



The

Parish Visitor

A Publication of Bethlehem Lutheran Church • Askov, Minnesota

November 2020						
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Hello, Church!

As I write this, I am looking out on my lawn which is now covered with a wet, white blanket of snow. It would appear that our fall season is now behind us. I must confess that I am not ready for winter.

On the other hand, I eagerly await change. This has been a difficult year and it is not over yet. This year with a pandemic, civil unrest, and another noisy election cycle has caused us to change much of what we once counted on in this life. We now count on technology as a daily need. We have learned to use our technology in ways we hadn't dreamed of in the past. I find myself ordering more online, holding "virtual" meetings, and doing the majority of my work from my home office (which I had downsized when I retired five years ago).

Things have changed around Bethlehem Lutheran Church, as well. We still have work to do, but we are quickly learning that being the Church does not require a building. We have worshiped via YouTube and outside in the pavilion. Holy communion has of necessity become "self-served." Newsletters and the website have become the major communication resource for this congregation. God is teaching us that being the Church is about far more than showing up for worship services. That is a lesson the whole Church has needed to learn for a very long time.

Along with the change of seasons, we have some important changes happening at Bethlehem. We have a new multi-generational Bible study. "Deeply Rooted in a Boundless God" is under way. Our SMART Team has been hard at work, too. By the time this is published, we will have embarked on a "hybrid" worship schedule and three students will have affirmed their baptism in the Rite of Confirmation. With news of some grants being awarded, we may soon have the airflow challenge in the church basement solved such that we may safely use the space again.

Look further in this newsletter for the worship schedule (basically we will be in person on the first and third Sundays with the other weeks online), more news about "Deeply Rooted"; weekly at-home worship resources with daily reading suggestions; and more. Folks, Bethlehem Lutheran Church is alive and pressing on with God's mission. This pandemic is not stopping the Church. Press on, dear people. Continue in prayer. Continue to check up on each other. Continue to support this congregation and our synod through your tithes and offerings. We are God's hands, feet, and voices doing God's work in this world.

Praise be to God!

-Larry



**The BLC
Quarterly Congregational
meeting has been
rescheduled for
Sunday,
November, 15, 2020
immediately following
the worship service**

IN OUR
Thoughts and Prayers

**Please include the
following people in
your daily prayers:**

Millie Sorensen, Roy Larsen, Jan Ecklund,
Lois Sahlen, Donna Norgaard, Ann Olson,
Jo Jessen, Tony Ecklund, Shirley Lund,
Joyce Schaumburg, the families of Ardis
Jensen and Dorla Clark, Chase & Elizabeth
Moon (*in the Philippines*)
and their families.

*If you would like to add someone to this weekly list, please
email the church office at blcaskov@gmail.com*

2020 Church Council Members



Bill Jansen



Marilyn Krogh



Cheryl Kohner



Chuck Moon



JoEllyn Foss



Andy May



Heidi Moon



**October 7, 2020
Unapproved Minutes**

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Bill Jansen, Larry Anderson, Marilyn Krogh, Chuck Moon, Heidi Moon, Jo Foss. Absent were Andy May and Cheryl Kohner.

Bill called the meeting to order. Members checked in with each other. Larry Anderson offered devotion and prayer.

Minutes from September were reviewed. There was a change made with regard to the attendees at the Music and Worship Team meeting to reflect that the full committee met. Bill made a motion to accept the minutes with the above change, Heidi seconded, motion carried.

The Treasurer's and Pastor's Reports for September were reviewed.

MINISTRY TEAMS:

- Property—Chuck had no report at this time.
- Family Ministry—Jo reported a multi-generational Bible Study has begun. These meetings will either be held in person or via Zoom.
- Music and Worship—No report.
- Circle of Faith—Jo reported 200 meals and bags of groceries were prepared for community

giving in the month of September. In lieu of Community Meals during the months of November and December, bags of groceries will be distributed to members of the community prior to the Thanksgiving and Christmas holidays.

- SMART Team—Bill reported indoor services are still on hold and will be determined by the Covid situation in Pine County. Covid Color Map Directives are: Red - services only online; orange - services outdoors as weather permits; yellow - services allowed indoors with safety precautions.

