

Daily Readings

Please note: As we continue our sermon series on prayer, this collection of Psalms are appropriate as thanksgiving and praise. One could be used as a prayer for Thanksgiving.

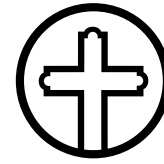
Monday, November 24 – Read Psalm 34. Verse 8 says, **“Taste and see that the Lord is good.”** Have you tasted the goodness of God’s spirit? What are you doing today to prepare your spirit to receive God’s presence? Have you taken God for granted?

Tuesday, November 25 – Read Psalm 107. **“O give thanks to the Lord, for he is good; for his steadfast love endures forever.”** (verse 1) Have you limited your perspective to the things of this world and this life? How can you look beyond this existence to the next? Is there someone you long to see? Can you give thanks for the one day opportunity to see this person again?

Wednesday, November 26 – Read Psalm 103. **“Bless the Lord, oh my soul; and all that is within me, bless his holy name.”** (verse 1) We often think of blessing and praise as something that comes from our lips or voice. How does your soul give blessing and praise to God? Can you remove all that is separating you from God? Can you remove it for five minutes – for one minute?

Thursday, November 27 – Read Psalm 89. **“I will sing of your love forever.”** (verse 1) This Thanksgiving before you begin your meal, invite someone to lead your family in the doxology. **“Praise God from whom all blessing flow. Praise Him all creature here below. Praise Him above ye heavenly host. Praise Father, Son and Holy Ghost. Praise Amen.”**

Friday, November 28 – Read Luke 17:12-16. Luke tells the story of Jesus healing ten individuals with leprosy. Only one of the ten returns to offer thanks to Jesus. How has God blessed you? Have you given thanks?



TRIETSCH

November 23, 2008
Study Guide & Daily Readings

Fuel Week 3 of 3 “High Octane”

Ephesians 2:10

For we are God’s masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so we can do the good things he planned for us long ago.

The Word from the Bible New Living Translation

Ephesians 2:10 – We are God’s Masterpiece

In Chapter 2 of Ephesians, Paul is clear that good works are not the basis of salvation. We are the masterpiece of God. The creation of humanity, the salvation of humanity and the sustaining of humanity come only through the purpose of and will of God. Our connection to the creative, saving and sustaining presence of God comes through faith. By faith, we are connected to God and to the person God created us to be. It is by this connection that we receive salvation and the calling to live out the good works for which God has made us.

One of the most basic and prevalent misunderstandings of the church is that we earn our name as a Christian. The average person thinks that a Christian is someone who goes to church, lives by the Golden Rule, does not gossip or engage in any destructive behavior. This assumption is hard to shake. Even after conversion, many Christians think far too much in terms of what they do (or don’t do).

The biblical witness focuses not on what we do, but on what God does. God has created, chosen, redeemed, called, forgiven, has changed and is changing, has regenerated and will raise all those who have been connected through faith in Jesus Christ. The final reason you cannot become a Christian by PERFORMING a work is that you ARE a work: you are God’s masterpiece! If you are a believer today, this shifting of the emphasis away from your own efforts and achievements should ironically do wonders for your self-esteem. The word translated “masterpiece” is the Greek *poiema*. It means handiwork, craftsmanship; in English it becomes the word “poem.”

A poem is the most carefully crafted kind of literature, into which goes every device and all the artistry of the author. After Jesus Christ himself, you as a member of Christ’s body are the fullest statement of God’s creative and redemptive heart that he ever plans to make. You are becoming a trophy of his mercy, a reflection of his glory, a showpiece of his grace. When he brings you to perfection at the return of Christ, the whole universe will look at you in order to understand God by what he has made. No work coming from you could ever be worthy of this; but those Christ works in and through you will be worthy by his grace.

Therefore, remember, as the masterpiece of God, you are of the highest importance and significance to God.

The spirit of God is waiting

God wants to fill us with the power of his spirit. Most individuals use only a fraction of the God-created potential that has been given. Especially in our culture of fear, suspicion and criticism, it is difficult to live out the life God has intended for us.

Filter out the negative

The first step in claiming the God-intended person we were created to be is to filter out all the negative messages we receive each day. Replace these messages and images with positive messages. In I Thessalonians 5:16-18, Paul instructs the reader to rejoice, pray and give thanks. This practice is intended to be a filter to remove the negative, destructive thoughts that can dominate our lives.

