be burned to death?
2. Why does Judah say that Tamar is more righteous than he?
3. Judah was the one who had suggested to sell Joseph. This chapter shows that sin doesn't stand still. From the one comes the next. The LORD is gracious to Judah and stops him in his path.
4. Note also that Tamar is mentioned in Matthew 1 : 3.

Sing: Ps. 76 : 1

Lunch: Genesis 38 : 27 - 30

Thursday, Nov. 1

In prison

Genesis 39:11-20

¹¹ But one day, when he went into the house to do his work and none of the men of the house was there in the house, ¹² she caught him by his garment, saying, "Lie with me." But he left his garment in her hand and fled and got out of the house. ¹³ And as soon as she saw that he had left his garment in her hand and had fled out of the house, ¹⁴ she called to the men of her household and said to them, "See, he has brought among us a Hebrew to laugh at us. He came in to me to lie with me, and I cried out with a loud voice. ¹⁵ And as soon as he heard that I lifted up my voice and cried out, he left his garment beside me and fled and got out of the house." ¹⁶ Then she laid up his garment by her until his master came home, ¹⁷ and she told him the same story, saying, "The Hebrew servant, whom you have brought among us, came in to me to laugh at me." ¹⁸ But as soon as I lifted up my voice and cried, he left his garment beside me and fled out of the house."

¹⁹ As soon as his master heard the words that his wife spoke to him, "This is the way your servant treated me," his anger was kindled. ²⁰ And Joseph's master took him and put him into the prison, the place where the king's prisoners were confined, and he was there in prison.

Discussion

1. What happened to Joseph after he was sold to Potiphar? See 39:2-3. How would Potiphar be able to see that the LORD was with Joseph?
2. What was the result? See vs. 5-7.

3. Why did he refuse the advances of Potiphar's wife? See vs. 8-9. Joseph gives several reasons.
4. What is the result of this refusal? Prison.
5. What does Joseph learn through this? To resist sin, and to trust in the LORD.
6. We live in a society where there are many sexual temptations. What do we need to do?
7. It can happen that we are mistreated. What are we do then?
8. Can you see how the Lord is working here with Joseph? Initially he was somewhat arrogant, but the LORD is humbling him to be able to use him in His plan.

Sing: Ps. 56 : 4

Lunch: 1 Peter 5 : 5 - 9

Friday, Nov. 2

Waiting in prison

God does not make it easy on Joseph. In the hard way he learns to trusts in the LORD. Joseph is not angry and bitter.

Genesis 39 : 20 - 40 : 8 & 23

²⁰ And Joseph's master took him and put him into the prison, the place where the king's prisoners were confined, and he was there in prison. ²¹ But the Lord was with Joseph and showed him steadfast love and gave him favor in the sight of the keeper of the prison. ²² And the keeper of the prison put Joseph in charge of all the prisoners who were in the prison. Whatever was done there, he was the one who did it. ²³ The keeper of the prison paid no attention to anything that was in Joseph's charge, because the Lord was with him. And whatever he did, the Lord made it succeed.

40 Some time after this, the cupbearer of the king of Egypt and his baker committed an offense against their lord the king of Egypt. ² And Pharaoh was angry with his two officers, the chief cupbearer and the chief baker, ³ and he put them in custody in the house of the captain of the guard, in the prison where Joseph was confined. ⁴ The captain of the guard appointed Joseph to be with them, and he attended them. They continued for some time in custody.

⁵ And one night they both dreamed—the cupbearer and the baker of the king of Egypt, who were confined in the prison—each his own dream, and each dream with its own interpretation. ⁶ When Joseph came to them in the morning, he saw that they were troubled. ⁷ So he asked Pharaoh's officers who were with him in custody in his master's house, "Why are your faces downcast today?" ⁸ They said to him, "We have had dreams, and there is no one to interpret them." And Joseph said to them, "Do not interpretations belong to God? Please tell them to me."

²³ Yet the chief cupbearer did not remember Joseph, but forgot him.

Discussion

1. What do we learn about Joseph's stay in prison? The LORD is with Him. He was forsaken by his family, by his former employer, but the LORD is with him.
2. How does it show that Joseph is aware of this? He is not bitter. He is concerned about other people. Vs. 7. If someone had reason to feel sad, you would think he had. Yet He is concerned with others. He has peace in the hand of God. Verse 8 shows this too.
3. When your goal is to please God you can be honest with other people as well. How does this passage show this?
4. The end seems so unfair. Joseph is forgotten. He has to rely completely on the LORD. We can feel forsaken. It can be that we feel as if no one cares for us. What is then our strength? Does this mean that our situation will change right away?

Sing: Ps. 27 : 5, 6

Lunch: Deut. 31 : 6

“YOU MEANT IT FOR EVIL, BUT GOD USED IT FOR GOOD”

Monday, Nov. 5

From prison to palace

The LORD has his plan, and in due time Joseph ends up in the palace.

Genesis 41:39-43; 50-52;

³⁹ Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, “Since God has shown you all this, there is none so discerning and wise as you are. ⁴⁰ You shall be over my house, and all my people shall order themselves as you command. Only as regards the throne will I be greater than you.” ⁴¹ And Pharaoh said to Joseph, “See, I have set you over all the land of Egypt.” ⁴² Then Pharaoh took his signet ring from his hand and put it on Joseph’s hand, and clothed him in garments of fine linen and put a gold chain about his neck. ⁴³ And he made him ride in his second chariot. And they called out before him, “Bow the knee!” Thus he set him over all the land of Egypt.

⁵⁰ Before the year of famine came, two sons were born to Joseph. Asenath, the daughter of Potiphara priest of On, bore them to him. ⁵¹ Joseph called the name of the firstborn Manasseh. “For,” he said, “God has made me forget all my hardship and all my father’s house.” ⁵² The name of the second he called Ephraim, “For God has made me fruitful in the land of my affliction.”

Discussion

1. How did Joseph end up in the palace? Note how in vs. 28 Joseph confesses the power and wisdom of God. He knows himself a servant.
2. What is the result? He becomes second in command.
3. What does he do in this position? Make sure that there is enough food for the people in the coming drought. Again, he is not out for his own position.
4. Take note of the two names of Joseph’s sons. He acknowledges his suffering (Ephraim), but also that through God’s work the trouble is forgotten. This last confession is about to be tested!
5. Is it easy to forget trouble? What if that trouble comes through the unjust actions of others?

Sing: Ps. 105 : 7, 8

Lunch: Isa. 65 : 16 - 19

Tuesday, Nov. 6

The ten bow before their brother

We begin to understand God’s plan. Joseph is a servant to keep Israel alive.

Genesis 42:6-17

⁶ Now Joseph was governor over the land. He was the one who sold to all the people of the land. And Joseph’s brothers came and bowed themselves before him with their faces to the ground. ⁷ Joseph saw his brothers and recognized them, but he treated them like strangers and spoke roughly to them. “Where do you come from?” he said. They said, “From the land of Canaan, to buy food.” ⁸ And Joseph recognized his brothers, but they did not recognize him. ⁹ And Joseph remembered the dreams that he had dreamed of them. And he said to them, “You are spies; you have come to see the nakedness of the land.” ¹⁰ They said to him, “No, my lord, your servants have come to buy food. ¹¹ We are all sons of one man. We are honest men. Your servants have never been spies.”

¹² He said to them, “No, it is the nakedness of the land that you have come to see.” ¹³ And they said, “We, your servants, are twelve brothers, the sons of one man in the land of Canaan, and behold, the youngest is this day with our father, and one is no more.” ¹⁴ But Joseph said to them, “It is as I said to you. You are spies. ¹⁵ By this you shall be tested: by the life of Pharaoh, you shall not go from this place unless your youngest brother comes here. ¹⁶ Send one of you, and let him bring your brother, while you remain confined, that your words may be tested, whether there is truth in you. Or else, by the life of Pharaoh, surely you are spies.” ¹⁷ And he put them all together in custody for three days.

Discussion

1. What did Joseph remember when he saw his brothers? Vs. 9
2. Of what does he accuse them? Why does he do this? It is not to get even. Notice the word “test” several times. And in vs. 20 “verified.” Joseph wants to know whether he can trust his brothers. Their actions of the past have broken that trust. He now gives them opportunity to rebuild it.
3. How do the brothers interpret the situation? See vs. 21. Their consciences were not clear.