OLD BUSINESS:

- 2021 Proposed Budget as submitted by the Finance Committee was reviewed. Discussion followed. Minor changes were made. Heidi's hourly wage was set at \$15.50 per hour for both her secretarial and treasurer's duties, per Synod guidelines, retro active to her anniversary date of August 14th. Bill made a motion to approve the budget and to forward on to the congregation, Chuck seconded, motion carried.
- Parsonage Sale—There have been three viewers, without offers. Bill made a motion to allow the realtor and Denny Birkholm the authority to make changes to the asking price should they determine there is a need, second by Chuck, motion carried.

- Nominating Committee—Denny Birkholm and Bill Steele are working on finding suitable candidates to fill some upcoming church council vacancies beginning 2021. Anyone interested in a position on the council is asked to contact Denny or Bill.
- 2019 Audit—No one has been found to complete this audit to date.
- Shut-in visitation—Larry reported the nursing homes are still not allowing any visitors into the buildings due to Covid restrictions. Home visits also pose some risk. He has made phone calls to some of our members and has either had ministry with them in this manner, or has asked if they would be comfortable with a home visit. Larry asked about resuming weekly mailings. After discussion, it was decided to include the monthly ministry materials with each Parish Visitor to reduce mailing costs.
- Quarterly meeting—Agenda discussed.

NEW BUSINESS:

- Cares Grants—Bill has put together a request for a grant to purchase an air exchanger for the basement. These grants are monies made available to non-profits to help with Covid-related needs. Heidi made a motion to accept this proposal, Bill seconded, motion carried.

Minutes continued on page 3

...Minutes cont'd from page 2

- Confirmation—Larry reported there are three confirmands this year. Confirmation will be held on Reformation Sunday. The three youth who have completed their studies and are eligible to be confirmed are Levi and Lacy Jorgenson, and Simon Ecklund. A motion was made by Bill, seconded

by Marilyn to approve the confirmation of these three students, motion carried.

ACTION ITEMS:

- Larry will meet with the confirmands and their families.
- Jo will contact Tracy Zinter to see if Circle of Faith meets prior to the Parish Visitor deadline so the dates for the grocery bag distribution can be published.

- Bill will continue working resources to find an auditor.

Jo made a motion to adjourn the meeting, second by Bill, motion carried. Meeting adjourned with the Lord's Prayer.

Our next meeting will be Wednesday, November 11, 2020 at 6 pm.

*Respectfully submitted,
-Marilyn Krogh*



COUNCIL MEETING

**October 20, 2020
Special Called Meeting
Unapproved Minutes**

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Bill Jansen, Larry Anderson, Marilyn Krogh, Jo Foss, and Cheryl Kohner. Absent were Andy May, Chuck Moon, and Heidi Moon.

Checks-ins; opening prayer led by Larry.

OLD BUSINESS:

- Smart Plan- Fall/Winter revision—Bill discussed with council about revisions that were made to the Smart Plan on October 13th by the Smart Team/Worship Team. Larry updated the council on what an indoor service would look like. Motion to accept the Fall/Winter Smart Plan made by Marilyn, 2nd by Jo, motion carried.

- Reschedule Quarterly meeting—Larry suggested having the meeting after church on Sunday, November 15th, thereby giving enough notice to the congregation. Bill made a motion to reschedule the Quarterly meeting to November 15th after the worship service, 2nd by Cheryl, motion carried.

Action Items:

- Larry will contact Heidi to update her on the worship schedule and the Quarterly meeting.
- Bill will send Heidi the revised Smart Plan.

NOTE:

Two items need to be revised when we update the constitution:

1. Service can only be videotaped from the balcony
2. Quarterly meeting month

Need to update these 2 items to be more flexible.

Motion to adjourn by Marilyn, 2nd by Jo, motion carried.

Meeting adjourned

with The Lord's Prayer.

