

Friday – The Father Sent the Son to Die

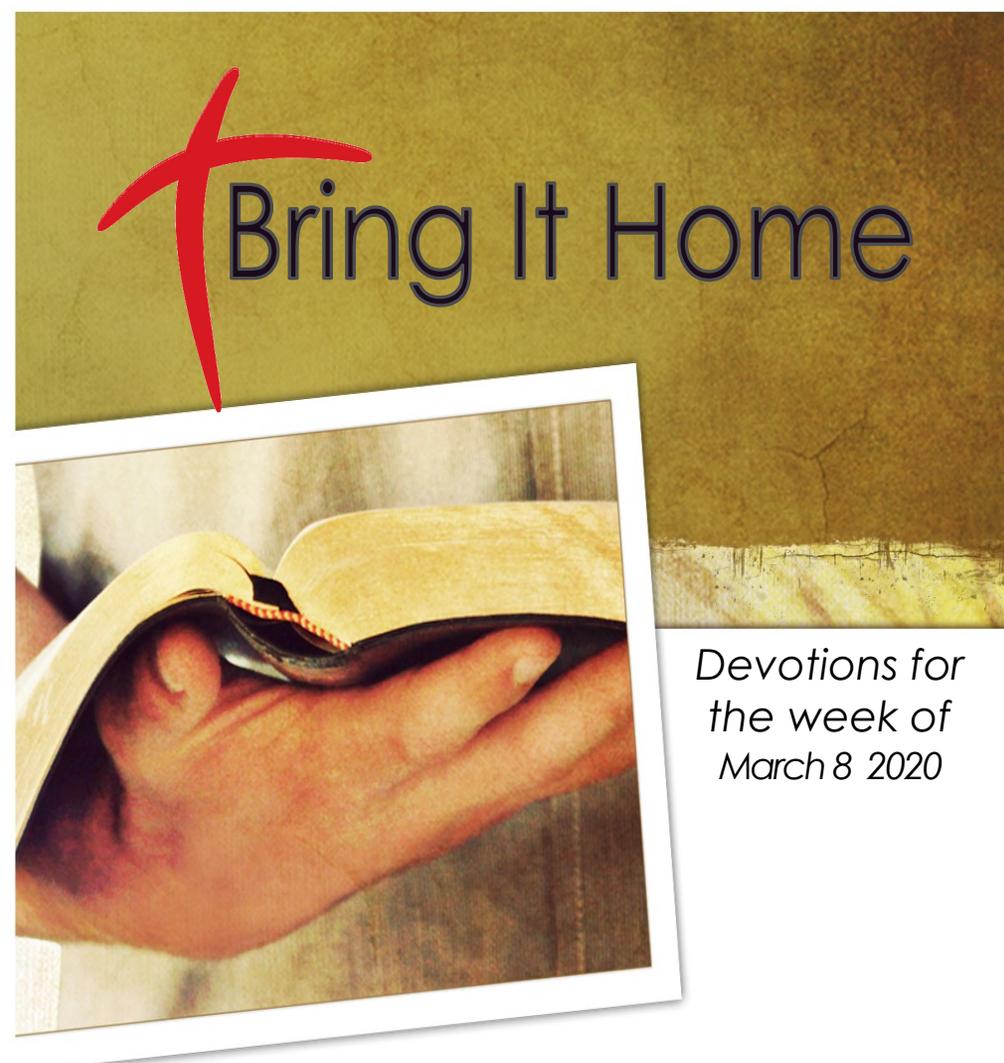
There is a haunting echo here. Remember the story of Abraham and Isaac at the mount of sacrifice? God challenges this father who almost did not have children at all with his wife Sarah. Then came this late-in-life gift of happy-go-lucky Isaac. His name means ‘laughing boy’ – as Sarah laughed at the ridiculous promise from the visiting strangers (see Genesis 18:1-15). Imagine the heart-pain when God commanded this father to sacrifice his son (see Genesis 22:1-18!). Can you see this as a hint toward the future? Something God the eternal Father intended to do ages later? John 3:16 reminds us that the Father “gave” his only Son. That is, to go to the cross as sacrifice for the sins of the world’s people. So great is the Father’s love for all his human creatures. (Read also John 10:17-18.) Now all “who believe in him shall not perish – that is, their life will not fail – but they will have eternal life.” Think of this today, that the life you live – and it’s driven by a heart of the Father’s kind of love, being worked over with love by the Creator Spirit – will live again after this mortal life. We will live with the risen Jesus! Let your mind dwell on this thought today.

Saturday – Condemned/Saved Eternally

This is even more important than the very familiar, “Gospel in a nutshell,” of John 3:16. You would do well to memorize John 3:17: God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world might be saved through him. Saved means everlasting life. It’s a good life now when we serve the Father by extending love to others in all our relationships. We have eternal life now, that is, we can look toward an endless future in bliss. With this kind of view to the times ahead, we can put up with the troubles that abound. We can endure other people’s bad treatment of us, when it happens. We can endure it with patience, hope, and above all, with the Father-kind of love. We will hold ourselves back, like Jesus, from condemning other people for their behavior. We will restrain ourselves from complaining how awful this world is getting to be. We will work for the common good. What challenges do you face these days that wear on you? Are you losing patience over something? Are you suffering hurt from someone? Think of Jesus’ love and the Father’s will to save people. See what you can do....