4. When trust is broken it takes time to be repaired. You have to allow for this. In Art. 69 of the Church Order we say that we should not accept a confession of sin too quickly. We have to give the sinner also the opportunity to show that he means it. That element is present here as well. Is this easy?

Sing: Ps. 139 : 1

Lunch: Eph. 4 : 30 - 32

Wednesday, Nov. 7

Testing

Joseph puts his brothers to the test. Trust needs time to be rebuilt.

Genesis 44:30-34

³⁰“Now therefore, as soon as I come to your servant my father, and the boy is not with us, then, as his life is bound up in the boy's life, ³¹as soon as he sees that the boy is not with us, he will die, and your servants will bring down the gray hairs of your servant our father with sorrow to Sheol. ³²For your servant became a pledge of safety for the boy to my father, saying, ‘If I do not bring him back to you, then I shall bear the blame before my father all my life.’ ³³Now therefore, please let your servant remain instead of the boy as a servant to my lord, and let the boy go back with his brothers. ³⁴For how can I go back to my father if the boy is not with me? I fear to see the evil that would find my father.”

Gen 45:1-7

⁴⁵ Then Joseph could not control himself before all those who stood by him. He cried, “Make everyone go out from me.” So no one stayed with him when Joseph made himself known to his brothers. ² And he wept aloud, so that the Egyptians heard it, and the household of Pharaoh heard it. ³ And Joseph said to his brothers, “I am Joseph! Is my father still alive?” But his brothers could not answer him, for they were dismayed at his presence. ⁴ So Joseph said to his brothers, “Come near to me, please.” And they came near. And he said, “I am your brother, Joseph, whom you sold into Egypt. ⁵ And now do not be distressed or angry with yourselves because you sold me here, for God sent me before you to preserve life. ⁶ For the famine has been in the land these two years, and there are yet five years in which there will be neither plowing nor harvest. ⁷ And God sent me before you to preserve for you a remnant on earth, and to keep alive for you many survivors.

Discussion

1. It took a while before Jacob let Benjamin go, see chapter 43. Jacob's attitude is different than Joseph's. Jacob does not mention the LORD, only his own grief. However, Judah had promised to guarantee his safety. Now we see that Judah lives up to his promise. That is how repentance shows and trust is rebuilt.
2. Why would Judah do this? Because he suggested to sell Joseph? Or can we see here the providence of God, one day a descendant of Judah will take our place?
3. Why could Joseph no longer control himself? Is it wrong to show emotions?
4. What does Joseph see as the purpose of all this? Vs. 5-7 Note that Joseph does not hesitate to mention what they had done to him, but places it in the context of what God is doing here. What is God doing here for His people? How does this help us? See Lord's Day 10.

Sing: Ps. 133 : 1

Lunch: Romans 8 : 28

Thursday, Nov. 8

You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good

Now we see the meaning of it all, the confession of God's providence.

Genesis 50:15-21

¹⁵ When Joseph's brothers saw that their father was dead, they said, “It may be that Joseph will hate us and pay us back for all the evil that we did to him.” ¹⁶ So they sent a message to Joseph, saying, “Your father gave this command before he died: ¹⁷ ‘Say to Joseph, “Please forgive the transgression of your brothers and their sin, because they did evil to you.”’ And now, please forgive the transgression of the servants of the God of your father.” Joseph wept when they spoke to him. ¹⁸ His brothers also came and fell down before him and said, “Behold, we are your servants.” ¹⁹ But Joseph said to them, “Do not fear, for am I in the place of God? ²⁰ As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, to bring it about that many people should be kept alive, as they are today. ²¹ So do not fear; I will provide for you and your little ones.” Thus he comforted them and spoke kindly to them.

Discussion

1. What do the brothers say when their father is dead?
2. Why would Joseph weep?
3. How does Joseph explain what had happened? Vs. 20
4. The LORD can use something sinful for a good purpose. This does not mean that the initial deed was good after all. We do not know how the LORD uses things, even wrong things in our lives. We are called to obey His will.

Sing: Hy. 47 : 4

Lunch: Phil. 1 : 9 - 11

Friday, Nov. 9

Bones that speak

Joseph still “spoke”, while he was dead already.

Genesis 50:22-26

²² So Joseph remained in Egypt, he and his father's house. Joseph lived 110 years. ²³ And Joseph saw Ephraim's children of the third generation. The children also of Machir the son of Manasseh were counted as Joseph's own. ²⁴ And Joseph said to his brothers, “I am about to die, but God will visit you and bring you up out of this land to the land that he swore to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob.” ²⁵ Then Joseph made the sons of Israel swear, saying, “God will surely visit you, and you shall carry up my bones from here.” ²⁶ So Joseph died, being 110 years old. They embalmed him, and he was put in a coffin in Egypt.

Discussion

1. What did Joseph say as he was about to die? Note that He ends with directing the people to the faithfulness of God.
2. What promise did the sons of Israel make to Joseph? Why would Joseph ask for this? Vs. 24, the land of Canaan is the land of promise. How does this show the faith of Joseph? Hebr. 11:22
3. Israel kept this promise. Ex. 13:19. They traveled through the desert with the coffin of Joseph. What did this coffin tell the people in Egypt?
4. Even in our burials we can testify of our hope. How important is this?
5. We have looked at the history of Joseph. Do you see how the LORD proved Himself to be a faithful God and Father for His people?

Sing: Ps. 105 : 4, 15

Lunch: Hebrews 11 : 22

“YOU SHALL NOT KILL.”

War is the result of our fall into sin. Peace that is true and lasting is given by the Prince of Peace, our Lord Jesus Christ. This week we will focus on the sixth commandment with this in mind.

Monday, Nov. 12

Peace

We begin with reflecting on the word “peace”.

Psalm 122

¹ I was glad when they said to me,
“Let us go to the house of the Lord!”
² Our feet have been standing
within your gates, O Jerusalem!
³ Jerusalem—built as a city
that is bound firmly together,
⁴ to which the tribes go up,
the tribes of the Lord,
as was decreed for Israel,
to give thanks to the name of the Lord.
⁵ There thrones for judgment were set,
the thrones of the house of David.
⁶ Pray for the peace of Jerusalem!
“May they be secure who love you!
⁷ Peace be within your walls
and security within your towers!”
⁸ For my brothers and companions' sake
I will say, “Peace be within you!”
⁹ For the sake of the house of the Lord our God,
I will seek your good.

Discussion

1. Where do we find the word peace in this Psalm?
2. What is the connection between Jerusalem and peace
3. What is the call? To pray for this peace. What does this mean? How do we do this?
4. Jerusalem is seen here as the place where peace is to be secured. In Jerusalem there was the temple. Through the sacrifices peace with the LORD was established. That peace has consequences for the whole world.
5. We receive this peace in the church, by the Word of Christ. Think of the benediction in the church. This peace rules how we live with each other. This peace calls us to seek the unity of the true faith. This peace also has consequences for this world. True peace can only come through the work of Christ.

Sing: Ps. 122

Lunch: Eph. 2 : 14 - 18

Tuesday, Nov. 13

The prophet of violence

Murder is the result of hatred and desire of revenge. Murder is the result of our fall into sin. We see this in Cain, who murders Abel, but also in Cain’s descendant, Lamech. Lamech is the prophet of violence.

Genesis 4: 19-24

¹⁹ And Lamech took two wives. The name of the one was Adah, and the name of the other Zillah. ²⁰ Adah bore Jabal; he was the father of those who dwell in tents and have livestock. ²¹ His brother's name was Jubal; he was the father of all those who play the lyre and pipe. ²² Zillah also bore Tubal-cain; he was the forger of all instruments of bronze and iron. The sister of Tubal-cain was Naamah.

²³ Lamech said to his wives:
“Adah and Zillah, hear my voice;
you wives of Lamech, listen to what I say:

I have killed a man for wounding me,
a young man for striking me.
²⁴ If Cain's revenge is sevenfold,
then Lamech's is seventy-sevenfold."