Next meeting is Wednesday, November 11th, 2020 at 6:00 pm

*Respectfully submitted,
-Cheryl Kohner
Ccouncil secretary*

**The BLC
Quarterly
Congregational
meeting has
been
rescheduled
for Sunday,
November 15,
2020
following the
worship
service.**

**Masks will be
required to
attend this
meeting**

**Copies of our 2021
Proposed Budget can
be found on our
church website:
www.blcaskov.com**



- Cindy Jensen and Tim Loew—6th
- Hannah Quam—9th
- Emma Jansen, Melanie Klocke, and Cindy Mortensen—12th
- John Thinesen—15th
- Kayleigh Maloney—18th
- Aaron Jensen—19th
- Linda Clausen and Dustin Peterson—20th
- Andrew Jensen—23rd
- Joyce Larsen—26th
- David Lunde—28th
- Shari Bigay—30th



- John & Tracy Zinter—3rd
- Don & Lorraine Peterson—18th
- Chuck & Heidi Moon—22nd
- Bill & Shawn Jansen—29th



During this time of COVID-19, we still need your help to make certain we continue to fulfill our mission and meet our budgetary needs!

**We have a process for making safe and secure one-time or recurring online contributions through our website:
www.blcaskov.com/online-giving**

Your checks are greatly appreciated too, for those who aren't online

Thank you for your continued support!



SEPTEMBER UNAPPROVED MINUTES

Circle of Faith met September 18, 2020 at 10:00 am with 7 members in attendance. Tracy

called the meeting to order. Jo's devotional was about dealing with isolation and ways to be kind to ourselves.

Secretary minutes from the March's meeting were read by Mary. Motions by Shawn, 2nd by Elaine, approved. Treasure's report read by Mary, \$58.25 in checking and \$785.92 in savings.

Tracy thanked Shawn and Cookie for the great work they are doing with the Community Meals. Jo handed out an updated mailing list for the Circle

of Faith monthly card mailing. Elaine will mail September cards, Tracy will mail October cards, Mary will mail November cards, and Tracy will mail December cards.

New business: Community Meals for Wednesday, September 23rd were discussed. The menu will be chicken ranch wrap, ramen noodle salad, pretzels, apple and a brownie. We will continue with handouts and delivery. Tentative October meal will be hot dish, fruit and dessert. Discussed ideas

for the November and December meals.

Shawn mentioned looking into a Bible study, the link is SJResources-Northeastern Minnesota Synod, ELCA.

Motion to adjourn was made by Shawn, 2nd by Jo, carried. The meeting adjourned with the Lord's Prayer.

Our next meeting is Friday, October 16th.

*Respectfully submitted,
-Mary Johnson
Secretary*

OCTOBER UNAPPROVED MINUTES

Circle of Faith met October 16, 2020 at 10:00 am with 8 members in attendance.

Tracy called the meeting to order. Jo's devotional was about dealing with feeling overwhelmed with trying to get everything done. We need to remember we are spiritual beings on earth being human. Deadlines are earthly made and we worry about things. Calm yourself. In our spiritual lives there is

chronos, the world's time, and kairos, eternity. Don't sweat the small stuff and GOD will handle everything else in his time.

Secretary minutes from the September's meeting were read by Mary. Motions by Jo, 2nd by Carolyn, carried. Treasurer's report read by Mary, \$128.25 in checking and \$786.08 in savings.

Old business: Jo said she would mail cards to shut-ins in January. The Bible Study Shawn spoke about in September started Wednesday October 7th and will meet the first and

third Wednesday of the month from 6 to 7 pm. If we are unable to meet at the church, we will meet on zoom. Community meals served 206 people in September.

New business: Community meals for Wednesday, October 28th were discussed. The menu will be shepherds pie, squash soup, apple and dessert. Members volunteered to fix the squash for the soup ahead of time. Discussed meals for November. The November Community Meals falls the day before Thanksgiving so Carolyn

will talk to Shawn regarding doing something at the monthly distribution in Askov, in place of November meals. The Christmas bazaar was brought up, Tracy will check with Carol to see what the quilters are planning.

Motion to adjourn was made by Tracy, 2nd by Carolyn, carried. The meeting adjourned with the Lord's Prayer.