Regular Tune Ups

Neglect is one of the greatest enemies of the Christian life. We allow our spiritual, emotional and physical health to slip. This neglect impedes the flow of the God's spirit.

The Bible teaches us that the body, heart and spirit are related. Many of the laws focus on this interrelated health – taking care of the body, emotions and spirit. If we are truly going to live a high-octane life, we must keep our selves tuned for this presence.

One important note on aging and debilitating diseases: The question what happens to the spirit as the body wears out is addressed by Paul and other authors in the Bible. Paul teaches that as the body decreases the spirit increases to make up the difference. In other words, there is no human state that can keep us from God. When we take care to tune ourselves to the Holy Spirit, our lives grow stronger even as the body may grow weaker.

Receiving the God's Spirit

"You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you." (Acts 1:8)

The promise of God's spirit is sure. The question is whether or not we are ready to receive a full measure of the power of this spirit. The disciples were told to go to Jerusalem to pray and wait. At the right time when they were fully ready, the promise of Acts 1:8 was fulfilled.

A Thanksgiving Exercise in Blessings

This past Sunday, Mackenzie Arnold (a 3rd grader in our church) made the following suggestion to Dr. Allen as a family exercise on Thanksgiving.

"Put a basket or bowl out for your family to use to collect slips of paper. Ask each family member to write down five prayers of thanksgiving on a slip of paper. After each family member has completed their prayers and put them in the bowl or basket, then each family member selects one out of the bowl or basket to read. The family then tries to guess who wrote the prayer."

However you do it, take time this Thanksgiving to count your blessings. No matter how dire the circumstances, we all have reason to give thanks on Thanksgiving.

The First Thanksgiving (from biblestudyplanet.com)

The Pilgrims' daily existence was a life-or-death battle to overcome constant hunger, sickness, and exposure to the elements. Crudely assembled houses made of mud daub were their only shelter from the icy New England weather. Because they were not yet knowledgeable about their new environment's agriculture, planting gardens in the hostile conditions proved virtually fruitless. Every meal was portioned out meticulously. The death toll, a constant reminder of their fragility, rose steadily. At one point, only five men were well enough to care for the sick.

Despite their tribulations, the Pilgrims thanked the Lord every day, petitioning Him for rehabilitation. One morning, during an ordinary Sunday worship service, the Lord sent tangible evidence that He had heard their prayers. Their church service was interrupted by an unexpected guest, an Algonquin Indian chief who assessed their hopeless situation and returned with a helper named Squanto. The Pilgrims, who had warred with Indians before and lived with a continuous fear of being attacked by them, were astonished by their new friends' eagerness to provide much-needed assistance. Squanto, a Patuxet Indian who spoke perfect English, taught the Pilgrims how to hunt game, trap beavers, and plant Indian corn, a staple that would eventually save their lives.

When the harvest yielded more than the Pilgrims could eat, Governor William Bradford, their elected leader, declared a day of public thanksgiving. He invited the chief of a friendly neighboring Indian tribe to join in their tribute of Thanksgiving. The Pilgrims were excited to celebrate with their honored guest, but were completely shocked when he arrived with 90 other Indians. Although God had provided abundantly, their food supply would not accommodate a group of this size, and they had no idea how to feed their visitors. Despite their quandary, all worries were soon dismissed. To their amazement and ever-increasing thankfulness, the Indians had brought with them five dressed deer and a dozen fat, wild turkeys.

In 1623, a period of drought was answered by colonists with a proclamation of prayer and fasting. This prayer and fasting was changed to another thanksgiving celebration when rains came during the prayers. Later that year, Governor Bradford proclaimed November 29 as a time for pilgrims to gather and give thanks.

"Inasmuch as the great Father has given us this year an abundant harvest of Indian corn, wheat, peas, squashes and garden vegetables, and made the forest to abound with game and the sea with fish and clams, and inasmuch as he has protected us from the ravages of the savages, has spared us from the pestilence and granted us freedom to worship God according to the dictates of our own conscience.

Now I, your magistrate do proclaim that all ye Pilgrims, with your wives and ye little ones, do gather at ye meeting house, on ye hill, between the hours of nine and twelve in the daytime on Thursday, November ye 29th, of the year of our Lord one thousand six hundred and twenty-three, and the third year since ye Pilgrims landed on ye Plymouth Rock, there to listen to ye Pastor and render Thanksgiving to ye Almighty God for all his blessings."

- Governor Bradford November 29, 1623