Discussion

1. Who is Lamech? Descendant of Cain
2. What does he say? Song of revenge, vs. 23-24
3. The desire of revenge is the root of murder - L.D. 40. What is the root of the desire of revenge?
4. How do we fight this desire?
5. Note the contrast between the seed of the serpent and the seed of the woman (Gen.4:26)
6. Violence and revenge seems to be part of entertainment. Do we get immune to it?

Sing: Ps. 52 : 1

Lunch: Gen. 4 : 25 - 26

Wednesday, Nov. 14

Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed.

The violence of Lamech permeated society so that the LORD had to punish the world with the flood. After the flood the LORD warns that human life is to be treated with respect.

Genesis 9: 1- 7

⁹ And God blessed Noah and his sons and said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth. ² The fear of you and the dread of you shall be upon every beast of the earth and upon every bird of the heavens, upon everything that creeps on the ground and all the fish of the sea. Into your hand they are delivered. ³ Every moving thing that lives shall be food for you. And as I gave you the green plants, I give you everything. ⁴ But you shall not eat flesh with its life, that is, its blood. ⁵ And for your lifeblood I will require a reckoning: from every beast I will require it and from man. From his fellow man I will require a reckoning for the life of man.

⁶ "Whoever sheds the blood of man,
by man shall his blood be shed,
for God made man in his own image.

⁷ And you, be fruitful and multiply, increase greatly on the earth and multiply in it."

Discussion

1. When is "then?" What does the LORD give to Noah?
2. Why was it not allowed to eat meat with blood still in it? Blood is the symbol of life. Life is a precious gift of God.
3. What is special about human life? It is created in the image of God. What does this mean? Vs. 6
4. Note the difference between human life and animal or plant life. Are we allowed to kill animals for consumption?
5. L.D. 3, and B.C. art. 12 speak about man's task and place on earth. What is the purpose of life, of our lives? We do not protect life in itself, but we must protect the rights of the God of life.

Sing: Ps. 8 : 1, 4

Lunch: Matthew 26 : 52

Thursday, Nov. 15

Respect the God who gives life!

Certainly the people of God have to show this respect for life, for they have been redeemed by the God of life.

Exodus 21: 12-17

¹² "Whoever strikes a man so that he dies shall be put to death. ¹³ But if he did not lie in wait for him, but God let him fall into his hand, then I will appoint for you a place to which he may flee. ¹⁴ But if a man willfully attacks another to kill him by cunning, you shall take him from my altar, that he may die.

¹⁵ "Whoever strikes his father or his mother shall be put to death.

¹⁶ "Whoever steals a man and sells him, and anyone found in possession of him, shall be put to death.

¹⁷ "Whoever curses his father or his mother shall be put to death.

Discussion

1. What does the LORD say about murder? What if it was an accident?
2. What other situations are placed on the same level as murder here?
 - attacks father or mother
 - kidnaps, sells a person
 - curses father or mother
3. What do we learn from this?
4. The government bears the sword to prevent murder, L.D. 40. How is that clear from this passage?
5. How important is the distinction between murder and accident? What does this teach us about God?
6. Is our government living up to the Word of God? What is our duty as citizens in this regard? Do we pray for the government? What do we pray for?

Sing: Ps. 72 : 2, 10

Lunch: Rom. 13 : 1 - 4

Friday, Nov. 16

Overcome evil with good

The Lord Jesus fulfilled the law sinner, including murders. Those who have been raised with Him to a new life now may show this in overcoming evil with good.

Romans 12: 17 - 21

¹⁷Repay no one evil for evil, but give thought to do what is honorable in the sight of all. ¹⁸If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all. ¹⁹Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord." ²⁰To the contrary, "if your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink; for by so doing you will heap burning coals on his head." ²¹Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

Discussion

1. What should we not do? Repay evil for evil. What does this mean?
2. What is required? To live at peace with everyone. What does this mean?
3. Why the words "if it is possible" and "as far as it depends on you" There are limits. We may not sin in order to keep the peace. There are also limits in what I can do. I cannot change others. I can deal with my own actions.
4. Is it easy to live at peace with every one? Are we allowed to defend ourselves? Are we pacifists? Are we allowed to admonish others?
5. What does vs. 21 mean?

Sing: Hy. 49 : 1, 2

Lunch: Rom. 13 : 8 - 10

LONGING FOR THE FUTURE

As we reflect on peace and good overcoming evil, we realize that this will ultimately happen when Christ, the Prince of Peace, will come back. We long for Him to come. Peter writes about this future in the last chapter of his second letter.

Monday, Nov. 19

Wholesome thinking

When we think about the future we have to stay within the bounds of God's Word.

2 Peter 3:1-2

³ This is now the second letter that I am writing to you, beloved. In both of them I am stirring up your sincere mind by way of reminder, ² that you should remember the predictions of the holy prophets and the commandment of the Lord and Savior through your apostles,

Discussion

1. Who is the writer? Why did he write this second letter? To stimulate the believers to wholesome thinking.
2. What is part of this "wholesome thinking?" See Vs. 2
3. What is wholesome thinking? Why the word "wholesome"?
4. In vs. 2 Peter refers to the Bible. Wholesome thinking is the result of meditating on God's Word. How can we stimulate to wholesome thinking?

Sing: Ps. 19 : 3

Lunch: 1 Peter 1 : 22 - 25

Tuesday, Nov. 20

Scoffers

There are many false teachings about the future, thus we need to be on our guard.

2 Peter 3:3-7

³ knowing this first of all, that scoffers will come in the last days with scoffing, following their own sinful desires. ⁴ They will say, "Where is the promise of his coming? For ever since the fathers fell asleep, all things are continuing as they were from the beginning of creation." ⁵ For they deliberately overlook this fact, that the heavens existed long ago, and the earth was formed out of water and through water by the word of God, ⁶ and that by means of these the world that then existed was deluged with water and perished. ⁷ But by the same word the heavens and earth that now exist are stored up for fire, being kept until the day of judgment and destruction of the ungodly.

Discussion

1. What is the first thing the readers have to understand?
2. What is the contents of this scoffing? What is the reason for this scoffing?
3. What do they forget? Vs. 5-7 - The power of God's Word. By His Word God created this world. By His word He can also preserve it for fire.
4. The scoffers seems to have the facts on their side. How long has the church not waited for the last day? Do you ever question whether it will come? Do we meet such scoffers also today? Do you talk with others about the return of the Lord? How do you talk about it?
5. The Lord continues to uphold this creation in order to make it ready for judgement. What does that tell us about the world in which we live, and about our place in this world?

Sing: Ps. 53 : 1, 5

Lunch: Acts 17 : 30 - 33

Wednesday, Nov. 21

1000 = 1

God's math is not our math. He is not slow, He is patient.

2 Peter 3:8-9

⁸ But do not overlook this one fact, beloved, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. ⁹ The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance.

Discussion

1. What should we not forget?
2. What does it mean that “one day is like a thousand years?” Do not measure God with our division of time. The LORD will not go too fast, nor too slow. He will do what He has set out to do.
3. Why is the Lord patient? What is the implication of the end of verse 9 for our personal lives?
4. Yesterday we asked: do you speak with others about the return of the Lord? What does vs. 9 teach in this regard?

Sing: Ps. 90 : 1, 2

Lunch: Romans 2 : 1 - 4

Thursday, Nov. 22

Speed the coming of the day

For the unbelievers the day of the Lord will be a surprise. We know about its coming because of God’s promises.

2 Peter 3:10-13

¹⁰But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a roar, and the heavenly bodies will be burned up and dissolved, and the earth and the works that are done on it will be exposed.

¹¹Since all these things are thus to be dissolved, what sort of people ought you to be in lives of holiness and godliness, ¹²waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be set on fire and dissolved, and the heavenly bodies will melt as they burn! ¹³But according to his promise we are waiting for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells.

Discussion

1. How will the day of the Lord come? What will happen? Are you afraid of this day?
2. What is the implication for us? Vs. 11
3. How can we speed to coming of God’s day? Living holy and godly lives. Do we speed its coming?
4. What do we look forward to? What does it mean that the new earth is “the home of righteousness?” Why look forward to it? Do we?