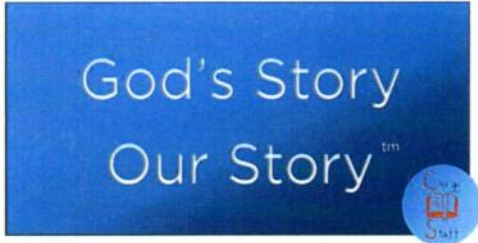
Our next meeting is Saturday, November 21st at 10:00 am.

*Respectfully submitted,
-Mary Johnson
Secretary*



Please be sure you're utilizing our church website for the latest information, updates, and worship resources:

<http://www.blcaskov.com>



God's Care for
the Widow

Sunday, November 1, 2020

Read: 1 Kings 17:1-16 [17-24]

Main Idea: Sometimes aid comes in the most unexpected places.

Elijah was a prophet to the northern kingdom (after the northern kingdom of Israel split from the southern kingdom of Judah). King Ahab and Queen Jezebel had brought priests and followers of the god, Baal into the kingdom and discouraged Israel from following God.

It was a dangerous time to be a prophet, as Jezebel and Ahab were vicious and ruthless. Often, when Elijah spoke God's words to the people, he found it necessary to flee from the reach of Jezebel or risk execution.

Following a prophecy of drought (as Baal was a god of thunder and lightning, predicting the cessation of rain also challenged the power of Baal), Elijah fled to Sidon, a land outside the realm of Jezebel. Throughout Elijah's ministry, he regularly complained to God that he was alone, destined to suffer in isolation. But God sent him to an unlikely ally—a poor widow. Despite her lack of resources, she shared what she had with Elijah, and through Elijah, God promised that the widow's resources would not run out until the day the rains returned (when her resources could be replenished naturally). For a long time Elijah, the widow, and her son survived on the manna God sent.

Elijah—one of the greatest prophets claimed by Judaism, Christianity, and Islam—couldn't survive without help. Even Elijah couldn't do it alone. For us, independence is revered as a great accomplishment. But it can come at a great cost. Independence can lead to isolation, and isolation to despair. Instead, God has created us to be interdependent on one another. We were made to be in community, to live and work alongside others, relying upon their gifts and sharing ours. Elijah's gift was prophecy. He didn't necessarily have the gift of hospitality. The widow's gift was hospitality, and she shared it even though she had little to offer. Consider how much more we could accomplish if we stopped trying to do it all by ourselves.

November 1, 2020

1 Kings 17:1-16 [17-24]

Pray: Light a candle. Open your devotion with prayer.

Steadfast God, you do not wish for us to struggle through this life on our own. May we accept the people and the signs you send our way to help us on the path you have set out for us, and may we trust in the mercy of your Holy Spirit. Amen.

Read: Read the key verse from Sunday's reading.

"For thus says the Lord the God of Israel: The jar of meal will not be emptied and the jug of oil will not fail until the day that the Lord sends rain on the earth." (1 Kings 17:14)

Reflect: Reflect on the scripture summary.

Elijah was a great prophet working to get God's fickle people to return to God. But he couldn't do it alone. God sent him to a poor widow whose gift of hospitality made all the difference.

Connect: Connect in conversation with others in your household.

What was a high point of your day? What was a low point?

God instructed Elijah to help a widow from a foreign country. Instead, the widow helped him. What can we learn from people who come from different countries? Tell of a time help came to you from an unexpected place.

What have you been refraining from doing because it's hard to trust God? What can you do to demonstrate trust in God this week?

For the littles: What is your favorite flavor of cake? A widow made cake for Elijah, and God made sure the widow never ran out of ingredients!

Bless: Close your devotion with a blessing.

May God provide for you from unexpected places. Amen.

Do: By acting on what we learn, we make God's word come alive. Do the following activity this week.

Plant some bulbs that will grow in the spring. Over the winter, pray for the healing of our planet. In the spring, as your bulbs sprout and blossom, celebrate the planet's resilience.

Go Deeper: Visit clergystuff.com/daily-devotions.

