

Saturday, October 8

Luke 8:16-25 *He replied, "My mother and brothers are those who hear God's word and put it into practice."* (v.21)

Today's passage seems to contain three disjointed events. Yet this verse ties it all together. In fact, it ties together all the verses chosen and commented upon this week.

Ancestry cannot give us privileges. Not even Jesus' disciples who were in constant proximity to him. Only those who believe the gospel become brothers and sisters in Christ and receive the privilege of his gracious mercy.

Life will throw you a curveball. Perhaps you already see it barreling toward you or have felt the hurtful whack that took your breath. Look beyond what you see and seek the one who is reaching out to grab you, correct your path, and comfort your soul. Let your true family embrace you and pray with you.

Those who do put their faith in practice have a special glow that shines through the darkest situation or the worst storm, figuratively or physically. However, we must put that into practice as an example for others. The Holy Spirit prompts us to share this wonderful peace that defies understanding. Let's welcome them into the family.

Micah 5:1-4, 10-15; Psalms 137, 144; Acts 25:13-27

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Sunday, October 2

Hosea 13:4-14 *Pains as of a woman in childbirth come to him, but he is a child without wisdom; when the time arrives, he doesn't have the sense to come out of the womb.* (v.13 NIV)

This verse is almost laughable. Until it hits home. Why is it that we hate change when life on this earth is defined by it? Seasons change, babies grow into toddlers, then adolescents and adults. Adults grow older, their joints wear out, their memories dull, and their hair whitens. Jobs are lost, households move, nature strikes. People fall out of love.

The only thing that doesn't change is God. He alone can offer a consistent peace in a temporal world of turmoil and pain. And yet, way too often, we cower amid our hurt and confusion in a fetal position, refusing to leave what is familiar. Then we wonder where He is.

Like the obstetrician, He is there, beckoning, coaching, and ready to catch us. Let us push out of the darkness into the light.

Psalm 118; 1 Corinthians 2:6-16; Matthew 14:1-12

Monday, October 3

Psalm 106:1-18 *But they soon forgot what he had done and did not wait for his plan to unfold.* (v.13)

If this verse makes you cringe a bit, as it does me, raise your hand.

Patience may be a virtue, but it doesn't seem to be an inherited trait. We must learn how to exercise it. Often that means putting our agenda aside in favor of someone else's. And who's agenda is better than our loving Lord's?

We want to usher God into our plans rather than wait on Him to unfold His. And yet we are the ones with nearsighted vision. He alone sees the future before it unfolds. He knows where the potholes are in the road lying around the bend.

The next time I begin to tap my foot or grind my teeth, precious Lord, help me recall the times I've learned that Your timing is always the best. Trusting in You is a lot less anxiety-producing. Teach me, again, that patience is the best reaction I can have to any situation. In Jesus's name, amen.

Hosea 14:1-9; Acts 22:30—23:11; Luke 6:39-49

Tuesday, October 4

Acts 23:12-24 *The commander dismissed the young man with this warning: “Don’t tell anyone that you have reported this to me.”* (v.22)

Paul, as a Roman citizen, knew his rights. When in danger, he knew the one person who could help him escape death. He trusted in that authority and power. He asked a relative to go and intercede for him since he was shackled and unable to go himself.

We should be no different. When life handcuffs us and imprisons us in a nasty situation, it’s okay to cry out for help. We know who has the power and authority to save us. Through baptism, we have the citizenship that gives us the right to approach His throne.

Even better, we can ask someone to join in prayer with us. Intercession is one of the most powerful forms of prayer. God bends an ear when we pray for each other.

Yet, many are too embarrassed or proud to ask for help. They don’t want people to know their plight, even though they probably have an idea anyway. There is wisdom in trust. Let’s swallow our pride and seek out a faithful friend to pray for us and with us.

Micah 1:1-9; Psalms 120, 121, 122, 123; Luke 7:1-17

Wednesday, October 5

Luke 7:18-35 *When the men came to Jesus, they said, “John the Baptist sent us to you to ask, ‘Are you the one who is to come, or should we expect someone else?’”* (v.20)

It seems strange that John would ask his followers to pose this question to Jesus. After all, John had said he must decrease so Jesus could increase (John 3:30) and that he didn’t have the right to even carry Jesus’ sandals (Matthew 3:11).

It is one of those real, raw passages of Scripture that can touch our hearts because, if we are honest, we have asked the same question at one time or another. Probably when in a dire situation as John was, imprisoned at Herod’s court. Often, we feel imprisoned, too.

There comes a time when everyone must ask the question, “Are you Lord? Should I follow you and trust you with my life?” Some will decide that they should and accept Christ as their Savior. Others will hang their head and back away. Maybe because he is not in their image. He is not molded to their definition.

Let us be like John’s followers and help them discover the real answer. Yes, he is the one.

Micah 2:1-13; Psalm 119:145-176; Acts 23:23-35

Thursday, October 6

Micah 3:1-8 *This is what the LORD says: “As for the prophets who lead my people astray, they proclaim ‘peace’ if they have something to eat, but prepare to wage war against anyone who refuses to feed them.”* (v.5)

No, I am not going to get political. However, Micah points out that we should have discernment when it comes to those who have selfish agendas and talk out of both sides of their mouths. If things are great for them, they’ll act as our friend, but when times get tough, they often get going.

God is the author of peace and lover of concord, yet He doesn’t white-wash things. There are times He must be the most loving of fathers and discipline His children. Many self-proclaimed pastors and inspirational speakers talk of God as love and yet downplay His might. They talk as if He is a celestial Santa Claus who will give us our wishes if we are good boys and girls.

Yet Micah calls for repentance and cleansing of sins. Those that do not confess when they slip may feel our Lord’s wrath. He still loves them, and us, but occasionally all need the reminder of who is in control and has the power and glory. Thy will be done, not ours.

Psalm 131, 132, 133; Acts:24:1-23; Luke 7:36-50

Friday, October 7

Psalm 140 *May burning coals fall on them; may they be thrown into the fire, into miry pits, never to rise.* (v.10)

Ouch. In other words, may they go to H-E-double-sticks. Not exactly a Christian, forgiving thing to say, is it? But we must understand, we read this from the other side of the cross. David knew of God’s mercy but not of His sacrifice for sins.

David realized what Micah preached yesterday: God is a loving but stern parent. Having been a shepherd, he knew that those who repeatedly ignore His commandments will feel the strike of His rod the way wayward sheep, intent to follow their own way, do. If spiritual taps on the back do not turn them around, He may use the staff with a hook on it to yank them back. If they continue to disobey, danger and death await them. Their carcasses must be burned.

Not everyone is heaven bound. However, our faith calls us to pray for our enemies, not condemn them. In treating them with mercy, we will be heaping burning coals on their heads (Romans 12:20)—a warning of what may be to come if they refuse to repent.

Micah 3:9—4:5, Psalm 142; Acts 24:24—25:12; Luke 8:1-15