Sing: Hy. 67: 1, 2

Lunch: Rev. 6 : 12 - 14

Friday, Nov. 23

Be found spotless

Waiting is not passive. It is a spiritual activity.

2 Peter 3:14-18

¹⁴Therefore, beloved, since you are waiting for these, be diligent to be found by him without spot or blemish, and at peace. ¹⁵And count the patience of our Lord as salvation, just as our beloved brother Paul also wrote to you according to the wisdom given him, ¹⁶as he does in all his letters when he speaks in them of these matters. There are some things in them that are hard to understand, which the ignorant and unstable twist to their own destruction, as they do the other Scriptures. ¹⁷You therefore, beloved, knowing this beforehand, take care that you are not carried away with the error of lawless people and lose your own stability. ¹⁸But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be the glory both now and to the day of eternity. Amen.

Discussion

1. Since we are looking forward to this new earth, what should we do? Do we? How can we?
2. What must we bear in mind? What does this mean for us?
3. What does Peter say about Paul’s letters? Do you agree with Peter? Is the Bible clear? Do you ask for the Holy Spirit to give insight?
4. Why should we be on our guard?
5. How does Peter conclude this chapter? Growing in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. What does this mean? Are we growing?

Sing: Hy. 69 : 6, 7

Lunch: Rev.22 : 20-21

SERVE THE LORD WITH ALL YOUR HEART

As we wait for our Lord to return we have to be faithful servants. Do you regard it an honour to be his servant? What does it mean to serve the Lord? How does it show that we are his servants? These are some of the point we want to consider this week.

Monday, Nov. 26

Slaves to righteousness

How come we are servants? We are servants to righteousness through Christ.

Romans 6:15-18

¹⁵What then? Are we to sin because we are not under law but under grace? By no means! ¹⁶Do you not know that if you present yourselves to anyone as obedient slaves, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin, which leads to death, or of obedience, which leads to righteousness? ¹⁷But thanks be to God, that you who were once slaves of sin have become obedient from the heart to the standard of teaching to which you were committed, ¹⁸and, having been set free from sin, have become slaves of righteousness.

Discussion

1. Paul poses a question in vs. 15. What is the question?
2. What is the answer? Why not? As a slave you serve the one who bought you. Vs. 16.
3. What was their initial state? What is their state now?
4. What does it mean to you to be a servant of the Lord?
5. Note that this serving involves obeying wholeheartedly the “form of teaching” they received, that is the apostolic preaching and teaching.
6. Does the doctrine of free grace make people careless and wicked? L.D. 24. There can be people who misuse this doctrine, but the doctrine itself is not to be blamed.
7. How does it show that we are slaves to righteousness?

Sing: Ps. 116 : 9, 10

Lunch: Rom. 6 : 19 - 23

Tuesday, Nov. 27

A servant must be well informed

Luke 12:42-48

⁴²And the Lord said, “Who then is the faithful and wise manager, whom his master will set over his household, to give them their portion of food at the proper time? ⁴³Blessed is that servant whom his master will find so doing when he comes. ⁴⁴Truly, I say to you, he will set him over all his possessions. ⁴⁵But if that servant says to himself, ‘My master is delayed in coming,’ and begins to beat the male and female servants, and to eat and drink and get drunk, ⁴⁶the master of that servant will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour he does not know, and will cut him in pieces and put him with the unfaithful. ⁴⁷And that servant who knew his master’s will but did not get ready or act according to his will, will receive a severe beating. ⁴⁸But the one who did not know, and did what deserved a beating, will receive a light beating. Everyone to whom much was given, of him much will be required, and from him to whom they entrusted much, they will demand the more.

Discussion

1. Who is the faithful and wise servant?
2. What will the Master do to him? Vs. 44
3. What about the unwise and unfaithful servant? Vs. 45, 46
4. What is required of a wise servant? To know his master’s will. How can we be well informed servants? Are we?

Sing: Ps. 19 : 5

Lunch: 1 Sam. 3 : 10

Wednesday, Nov. 28

A servant is dependent

1 Corinthians 2:9-15

⁹But, as it is written,

“What no eye has seen, nor ear heard,
nor the heart of man imagined,

what God has prepared for those who love him”—

¹⁰these things God has revealed to us through the Spirit. For the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God. ¹¹For who knows a person's thoughts except the spirit of that person, which is in him? So also no one comprehends the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God. ¹²Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might understand the things freely given us by God. ¹³And we impart this in words not taught by human wisdom but taught by the Spirit, interpreting spiritual truths to those who are spiritual.

¹⁴The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned. ¹⁵The spiritual person judges all things, but is himself to be judged by no one.

Discussion

1. Yesterday we said that a wise servant must be well informed. Now the question is how can he receive this information? The answer is: the Holy Spirit and the Word.
2. What has God prepared for those who love Him? Vs. 9. What is this?
3. How did God do this? Vs. 10
4. What is the work of the Spirit in our lives? Vs. 12 - 14
5. We are completely dependent on the Lord as servants. At times we like to think that we know better, but that is foolishness. To be a good and wise servant we live from the Spirit and the Word.
6. We have to learn to deny our own will. Why is this so hard?
7. How does your dependence show?

Sing: Hy. 84 : 1, 2

Lunch: 1 Thess. 1 : 4-10

Thursday, Nov. 29

A servant must know his limitations

Matthew 10:24-25

²⁴“A disciple is not above his teacher, nor a servant above his master. ²⁵It is enough for the disciple to be like his teacher, and the servant like his master. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebul, how much more will they malign those of his household.

Discussion

1. Who is speaking in Matthew 10? What does He say to His servants?
 - Not try to be more than master.
 - It is enough when they are like Him.
2. In which context is this said? Persecution, ridicule. Be prepared to be treated as He was treated.
3. A servant has to know his limitations. He is not more than the Master. He has to give things over in the hands of the Master.
4. What does it mean to know your limitations?
 - They may treat us, as they treated Him
 - I am not indispensable in God's Kingdom.
 - I may want something, long for it, pray for it, but whether it will happen I have to leave in the hands of the Master.

Sing: Hy. 84 : 3, 4

Lunch: John 15 : 20 - 21

Friday, Nov. 30

A servant must be faithful

John 12:23-26

²³And Jesus answered them, "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. ²⁴Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. ²⁵Whoever loves his life loses it, and whoever hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. ²⁶If anyone serves me, he must follow me; and where I am, there will my servant be also. If anyone serves me, the Father will honor him.

Discussion

1. What is the hour the Lord is speaking about? Vs. 23 - this refers to His death, resurrection and ascension
2. What is the law of the kernel? It has to die to produce seed. How does this apply to Christ? How does this apply to us?
3. What is our duty as servants? Vs. 26
4. The law of the kernel is a painful law. Do you agree? To follow Christ is to take up our cross.
5. Serving the Lord will not lead to glamour and success in the eyes of the world, on the contrary, it may lead to suffering, sacrifice and pain. All that is required is to be faithful. Are you prepared?
6. Look at the wonderful reward mentioned in the end of vs. 26. What does this mean to you?
7. There are people who suffer for serving the Lord. Do we remember them?
8. In conclusion: What does it mean to be a servant of the Lord?

Sing: Ps. 134 : 1, 2, 3

Lunch: 1 Cor. 4: 1 - 4

THE HOLY SPIRIT IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

The Holy Spirit makes us willing and ready to serve the Lord (L.D. 1). On Pentecost he was poured out on the church, but what about his work during the Old Testament? We will look at several passages from the O.T. that speak of his work.

Monday, Dec. 3

The Holy Spirit is the Lord and Giver of life.

Genesis 1:1-2; 11-13;24-25

¹ In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. ² The earth was without form and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters.

¹¹ And God said, "Let the earth sprout vegetation, plants yielding seed, and fruit trees bearing fruit in which is their seed, each according to its kind, on the earth." And it was so. ¹² The earth brought forth vegetation, plants yielding seed according to their own kinds, and trees bearing fruit in which is their seed, each according to its kind. And God saw that it was good. ¹³ And there was evening and there was morning, the third day.

²⁴ And God said, "Let the earth bring forth living creatures according to their kinds—livestock and creeping things and beasts of the earth according to their kinds." And it was so. ²⁵ And God made the beasts of the earth according to their kinds and the livestock according to their kinds, and everything that creeps on the ground according to its kind. And God saw that it was good.

