

Daily Readings

In last week's sermon I referred six passages of scripture as a guide to spiritual growth. Five of these are listed below, with study questions to help you go deeper into the scripture. The sixth is I John 1. Read this passage as preparation for next week's sermon asking yourself the question, "Where is the light in my life?"

Monday, March 22 – Read James 3 — James deals with some very practical Christian advice here. First he deals with the power of our words. His message is clear — watch what you say. Words can not be taken back. Second, he deals with wisdom that is born of a gentle and peaceful spirit, **"full of mercy and good fruits."** How would you evaluate the words that come from your mouth? Are they words of peace or conflict? Go through your day as if Jesus were with you every second. How would this change the way you speak and treat others?

Tuesday, March 23 – Read Matthew 6 — This passage comes from the Sermon on the Mount by Jesus. Here Jesus refers to correct piety, prayer, selfish concern, full commitment to God and dealing with anxiety. Where are your treasures? How many masters do you serve? What is your attitude when you pray? Do you worry?

Wednesday, March 24 – Read I Corinthians 13 — This is one of the most well know chapters in Paul's letters and is often read at weddings. The subject is love. The chapter can not be fully understood without reading chapter 12, where Paul deals with the Corinthian's argument over spiritual gifts. He introduces this chapter with these words, **"I will show you a still more excellent way."** In other words, everything we do as followers of Christ is to be done in love. Nothing else matters. Read the passage again. Each time Paul uses the word love, insert your name and read the description. How does your life compare with this description?

Thursday, March 25 – Read John 15 — This chapter is part of a much larger discourse from Jesus. Here he uses the vine and branches as a metaphor of our spiritual dependence upon God's grace. In verse 12, Jesus reminds us to **"love one another as I have loved you."** Beginning at verse 18 he reminds us that we are not of this world, but of God's world. True affirmation comes from God and the counsel of the Holy Spirit, referred to here as the Advocate. Using the metaphor of the vine and the branches, are you connected to Christ or to something of this world? Where do you get your affirmation? God, through Jesus Christ, is willing to die for us out of love. For whom are you willing to die?

Friday, March 26 – Read Romans 8 — This is my favorite passage of scripture in the Bible. The entire chapter is one of hope, deliverance, promise and strength. I encourage you to simply read this passage out loud and let the words sink in. This is God's eternal promise to you.



STUDY GUIDE & DAILY READINGS

Sunday, March 21, 2010

Stained

Broken in Life (Week 1 of 3)

II Corinthians 4:7-11 *The Word from the Bible (New Living Translation)*

We now have this light shining in our hearts, but we ourselves are like fragile clay jars containing this great treasure This makes it clear that our great power is from God, not from ourselves.

We are pressed on every side by troubles, but we are not crushed. We are perplexed, but not driven to despair. We are hunted down, but never abandoned by God. We get knocked down, but we are not destroyed. Through suffering, our bodies continue to share in the death of Jesus so that the life of Jesus may also be seen in our bodies.

Yes, we live under constant danger of death because we serve Jesus, so that the life of Jesus will be evident in our dying bodies.

The Real Treasure

These are some of the greatest words of encouragement in the Bible. Even though our bodies are mortal, there is a spiritual part of us that can not be wasted or be taken from us. Paul knew the real treasure was Christ, and he was merely the vessel that carried it. There is no more beautiful description of the Christian life than **"we ourselves are like fragile clay jars containing this great treasure"** (v. 7).

It is still the custom in some places in the world to hide valuables such as money or jewels in an ordinary clay pot. After all, who would think anything of value would be hidden in an inexpensive clay pot?

The Invincible Life

Paul was encouraged because life had not thrown more at him than he could handle. When we read verses 7-10, we are likely to catch only the bad things that had happened to him and not notice the words **"pressed," "perplexed," "hunted down," "knocked down,"** and **"our bodies continue to**

share in the death of Jesus” (v. 10).

If Paul had told us all the bad things that had happened to him as a servant of the Lord, we would think he would be justified in being bitter, leaving the ministry or having a nervous breakdown. But we need to go back and pick up the other end of the sentence where he talked of being **“not crushed ... not driven to despair ... never abandoned ... not destroyed,”** and of the **“life of Jesus may also be seen in our bodes.”** If we read carefully what he has written, we hear the note of celebration — even though life had knocked him down, it had not knocked him out; he was still functioning.

As God’s people, we are a lot tougher than we sometimes think, and it’s encouraging for us to realize we can cope with a great deal with the strength that Christ gives. In the church, we have seen Christians deal realistically and triumphantly with calamity, sorrow, tragedy, illness, death and losses of every sort. We’ve stood by them during times of almost unbelievable stress with the assurance they would not be abandoned by Christ. And with time, and patience and encouragement from Christian friends, we’ve seen them bounce back with renewed faith and confidence.

II Corinthians 4:16-18

That is why we never give up. Though our bodies are dying, our spirits are being renewed every day. For our present troubles are small and won’t last very long. Yet they produce for us a glory that vastly outweighs them and will last forever! So we don’t look at the troubles we can see now; rather, we fix our gaze on things that cannot be seen. For the things we see now will soon be gone, but the things we cannot see will last forever.

Never Give Up

Paul continues with the words, **“That is why we never give up.”** Paul was encouraged by God’s ability to renew his spirit when circumstances got him down. Though he was confronted by both the aging process and the possibility of death, he could still write, **“Though our bodies are dying, our spirits are being renewed every day.”** (v. 16).

Paul’s strenuous and arduous schedule had taken its toll on his body and his spirit, but he said that through God’s Spirit, he daily experienced renewal. This helped him to face life and gave him hope even about death.

In the same way, God takes our broken pieces and creates a new image. It is a new existence that starts in this life and continues into eternity. When we get in touch with the Spirit of Christ, we become more beautiful than we can imagine. We are truly God’s creation.

Prayer Focus

Trietsch is a praying church. This morning, as you worship, one of our prayer volunteers is praying for everyone in each section of our worship center. We believe that prayer changes lives and hearts for good and for God.

We invite you to join these volunteers by praying for those persons around you. We believe these prayers will have an immediate impact on those for whom you are praying.

Remember... someone is praying for you. Have a great week!

As you worship today, meditate on this passage from Romans 8:31-39. There is no great strength than that which comes from God through Jesus Christ.

Romans 8:31-38

What, then, shall we say in response to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all—how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things? Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies. Who then can condemn? No one. Christ Jesus who died—more than that, who was raised to life—is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? As it is written:

***“For your sake we face death all day long;
we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered.”***

No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Have a great week!

Invite someone to worship this week.

You will be glad you did.

God is doing great things through the ministry of Trietsch.