Monday: *Elijah Meets God*, 1 Kings 19:11-18, 2 Kings 9:30-37

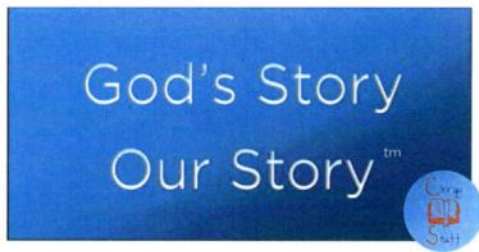
Tuesday: *Elijah Ascends to Heaven and Elisha Succeeds Elijah*, 2 Kings 2:1-18

Wednesday: *Elisha Heals Naaman*, 2 Kings 5:1-19

Thursday: *Amos Prophecies Against Israel*, Amos 5:18-24

Friday: *Hosea Prophecies Against Israel*, Hosea 2:1-13

Saturday: *Micah Prophecies to Both Kingdoms*, Micah 6:1-8



Sunday, November 8, 2020

Read: Jonah 1:1-17; 3:1-10 [4:1-11]

Main Idea: God's mercy gushed all over this story, even though Jonah was too wrapped up in himself to see it.

The parable of Jonah is a delightful tale of disobedience and obedience, sin and redemption, all wrapped in a cloak of secrecy, hiding, games of chance (casting lots), and sea creatures. It is vivid in its imagery and clear on its message. God called upon Jonah to travel to a land Jonah despised and proclaim God's impending punishment on them for their sin. Jonah, of course, refused and tried to run from God by boarding a ship in the opposite direction. Once discovered, Jonah was thrown overboard to save the uninvolved members of the crew. Jonah was tossed into the sea—the realm of the creatures of darkness. If he was trying to flee from God, there would be no further place on earth than the domain of the evil ones. But even there, God did not forget Jonah. God sent a sea creature to hold him there while he thought about what he had done. Once turned around, Jonah continued on to Nineveh, where he proclaimed the destruction God intended upon the city. Unlike many other hearers of God's impending doom, Nineveh actually listened. From the king to the common folk, all of Nineveh repented, and God changed God's mind about destroying them. This change of heart irritated Jonah, who hadn't wanted to go in the first place. All this upheaval, and God ultimately didn't do what God said God would do. The irony is that Jonah couldn't see that the repentance (turning around) of Nineveh was not so different from his own repentance in the belly of the sea creature. God had saved not only Jonah, but the sea merchants, and now Nineveh. God's mercy drooled all over this story, but Jonah was too wrapped up in his own misery to see it. If he had stopped looking inward and opened his eyes to what was going on around him, he might have seen how glorious and magnificent God's grace really was. How profound is the matter of perspective!

November 8, 2020

Jonah 1:1-17; 3:1-10 [4:1-11]

Pray: Light a candle. Open your devotion with prayer.

Gracious God, you show abundant mercy even when we cannot see the purpose of it. Give us your heart for compassion and love for all of your children, regardless of who or where they may be, in the name of Jesus. Amen.

Read: Read the key verse from Sunday's reading.

When God saw what they did, how they turned from their evil ways, God changed his mind about the calamity that he had said he would bring upon them; and he did not do it. (Jonah 3:10)

Reflect: Reflect on the scripture summary.

When God called on Jonah to proclaim destruction to his mortal enemies, Jonah tried to flee. But even in the deep, dark sea God found him and granted him a second chance. God went on to give a second chance to Nineveh, too. Everyone God encountered here was filled with the abundance of God's mercy.

Connect: Connect in conversation with others in your household.

What was a high point of your day? What was a low point?

Tell of a time you were so wrapped up in your own drama that you were unable to see God's grace in the world.

What does it mean that God desires to save all people in all nations? How can you be an agent of God's work throughout the world?

For the littles: How would you keep yourself busy if you were stuck in the belly of a sea monster for 3 days?

Bless: Close your devotion with a blessing.

May God's blessings pour out of you onto all the people of the world. Amen.

Do: By acting on what we learn, we make God's word come alive. Do the following activity this week.

Visit a local aquarium, farm, or zoo. Observe the animals. Consider what God sees in them that makes them valuable. Consider what God sees in you that makes you valuable.

Go Deeper: Visit clergystuff.com/daily-devotions.