Discussion:

1. How did God created? By his Word. He spoke and it was
2. Where is the Holy Spirit mentioned? Vs. 2 What does he do? He gives life to a formless and empty creation.
3. The Nicene Creed: The Lord and Giver of Life. We connect the Holy Spirit to faith, but keep this in mind as well. He made God's work come alive. Makes it look beautiful.

Sing: Ps. 33 : 2

Lunch: Hebr. 11 : 3

Tuesday, Dec.

The Holy Spirit gives talents to people.

Exodus 31:1-11

³¹ The Lord said to Moses, ² "See, I have called by name Bezalel the son of Uri, son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah, ³ and I have filled him with the Spirit of God, with ability and intelligence, with knowledge and all craftsmanship, ⁴ to devise artistic designs, to work in gold, silver, and bronze, ⁵ in cutting stones for setting, and in carving wood, to work in every craft. ⁶ And behold, I have appointed with him Oholiab, the son of Ahisamach, of the tribe of Dan. And I have given to all able men ability, that they may make all that I have commanded you: ⁷ the tent of meeting, and the ark of the testimony, and the mercy seat that is on it, and all the furnishings of the tent, ⁸ the table and its utensils, and the pure lampstand with all its utensils, and the altar of incense, ⁹ and the altar of burnt offering with all its utensils, and the basin and its stand, ¹⁰ and the finely worked garments, the holy garments for Aaron the priest and the garments of his sons, for their service as priests, ¹¹ and the anointing oil and the fragrant incense for the Holy Place. According to all that I have commanded you, they shall do."

Discussion

1. What is the situation? Building of the tabernacle and its furnishings
2. What is this to be done so carefully? The tabernacle is the House of the LORD, where he dwells among His people. God's holiness demands carefulness.
3. Where is the Holy Spirit mentioned? What is his work? Vs. 3, 4
4. Yesterday we said that the Spirit makes things look beautiful. How does he do this in our text? In giving these craftsmen special talents.
5. Artistic gifts are his means to beautify this creation. What does this teach us about the use of these gifts?
6. Is Reformed education only concerned with Language, Math, Science, Social Studies?

Sing: Ps. 27 : 2

Lunch: Job 32 : 8

6. How are we confronted with this work of the Holy Spirit? Each season we see the work and power of the Holy Spirit all around us. But especially in the Spring when plants come back to life, when animals have young ones, we see the demonstration of God's power and wisdom through his Spirit.

Sing: Ps. 104 : 7

Lunch: Job 33 : 4; John 6 : 63

Friday, Dec. 7

The Holy Spirit renews people

Joel 2: 27 - 32

²⁷You shall know that I am in the midst of Israel,
and that I am the Lord your God and there is none else.
And my people shall never again be put to shame.

²⁸"And it shall come to pass afterward,
that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh;
your sons and your daughters shall prophesy,
your old men shall dream dreams,
and your young men shall see visions.

²⁹Even on the male and female servants
in those days I will pour out my Spirit.

³⁰"And I will show wonders in the heavens and on the earth, blood and fire and columns of smoke. ³¹The sun shall be turned to darkness, and the moon to blood, before the great and awesome day of the Lord comes. ³²And it shall come to pass that everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved. For in Mount Zion and in Jerusalem there shall be those who escape, as the Lord has said, and among the survivors shall be those whom the Lord calls.

Discussion

1. What is the situation of the prophecies of Joel? Massive locust plague and severe drought (2:31)
2. What does Joel do in light of this? Call unfaithful Israel to repentance.
3. How will this repentance come about? By the power of the Holy Spirit.
4. What does this passage refer to? The messianic future. Why is there the need for this messianic future? Why is there the need for the Spirit to be poured out? Peter quotes this in Acts 2.
5. What does this teach us about the work of the Holy Spirit? He, who makes God's creation look beautiful and gives life to it, also gives life to sinners and makes them "beautiful" people. Beautiful in the sense of: willing and ready to serve the Lord.

Sing: Jeremiah 31 : 33 – 34

Lunch: Hy. 6 : 1, 2

GOD THE SON IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

Not only the Holy Spirit also the Son of God was at work in the Old Testament. He is sometimes called “the Messenger of the LORD” or “the Angel of the LORD.” Not every time we meet “an angel of the Lord” do we have to think of the Son of God, but in certain instances it is clear that He is at work. This week we hope to see that He was involved in the redemption and preservation of God’s people, Israel.

Monday, Dec. 10

Flames of fire

Exodus 3:1-10

³ Now Moses was keeping the flock of his father-in-law, Jethro, the priest of Midian, and he led his flock to the west side of the wilderness and came to Horeb, the mountain of God. ² And the angel of the Lord appeared to him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush. He looked, and behold, the bush was burning, yet it was not consumed. ³ And Moses said, “I will turn aside to see this great sight, why the bush is not burned.” ⁴ When the Lord saw that he turned aside to see, God called to him out of the bush, “Moses, Moses!” And he said, “Here I am.” ⁵ Then he said, “Do not come near; take your sandals off your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground.” ⁶ And he said, “I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.” And Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look at God.

⁷ Then the Lord said, “I have surely seen the affliction of my people who are in Egypt and have heard their cry because of their taskmasters. I know their sufferings, ⁸ and I have come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians and to bring them up out of that land to a good and broad land, a land flowing with milk and honey, to the place of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites. ⁹ And now, behold, the cry of the people of Israel has come to me, and I have also seen the oppression with which the Egyptians oppress them. ¹⁰ Come, I will send you to Pharaoh that you may bring my people, the children of Israel, out of Egypt.”

Discussion

1. What is the situation? Moses is at Mount Horeb pasturing the flock of his father-in-law. He sees a burning bush.
2. Where do we meet the Son of God? Vs. 2, the angel of the LORD. How is it evident that this is no mere angel? Vs. 5 and 6
3. What do we learn about the work of the Son? He has seen the misery of Israel and is concerned about their suffering
4. Moses has to show respect, see vs. 5. When do we meet the Lord? Do we show respect? How?
5. What do we learn from this passage about the motivation of the LORD? He helps for the sake of His promise.

Sing: Ps. 34 : 3

Lunch: Acts 7 : 33-34

Tuesday, Dec. 11

A pillar of cloud

Exodus 14:15-22

¹⁵ The Lord said to Moses, “Why do you cry to me? Tell the people of Israel to go forward. ¹⁶ Lift up your staff, and stretch out your hand over the sea and divide it, that the people of Israel may go through the sea on dry ground. ¹⁷ And I will harden the hearts of the Egyptians so that they shall go in after them, and I will get glory over Pharaoh and all his host, his chariots, and his horsemen. ¹⁸ And the Egyptians shall know that I am the Lord, when I have gotten glory over Pharaoh, his chariots, and his horsemen.”

¹⁹ Then the angel of God who was going before the host of Israel moved and went behind them, and the pillar of cloud moved from before them and stood behind them, ²⁰ coming between the host of Egypt and the host of Israel. And there was the cloud and the darkness. And it lit up the night without one coming near the other all night.

²¹ Then Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and the Lord drove the sea back by a strong east wind all night and made the sea dry land, and the waters were divided. ²² And the people of Israel went into the midst of the sea on dry ground, the waters being a wall to them on their right hand and on their left.

Discussion

1. What is the situation? Israel is leaving Egypt.
2. Why are they crying? They are stuck. Ahead is the water, mountains on both sides and behind them the Egyptian army. Can you imagine how difficult this is? How easily do we not cry to the LORD when stuck?
3. How will the LORD use this occasion? To glorify Himself
4. Where do we meet the angel of the LORD? Vs. 19 What does He do? Goes between Egypt and Israel, to protect God's people.
5. What does the LORD teaches with this passage? The Son of God protects God's people. That is our comfort too.