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This week’s *Bring it Home* devotions were written by Pastor Al Schroeder



*Devotions for
the week of
March 8 2020*

What Now?

Throughout this coming week, if you’ve been baptized (at whatever age), rejoice and give thanks to God for this amazing gift He’s given you. Look for opportunities to daily remember your baptism, dying to yourself and letting this new, born-again life, be the life you grow in and experience more and more each day.

If you have not ever been baptized but would like to find out more about it, get in touch with me and we’ll talk!

Monday – Two Teachers Jostle

We've been given a life to live. Forever. This is what Nicodemus found, to his surprise. We heard in Sunday's Gospel (John 3:1-18 – take a moment to read this for yourself) that this man came to Jesus in the dark of night. Jesus engaged with Nicodemus so that he might believe and be saved, that is, have eternal life. Nicodemus was a “ruler of the Jews.” He was in fact a member of the ruling council in Jerusalem, that is, the Sanhedrin. He was therefore a man of high recognition and esteem among the people. He had a reputation to uphold. Should he be seen meeting in the open with this rabble rouser Jesus? This would become a fascinating exchange. He greeted Jesus as “Rabbi” – then a title of high respect – and a “teacher come from God.” If there were warm, friendly, and respectful exchanges, the evangelist does not report it. This story is brief, right to the point. Nicodemus was there for a serious discussion, and he got it. “Amen, amen I say to you (“I solemnly assure you”), unless one is born again, one cannot see the kingdom of God.” Nicodemus had come to discuss learned teaching with Jesus, whom obviously he respected. They are on! In typical fashion, Nicodemus comes back with, “Whoa there! How can a person get born again when he is grown up? Surely it's not possible to get back into mother's womb, come out and start all over again!” This is how learned teachers dialogued over doctrine. Jesus' move: “Amen, amen I say to you (“I solemnly assure you”), unless someone is begotten of water and Spirit, one cannot enter the kingdom of God.” Born again? The Greek word for again also means, “from above.” You know what that means. Just think of the blessing of your Baptism and the life you get to live with Jesus as a Christian! And the Spirit is given to coach you in your days. Ponder this today.

Tuesday – Flesh and Spirit

Please read John 3:6-7. Jesus sets up flesh and spirit against each other as he and Nicodemus go at it. Here “flesh” brings thoughts of weakness, of the motives and cravings of human nature. Spirit comes “from above,” and of course also brings something new, a second start, beginning “again,” or “anew” for a life that will not be solely self-centered and merely ambitious. Or not. Spirit from above forms a relationship with the Father. This brings one into a place where one learns something of the Father's mind and will. “God is love!,” we learn. God loves “the world!” Not just Israel, the chosen people, but the nations of the world. So then, if we have come to know the love of the Father, then his kind of love is stirring also in us. Now we begin to look at others from a heart of love. This new attitude opposes our natural – and today – our culture-inspired self-seeking and concerns. Life is not just all about me! Jesus saves us

from that, for a life of caring! How might you turn your attention on someone else, let's say, to care for that one? Who needs your care and attention today?

Wednesday – Spirit/Wind?

Read John 3:5-8. Jesus again jostles with Nicodemus over word meanings. The same Greek word *pneuma* means both wind and also spirit, and the Holy Spirit. This word gets us wind power = pneumatic and breathing, as in the illness of pneumonia. You will remember that at Pentecost the Lord brought the “sound of a great rushing wind” to symbolize the coming of the Spirit down on the gathered worshipers. Have you thought of Genesis 1? There the wind/Spirit of God moved mightily over the mass to bring new order and new life. Now the waters of our Baptism and the gift of the Spirit through the words that teach us, create and bring us new life. This would not have been possible for our sinful self to achieve. It's a gift! A grand and wonderful gift! Why not ponder the meaning of your Baptism today and the next days of this season of Lent? How does this give special meaning to your life?

Thursday – God the Father Loves the World!

Read (or recite from memory!) John 3:16. You may have noticed something new here. God loves, not just Israel, not just the heirs of Abraham, and not just the Christians either. Here we learn that God loves his whole world. It is his garden, and he tends it! Don't miss this! We tend to get really down about how the world is changing and getting worse in many ways. But God loves his world! And so can we, as we keep close in prayer and study and meditation with our Lord and with our Father. Do you remember that God told Abraham that all nations would secure blessing through his descendants (Genesis 12)? The Spirit draws us through the Sacrament of Holy Baptism into the family of God's people. Through us God enacts his love for the world in which we live, move, and have our being. I need to check today – how have I acted in love for someone and done that person some good? Also, how have I failed an opportunity to do a good work for someone? Did I not care? Did I not like that person? Was I angry? Is someone angry with me? In the church's season of Lent, we check ourselves and repent of sin as we see we must. Be assured, the sacrifice of Jesus for all the world's sin brings forgiveness and grace to you and me. Then we commit to a new attitude. We try viewing other people with a Father-kind of love for all. Ponder this!