Monday: *Zephaniah Prophesies Against the Kingdoms*, Zephaniah 1:14-18

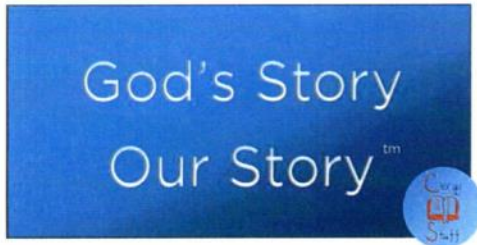
Tuesday: *Nahum Prophesies of God's Wrath*, Nahum 1:1-11

Wednesday: *Habakkuk Prophesies and Prays*, Habakkuk 3:1-19

Thursday: *God Calls Jeremiah*, Jeremiah 1:1-19

Friday: *Ezekiel Sees a Vision*, Ezekiel 1:1-28

Saturday: *The Valley of Dry Bones*, Ezekiel 37:1-14



November 15, 2020



God Calls Isaiah

Read: Isaiah 6:1-8

Main Idea: God cleansed Isaiah with the simple act of touching his lips with a hot coal so Isaiah would be purified enough to act as God's prophet. When we get out of our own way, we can do amazing things in God's name.

Visions from God were one of the ways God spoke to people at the time of Isaiah. Visions were common enough, that the lack of visions from God were concerning. Visions were similar to dreams, but they often (though not always) occurred during waking states. Some were in natural, and others in supernatural settings. Receivers of these visions were sometimes observers of the vision, and sometimes participants.

Isaiah at first observed this vision in quite a supernatural setting. [Seraphs](#) hover around the throne of God in an idealized version of what Solomon's temple was meant to be. There, God received praise from the seraphs, and also desired to send someone out to do God's work in the world. Here Isaiah moved from observer to participant, proclaiming his own unworthiness to follow God's calling. In quick response, the Seraphs performed the ritual of cleansing—touching a hot coal to Isaiah's lips—so that he would be worthy of the calling. After the cleansing, God asks and Isaiah answers, "Here am I; send me!"

Many of us have been called into God's service in very specific ways. Most of us have wondered if we are worthy of the callings. God's response to Isaiah was fairly simple: the touch of a hot coal absolved him of all his sin. Why then, do we make our own absolution so difficult? Why do we wallow in our guilt and recoil from facing our sin? If God can cleanse a man of a lifetime of sin to make him worthy of God's highest calling with the touch of a coal, then what might it take for us to become ready for our own callings? A taste of bread and wine, perhaps? Or a willingness to forgive ourselves? There is much work to be done. Could we get out of our own heads enough to accept God's cleansing and get on with God's work?

November 15, 2020

Isaiah 6:1-8

Pray: Light a candle. Open your devotion with prayer.

Merciful God, you can make us clean in an instant. Grant us courage to leave the mistakes of our past behind, and to answer your call with willingness, by the power of your Holy Spirit. Amen.

Read: Read the key verse from Sunday's reading.

Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?" And I said, "Here am I; send me!" (Isaiah 6:8)

Reflect: Reflect on the scripture summary.

Isaiah had a vivid and supernatural vision of God, where Seraphs hovered around the throne of God singing God's praises. In a simple act of touching Isaiah's lips with a hot coal, God purified him for the work of a prophet.

Connect: Connect in conversation with others in your household.

What was a high point of your day? What was a low point?
How do you get in your own way? What might God be able to accomplish in you if you were not operating out of fear or apathy? Are there prophets among us today? What prophetic message do you think God sends today?
For the littles: What do you think angels look like?

Bless: Close your devotion with a blessing.

May God call, purify, and send you. Amen.

Do: By acting on what we learn, we make God's word come alive. Do the following activity this week.

Watch your favorite TV or online news stories. Make a note of which voices speak prophetically. What are they saying? Do you agree? Why or why not?

Go Deeper: Visit clergystuff.com/daily-devotions.