Sing: Ps. 35 : 2

Lunch: Acts 7 : 37 - 38

Wednesday, Dec. 12

A drawn sword

Numbers 22: 31 - 35

³¹Then the Lord opened the eyes of Balaam, and he saw the angel of the Lord standing in the way, with his drawn sword in his hand. And he bowed down and fell on his face. ³²And the angel of the Lord said to him, "Why have you struck your donkey these three times? Behold, I have come out to oppose you because your way is perverse before me. ³³The donkey saw me and turned aside before me these three times. If she had not turned aside from me, surely just now I would have killed you and let her live." ³⁴Then Balaam said to the angel of the Lord, "I have sinned, for I did not know that you stood in the road against me. Now therefore, if it is evil in your sight, I will turn back." ³⁵And the angel of the Lord said to Balaam, "Go with the men, but speak only the word that I tell you." So Balaam went on with the princes of Balak.

Discussion

1. What is the situation? Balaam is on his way to Balak.
2. Why? Balak has hired Balaam to curse God's people.
3. What happened to Balaam on the way? Three times he is stopped
4. Why? The Angel of the LORD stopped him. Note what the Angel says to Balaam.
5. The Angel is again more than a normal angel. We see here again the Son of God. He is protecting Israel from the curses of the enemy. Balaam can only say what He allows. How is this a comfort for us?

Sing: Ps. 35 : 3

Lunch: 2 Peter 2 : 15-16

Thursday, Dec. 13

Again a drawn sword

Joshua 5:13 - 6:2

¹³When Joshua was by Jericho, he lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, a man was standing before him with his drawn sword in his hand. And Joshua went to him and said to him, "Are you for us, or for our adversaries?" ¹⁴And he said, "No; but I am the commander of the army of the Lord. Now I have come." And Joshua fell on his face to the earth and worshiped and said to him, "What does my lord say to his servant?" ¹⁵And the commander of the Lord's army said to Joshua, "Take off your sandals from your feet, for the place where you are standing is holy." And Joshua did so.

⁶Now Jericho was shut up inside and outside because of the people of Israel. None went out, and none came in. ²And the Lord said to Joshua, "See, I have given Jericho into your hand, with its king and mighty men of valor.

Discussion

1. What is the situation? Israel is about to enter the promised land. Jericho is the gate city.
2. Who meets Joshua?
3. Why does He come to Joshua?
4. The Son of God is also commander of the armies of the LORD. He leads these armies to protect God's people, so they receive the land. Christ Jesus is the Head of the angels. Why is this a comfort?

Sing: Hy. 7 : 3
Lunch: 2 Thess. 1 : 6 - 8

Friday, Dec. 14

A call to repent

Judges 2:1-5

2 Now the angel of the Lord went up from Gilgal to Bochim. And he said, "I brought you up from Egypt and brought you into the land that I swore to give to your fathers. I said, 'I will never break my covenant with you,² and you shall make no covenant with the inhabitants of this land; you shall break down their altars.' But you have not obeyed my voice. What is this you have done?³ So now I say, I will not drive them out before you, but they shall become thorns in your sides, and their gods shall be a snare to you."⁴ As soon as the angel of the Lord spoke these words to all the people of Israel, the people lifted up their voices and wept.⁵ And they called the name of that place Bochim. And they sacrificed there to the Lord.

Discussion

1. What is the situation? Israel is in the Promised Land.
2. Why did the Angel of the LORD come to Israel? They had departed from the LORD.
3. What does He say to them? Vs. 2, 3
4. What is their reaction Vs. 4, 5
5. The Angel is there too when the People of Israel go astray. What does this teach us about the history of the Church? Reformation is His work. It hurts Him when the church goes astray. Why?
6. What have we learned about the work of the Son before His incarnation? Do you also see here the need for Him to come to this earth?

Sing: Hy. 16 : 1, 3
Lunch: Isa. 63 : 7 - 9

SING TO THE LORD

The coming of the Son of God in the flesh is a cause for great joy. You see this reflected in the songs we find in Luke 1 and 2. This week we will take one of these songs, the one of Mary. We hope to look at its historical background and see what this tells us for the future

Monday, Dec. 17

The horse and its rider he has hurled into the sea.

One of the great songs in the Old Testament is the Song of Israel at the shores of the Red Sea. It is a song of victory because the LORD has delivered His people from bondage.

Exodus 15: 1-10

- ¹ Then Moses and the people of Israel sang this song to the Lord, saying,
"I will sing to the Lord, for he has triumphed gloriously;
the horse and his rider he has thrown into the sea."
² The Lord is my strength and my song,
and he has become my salvation;
this is my God, and I will praise him,
my father's God, and I will exalt him.
³ The Lord is a man of war;
the Lord is his name.
⁴ "Pharaoh's chariots and his host he cast into the sea,
and his chosen officers were sunk in the Red Sea.
⁵ The floods covered them;
they went down into the depths like a stone.
⁶ Your right hand, O Lord, glorious in power,
your right hand, O Lord, shatters the enemy.
⁷ In the greatness of your majesty you overthrow your adversaries;
you send out your fury; it consumes them like stubble.
⁸ At the blast of your nostrils the waters piled up;
the floods stood up in a heap;
the deeps congealed in the heart of the sea.
⁹ The enemy said, 'I will pursue, I will overtake,
I will divide the spoil, my desire shall have its fill of them.
I will draw my sword; my hand shall destroy them.'
¹⁰ You blew with your wind; the sea covered them;
they sank like lead in the mighty waters.

Discussion

1. When did Moses and Israel sing this song? After Pharaoh and his host was drowned in the Red Sea
2. Why would they sing this song? Vs. 2
3. What does this song say about the power of the LORD?
4. Elaborate on the images used in this song (e.g. 5, 8)
5. The LORD has become our salvation as well. Is He our strength and song?
6. Note that the focus of the song is the majesty of God and not the people.
7. What does it mean that the LORD is "my father's God" (vs. 2)?
8. Would we sing that the LORD is a warrior? Explain

Sing: Hy. 17 : 1, 2

Lunch: Isa. 12 : 4 - 6

Tuesday, Dec. 18

Who among the gods is like you, O LORD?

Exodus 15: 11-18

- ¹¹ "Who is like you, O Lord, among the gods?
Who is like you, majestic in holiness,
awesome in glorious deeds, doing wonders?
¹² You stretched out your right hand;
the earth swallowed them.

- ¹³“You have led in your steadfast love the people whom you have redeemed;
you have guided them by your strength to your holy abode.
¹⁴The peoples have heard; they tremble;
pangs have seized the inhabitants of Philistia.
¹⁵Now are the chiefs of Edom dismayed;
trembling seizes the leaders of Moab;
all the inhabitants of Canaan have melted away.
¹⁶Terror and dread fall upon them;
because of the greatness of your arm, they are still as a stone,
till your people, O Lord, pass by,
till the people pass by whom you have purchased.
¹⁷You will bring them in and plant them on your own mountain,
the place, O Lord, which you have made for your abode,
the sanctuary, O Lord, which your hands have established.
¹⁸The Lord will reign forever and ever.”

Discussion

1. What does Israel say about the LORD in vs. 11
2. In vs. 13 the tense changes to the future? What does Israel say about the future?
The LORD will guide and protect His people (13, 14)
The LORD will bring them to Jerusalem (17)
The LORD will reign for ever (18)
3. God’s work of the past gives confidence for the future. How does this apply to us?

Sing: Hy. 17 : 3, 4

Lunch: Isa. 46 : 3 - 5

Wednesday, Dec. 19

Hannah’s Song

Mary’s song has many connections with the song of Hannah, and both draw from Exodus 15.

1 Samuel 2:1-10

- ² And Hannah prayed and said,
“My heart exults in the Lord;
my horn is exalted in the Lord.
My mouth derides my enemies,
because I rejoice in your salvation.
²“There is none holy like the Lord:
for there is none besides you;
there is no rock like our God.
³Talk no more so very proudly,
let not arrogance come from your mouth;
for the Lord is a God of knowledge,
and by him actions are weighed.
⁴The bows of the mighty are broken,
but the feeble bind on strength.
⁵Those who were full have hired themselves out for bread,
but those who were hungry have ceased to hunger.
The barren has borne seven,
but she who has many children is forlorn.
⁶The Lord kills and brings to life;
he brings down to Sheol and raises up.
⁷The Lord makes poor and makes rich;
he brings low and he exalts.
⁸He raises up the poor from the dust;
he lifts the needy from the ash heap
to make them sit with princes
and inherit a seat of honor.
For the pillars of the earth are the Lord’s,
and on them he has set the world.
⁹“He will guard the feet of his faithful ones,
but the wicked shall be cut off in darkness,

for not by might shall a man prevail.
¹⁰The adversaries of the Lord shall be broken to pieces;
against them he will thunder in heaven.
The Lord will judge the ends of the earth;
he will give strength to his king
and exalt the horn of his anointed.”