Monday: *The Peaceful Kingdom*, Isaiah 11:1-10

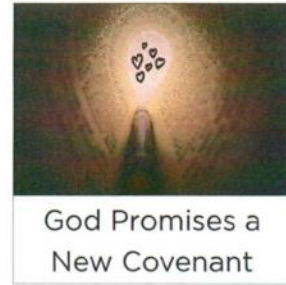
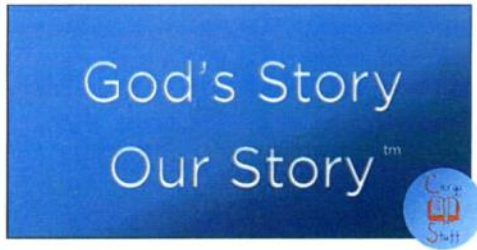
Tuesday: *Impending Judgment on the Earth*, Isaiah 24:1-23

Wednesday: *God's People Are Comforted*, Isaiah 40:1-31

Thursday: *A Hymn of Praise*, Isaiah 42:10-20

Friday: *The Suffering Servant*, Isaiah 52:13-53:12

Saturday: *A Promise of Abundant Life*, Isaiah 55:1-13



November 22, 2020

Read: Jeremiah 36:1-8, 21-23, 27-28; then 31:31-34

Main Idea: God's word has been written on our hearts. We are also charged with the task of letting God's word inform our decisions and our actions.

Jeremiah was a prophet for God during the time of the fall of Jerusalem and the destruction of Solomon's temple. The people had fallen so far from God, that even a brief repentance under the reign of Josiah didn't last beyond Josiah's death. The people had turned to the gods of neighboring countries, even sacrificing their children to these false gods.

But God was not ready to give up on the people. God sent Jeremiah to proclaim destruction if the people would not return to the fold. Through Jeremiah's scribe, Baruch, God sent word to King Jehoiakim, warning him to repent or be destroyed. As the scroll was being read, King Jehoiakim tore off pieces with his knife and burned them. Clearly, he had no regard for God or God's word.

God would not be deterred. God proclaimed to Jeremiah that God's word would one day be indestructible written not on a scroll, but on people's hearts. It would be inscribed within them so that their hearts would beat God's word, their lungs breathe it, and their lives live it. When this day would come, people wouldn't need to be reminded to pay attention to God's word. It would simply be part of who they are.

Christianity has become so prevalent a religion, that we might claim that we have reached that goal. We no longer need to be reminded of whose we are. God's word is written not only on the hearts of God's people, but into the fabric of modern society. Snippets of Bible verses have become so familiar, that even those not following God can quote them. The Golden Rule (Luke 6:31). "Love is patient, love is kind (1 Cor. 13:4a). "Start children off on the way they should go, and even when they are old they will not turn from it (Prov. 22:6). Adam and Eve sinning with the bite of a fruit (Genesis 3:6). Most people are at least familiar with these stories or images. Mission accomplished. But, is it enough to know them, or are we charged with the task of living them, too?

November 22, 2020
Jeremiah 36:1-8, 21-23, 27-28; then 31:31-34

Pray: Light a candle. Open your devotion with prayer.
God of wisdom, your word lives within us, within our very souls. Make us living scriptures by which the world can see your love clearly demonstrated and shared. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Read: Read the key verse from Sunday's reading.
The days are surely coming, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah. (Jeremiah 31:31)

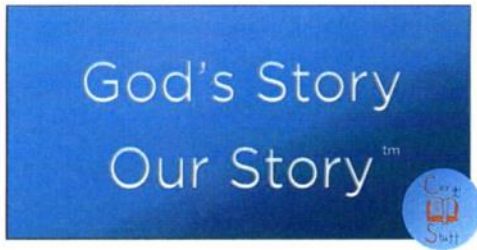
Reflect: Reflect on the scripture summary.
When God's people turned violently away from God, the prophet Jeremiah was sent to set them straight. Although the king refused to receive God's word in a scroll, God promised that one day God's word would be written on the hearts of all people.

Connect: Connect in conversation with others in your household.
What was a high point of your day? What was a low point?
What are your top 5 values? What do these say about what is written on your heart? Whose voice do you refuse to hear? Why? Would there be a benefit to listening? What might you learn?
For the littles: What are you most thankful for?

Bless: Close your devotion with a blessing.
May God write God's word on your heart. Amen.

Do: By acting on what we learn, we make God's word come alive. Do the following activity this week.
Make a vision board. Cut out pictures and words from magazines that appeal to you. (You don't need a reason—if you like it, cut it out.) Then use a glue stick to glue them to a large poster board. This board will represent the images and words that show how you desire to show up in the world.

Go Deeper: Visit clergystuff.com/daily-devotions.
Monday: *Israel Is Like an Unfaithful Spouse*, Jeremiah 3:1-5, 4:1-4
Tuesday: *Mourning for the People*, Jeremiah 8:18-9:3
Wednesday: *God Will Restore Israel*, Jeremiah 16:14-21
Thursday: *The Potter and the Clay*, Jeremiah 18:1-11
Friday: *Lamenting a Fallen City*, Lamentations 1:1-22
Saturday: *God Will Restore Israel and Judah*, Jeremiah 30:1-24



Daniel's Hope
in God

November 29, 2020

Read: Daniel 6:6-27

Main Idea: Daniel's loyalty to worshipping only God turned an entire kingdom toward God. Sometimes a small gesture can make a huge difference.

While the people of Israel were exiled for turning away from God, they managed to find ways to remain faithful to God and also make a living in the foreign lands where they've been exiled. Because of his ability to interpret dreams, Daniel became a trusted advisor to the Mede king, Darius, who had overthrown King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon (conqueror of Israel). King Darius took an instant liking to Daniel despite Daniel's station as an exile.

Others of Darius' advisors, however, were jealous of Daniel and sought to destroy him. They tricked Darius into signing a decree that no one could worship anyone except King Darius. Daniel, of course loyal to God, refused to bow to anyone but God. Captured for his lawlessness, Daniel was brought before King Darius, who was forced to sentence Daniel to death by lion.

God, however, had other plans. Once in the lion's den, God shut the mouths of the lions. Darius prayed all night for Daniel's safety, and in the morning Daniel was found in the den safe and sound. Darius immediately decreed that the entire kingdom would now worship Daniel's God, and the deceitful advisors and their families were executed by lions. Daniel had managed to turn an entire kingdom toward God by nothing more than his loyalty and devotion for God. A small (though dangerous) gesture turned the tide for scores of people.

We never know what our small gestures are capable of. Sometimes we make following God incredibly complex, when perhaps all God really needs from us is focused attention. Loyalty and devotion. Willingness to stand up for what we believe. Courage to follow in the face of opposition. Small gestures, perhaps, but with immense outcomes.

November 29, 2020

Daniel 6:6-27

Pray: Light a candle. Open your devotion with prayer.

Protective God, you guarded over your faithful servant Daniel when his life was threatened, because he refused to dishonor you. Show us the power that the smallest acts of faith may have to influence the world for good, by the help of your Holy Spirit. Amen.

Read: Read the key verse from Sunday's reading.

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. (Daniel 6:23b)

Reflect: Reflect on the scripture summary.

When jealous advisors tricked the king into outlawing worship of God, Daniel remained loyal to God. After surviving the sentence of execution by lion, Daniel's courage turned an entire kingdom toward God.

Connect: Connect in conversation with others in your household.

What was a high point of your day? What was a low point?

Tell of a time you felt like you were being thrown to the lions. What did you do to cultivate resilience?

How have you made a difference in your world? Who benefited from your actions?

For the littles: If you could, would you rather have for a pet a lion, a hippo, or a monkey?

Why?

Bless: Close your devotion with a blessing.

May God make big things out of your small actions. Amen.

Do: By acting on what we learn, we make God's word come alive. Do the following activity this week.

Download a mindfulness app to your smartphone. Every time the mindfulness bell goes off, stop what you are doing and pray. Remember how Daniel's small act of prayer changed an entire nation.

Go Deeper: Visit clergystuff.com/daily-devotions.

Monday: *Nebuchadnezzar's Dream*, Daniel 2:1-49

Tuesday: *The Fiery Furnace*, Daniel 3:1-30

Wednesday: *Belshazzar's Feast*, Daniel 5:1-30

Thursday: *Visions of Four Beasts*, Daniel 7:1-28

Friday: *Seventy Weeks*, Daniel 9:20-27

Saturday: *The Resurrection of the Dead*, Daniel 12:1-13