Discussion

1. When did Hannah pray this? When she gave her son away.
2. Why would she be so happy about this? She saw in this the care of the LORD for His people. Israel was in need of faithful servants. In Samuel the LORD provided.
3. Where is the connection with Exodus 15? Vs. 2. Also the image of warriors.
4. What do we learn from this? The LORD is faithful and powerful in His work of redemption
5. This passage is a prayer. There is a close connection between prayer and song. Many songs are prayers. Prayer is also the means to lay before the Lord our praise and petitions.
6. The tone of this “song” does not seem to fit the situation when a woman receives a child. It sounds more like a war song. This shows that not Hannah’s personal situation is in focus, but the LORD’s ongoing care for His church.
7. What is the holiness of the LORD? Here it refers to His power to redeem.

Sing: Hy. 17 : 5, 6

Lunch: Deut. 32 : 3 - 4

Thursday, Dec. 20

Mary’s Song

Luke 1: 46-55

⁴⁶And Mary said,
“My soul magnifies the Lord,
⁴⁷and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,
⁴⁸for he has looked on the humble estate of his servant.
For behold, from now on all generations will call me blessed;
⁴⁹for he who is mighty has done great things for me,
and holy is his name.
⁵⁰And his mercy is for those who fear him
from generation to generation.
⁵¹He has shown strength with his arm;
he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts;
⁵²he has brought down the mighty from their thrones
and exalted those of humble estate;
⁵³he has filled the hungry with good things,
and the rich he has sent away empty.
⁵⁴He has helped his servant Israel,
in remembrance of his mercy,
⁵⁵as he spoke to our fathers,
to Abraham and to his offspring forever.”

Discussion

1. Why did Mary sing this song?
2. What is the connection with Hannah’s prayer? Vs. 46, 49, 51, 52
3. This song is well known. But when we see the connections with the O.T. the richer it becomes. Mary knew her Bible. This song is well known. But when we see the connections with the O.T. the richer it becomes.
4. What is the focus of this Song? Vs. 50, 54-55
5. What does it mean that God’s name is holy? He sent His only Son to redeem

Sing: Hy. 19 : 1, 2

Lunch: Deut. 32 : 39 - 42

Friday, Dec. 21

Moses' Song

We hear of the Song of Moses also in Revelation.

Revelation 15:1-8

¹Then I saw another sign in heaven, great and amazing, seven angels with seven plagues, which are the last, for with them the wrath of God is finished.

²And I saw what appeared to be a sea of glass mingled with fire—and also those who had conquered the beast and its image and the number of its name, standing beside the sea of glass with harps of God in their hands. ³And they sing the song of Moses, the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying,

“Great and amazing are your deeds,

O Lord God the Almighty!

Just and true are your ways,

O King of the nations!

⁴Who will not fear, O Lord,

and glorify your name?

For you alone are holy.

All nations will come

and worship you,

for your righteous acts have been revealed.”

⁵After this I looked, and the sanctuary of the tent of witness in heaven was opened, ⁶and out of the sanctuary came the seven angels with the seven plagues, clothed in pure, bright linen, with golden sashes around their chests. ⁷And one of the four living creatures gave to the seven angels seven golden bowls full of the wrath of God who lives forever and ever, ⁸and the sanctuary was filled with smoke from the glory of God and from his power, and no one could enter the sanctuary until the seven plagues of the seven angels were finished.

Discussion

1. John sees a marvelous sign. What does he see and hear? What does this mean?
2. What follows this? Vs. 5-8
3. What is the connection with other songs we have looked at?
4. What is the song of Moses and the Lamb? The Lamb takes over the Song of Moses. Fulfills it. He will bring final redemption. He will destroy the enemies, bring low who are exalted in their own opinion, but exalt His people who long for His mercy. What is our comfort?
5. Our theme this week: Sing to the LORD. Our song today is based on what God has done in the past and gives confidence for the future.

Sing: Hy. 19 : 3, 4

Lunch: 1 Tim. 1 : 15 - 17

SEEK FIRST THE HONOUR OF THE KING

The Lord Jesus begins his work with teaching the people the message of his kingdom. The Sermon on the Mount is like a throne speech. The King proclaims his program, and what he expects of us, his subjects.

Monday, Jan. 7

No outward show when it comes to giving to the Lord.

Matthew 6 : 1 - 4

⁶ "Beware of practicing your righteousness before other people in order to be seen by them, for then you will have no reward from your Father who is in heaven.

² "Thus, when you give to the needy, sound no trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may be praised by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. ³ But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, ⁴ so that your giving may be in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

Discussion

1. What should we be careful not to do? Why? What are acts of righteousness? In this chapter: giving, praying and fasting.
2. What should we do then?
3. What will be the result? The Lord speaks about reward. See L.D. 24.
4. Why do we help? Do we do it to be noticed, or because we see it as our duty?
5. What does it mean that our right hand should not know what our left is doing?
6. Is it wrong to budget?
7. What does this passage teach us today?

Sing: Ps. 112 : 2

Lunch: 2 Cor. 9 : 10 - 11

Tuesday, Jan. 8

Pray from the heart.

Matthew 6 : 5 - 8

⁵ "And when you pray, you must not be like the hypocrites. For they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and at the street corners, that they may be seen by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. ⁶ But when you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

⁷ "And when you pray, do not heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles do, for they think that they will be heard for their many words. ⁸ Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him.

Discussion

1. What should we not do when we pray? Why did the hypocrites do this? What should we then do? Vs. 6
2. What does it mean not to keep on babbling? Why should we not keep on babbling?
3. Why do some find it so hard to pray in public?
4. How should we do it? How much attention do we give to the way in which we pray? How important is the wording, format, place or posture? See L.D. 46
5. We should not use prayer to tell others something. Agree?

Sing: Ps. 34 : 6

Lunch: 1 Peter 4 : 7

Wednesday, Jan. 9

No outward show when it comes to our dedication to God.

Matthew 6 : 16 - 18

¹⁶“And when you fast, do not look gloomy like the hypocrites, for they disfigure their faces that their fasting may be seen by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. ¹⁷But when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, ¹⁸that your fasting may not be seen by others but by your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

Discussion

1. What should we not do when we fast? Why not? How should we then do it?
2. What was the meaning of fasting in the O.T.? Is there still a place for it today? If yes, how should we do it. (See the heading of the first prayer in the Book of Praise)
3. All these three passages deal with hypocrites. In this context a hypocrite is someone who is like a stage actor. In front of people one way, but behind the mask there is something else. The Lord demands sincerity in His Kingdom. How do we fight hypocrisy?

Sing: Ps. 69 : 4, 5

Lunch: Isa. 58 : 6 - 7

Thursday, Jan. 10

What is your treasure?

Matthew 6 : 19 - 24

¹⁹“Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust^[a] destroy and where thieves break in and steal, ²⁰but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. ²¹For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

²²“The eye is the lamp of the body. So, if your eye is healthy, your whole body will be full of light, ²³but if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light in you is darkness, how great is the darkness!

²⁴“No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money.^[a]

Discussion

1. What does it mean to store up treasures on earth? Why should we not?
2. What should we do then?
3. Look at vs. 21. Where is your heart? Teaches us something about priorities in life.
4. How does the Lord use the image of the eye?
5. Why can we not serve two masters?
6. In vs. 24 Money is with a capital. In other translations: Mammon. Mammon is the god of money. It comes from the same root as the word Amen. Mammon offers certainty of life. This is why serving Mammon cannot go together with serving the Lord. It also shows that money itself is not the problem, but man’s inclination to find security in money. We have to learn to put our trust in the Lord alone.

Sing: Hy. 40 : 4, 5

Lunch: 1 Peter 1 : 3 - 5

Friday, Jan. 11

Seek first the Kingdom.

Matthew 6 : 25 - 34

²⁵“Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? ²⁶Look at the birds of the air: they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? ²⁷And which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to his span of life? ²⁸And why are you anxious about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin, ²⁹yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. ³⁰But if God so

clothes the grass of the field, which today is alive and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? ³¹ Therefore do not be anxious, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' ³² For the Gentiles seek after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. ³³ But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.

³⁴ "Therefore do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble.

Discussion

1. What should we not worry about? Why not? Which examples does the Lord use?
2. What does it mean to worry? Why do we worry so easily?
3. What is the difference between pagans and believers?
4. What does it mean to seek first God's Kingdom? Are we not allowed to make plans for the future?
5. What does it mean that each day has enough trouble of its own?

Sing: Hy. 3 : 5

Lunch: Job 38 : 39 – 41

WHAT IS GOD'S KINGDOM LIKE?

The Lord Jesus used parables to teach us. This week we will look at several.

Monday, Jan. 14

Who does Father's will?

Matthew 21:28-32

²⁸ "What do you think? A man had two sons. And he went to the first and said, 'Son, go and work in the vineyard today.' ²⁹ And he answered, 'I will not,' but afterward he changed his mind and went. ³⁰ And he went to the other son and said the same. And he answered, 'I go, sir,' but did not go. ³¹ Which of the two did the will of his father?" They said, "The first." Jesus said to them, "Truly, I say to you, the tax collectors and the prostitutes go into the kingdom of God before you. ³² For John came to you in the way of righteousness, and you did not believe him, but the tax collectors and the prostitutes believed him. And even when you saw it, you did not afterward change your minds and believe him."

Discussion

1. What is this parable about? Vs. 28-30
2. How does the Lord apply this? Vs. 31-32
3. How does this apply to us?
4. To do what you say is not always easy. In God's kingdom it is sin if we do not do what we promise. They those who do it without having promised will go ahead of us.

Sing: Ps. 40 : 3

Lunch: 1 Sam. 15 : 22-23

Tuesday, Jan. 15

The Lord is free in what He gives.

Matthew 20:1-16

²⁰ "For the kingdom of heaven is like a master of a house who went out early in the morning to hire laborers for his vineyard. ² After agreeing with the laborers for a denarius a day, he sent them into his vineyard. ³ And going out about the third hour he saw others standing idle in the marketplace, ⁴ and to them he said, 'You go into the vineyard too, and whatever is right I will give you.' ⁵ So they went. Going out again about the sixth hour and the ninth hour, he did the same. ⁶ And about the eleventh hour he went out and found others standing. And he said to them, 'Why do you stand here idle all day?' ⁷ They said to him, 'Because no one has hired us.' He said to them, 'You go into the vineyard too.' ⁸ And when evening came, the owner of the vineyard said to his foreman, 'Call the laborers and pay them their wages, beginning with the last, up to the first.' ⁹ And when those hired about the eleventh hour came, each of them received a denarius. ¹⁰ Now when those hired first came, they thought they would receive more, but each of them also received a denarius. ¹¹ And on receiving it they grumbled at the master of the house, ¹² saying, 'These last worked only one hour, and you have made them equal to us who have borne the burden of the day and the scorching heat.' ¹³ But he replied to one of them, 'Friend, I am doing you no wrong. Did you not agree with me for a denarius? ¹⁴ Take what belongs to you and go. I choose to give to this last worker as I give to you. ¹⁵ Am I not allowed to do what I choose with what belongs to me? Or do you begrudge my generosity?' ¹⁶ So the last will be first, and the first last."

Discussion

1. What is the Kingdom of heaven like?
2. What does this landowner do?
3. What is the point of the parable? How does this apply to us?

Sing: Ps. 106 : 1, 8

Lunch: Prov. 14 : 29 - 31

Wednesday, Jan. 16

Through suffering to glory.

Matthew 21:33-46

³³“Hear another parable. There was a master of a house who planted a vineyard and put a fence around it and dug a winepress in it and built a tower and leased it to tenants, and went into another country. ³⁴When the season for fruit drew near, he sent his servants to the tenants to get his fruit. ³⁵And the tenants took his servants and beat one, killed another, and stoned another. ³⁶Again he sent other servants, more than the first. And they did the same to them. ³⁷Finally he sent his son to them, saying, ‘They will respect my son.’³⁸ But when the tenants saw the son, they said to themselves, ‘This is the heir. Come, let us kill him and have his inheritance.’ ³⁹And they took him and threw him out of the vineyard and killed him. ⁴⁰When therefore the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those tenants?” ⁴¹They said to him, “He will put those wretches to a miserable death and let out the vineyard to other tenants who will give him the fruits in their seasons.”

⁴²Jesus said to them, “Have you never read in the Scriptures:

“‘The stone that the builders rejected
has become the cornerstone;
this was the Lord’s doing,
and it is marvelous in our eyes’?

⁴³Therefore I tell you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people producing its fruits. ⁴⁴And the one who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces; and when it falls on anyone, it will crush him.”^[L]

⁴⁵When the chief priests and the Pharisees heard his parables, they perceived that he was speaking about them. ⁴⁶And although they were seeking to arrest him, they feared the crowds, because they held him to be a prophet.

Discussion

1. What is this parable about? The behavior of the tenants toward the landowner
2. How does the Lord apply this? 42 - 44
3. What is the Lord teaching us with this parable?

Sing: Ps. 118 : 6

Lunch Isa. 5 : 1 - 5

Thursday, Jan. 17

How are you dressed?

Matthew 22:2-14

²“The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who gave a wedding feast for his son, ³and sent his servants^[L] to call those who were invited to the wedding feast, but they would not come. ⁴Again he sent other servants, saying, ‘Tell those who are invited, “See, I have prepared my dinner, my oxen and my fat calves have been slaughtered, and everything is ready. Come to the wedding feast.”’ ⁵But they paid no attention and went off, one to his farm, another to his business, ⁶while the rest seized his servants, treated them shamefully, and killed them. ⁷The king was angry, and he sent his troops and destroyed those murderers and burned their city. ⁸Then he said to his servants, ‘The wedding feast is ready, but those invited were not worthy. ⁹Go therefore to the main roads and invite to the wedding feast as many as you find.’ ¹⁰And those servants went out into the roads and gathered all whom they found, both bad and good. So the wedding hall was filled with guests.

¹¹“But when the king came in to look at the guests, he saw there a man who had no wedding garment. ¹²And he said to him, ‘Friend, how did you get in here without a wedding garment?’ And he was speechless. ¹³Then the king said to the attendants, ‘Bind him hand and foot and cast him into the outer darkness. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.’ ¹⁴For many are called, but few are chosen.”

Discussion

1. What is the kingdom of heaven compared to? Feast. Is this true for you?
2. Why is the king angry? What does he do? Vs. 7-10
3. What happens to this one man who has no festal garments? What does this teach?
4. What is the point of the parable?
5. What does this parable teach us?

Sing: Ps. 117

Lunch: Acts 28 : 26 - 29

Friday, Jan. 18

What is your place?

Luke 14: 7 - 14

⁷ Now he told a parable to those who were invited, when he noticed how they chose the places of honor, saying to them, ⁸ "When you are invited by someone to a wedding feast, do not sit down in a place of honor, lest someone more distinguished than you be invited by him, ⁹ and he who invited you both will come and say to you, 'Give your place to this person,' and then you will begin with shame to take the lowest place. ¹⁰ But when you are invited, go and sit in the lowest place, so that when your host comes he may say to you, 'Friend, move up higher.' Then you will be honored in the presence of all who sit at table with you. ¹¹ For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted."

¹² He said also to the man who had invited him, "When you give a dinner or a banquet, do not invite your friends or your brothers or your relatives or rich neighbors, lest they also invite you in return and you be repaid. ¹³ But when you give a feast, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, ¹⁴ and you will be blessed, because they cannot repay you. For you will be repaid at the resurrection of the just."

Discussion

1. Why did the Lord teach this parable? Vs. 7
2. What does He teach? Vs. 8-11
3. How does He apply this? Vs. 12-14
4. What is the point of this parable? What does it teach us?

Sing: Ps. 131 : 1, 3

Lunch: Prov. 25 : 6 - 7