

The Weekly Word
October 24-30, 2016

Another month... where does time go? Happy reading and may God's Word bless you...
Grace and Peace, Bill

To hear the Bible read click this link... <http://www.biblegateway.com/resources/audio/>.

Monday, October 24: Psalm 132- Do you believe in Jesus?...

The word 'covenant' filled my thoughts as I read this Psalm. Yes, the word appears in verse 12, but its concept is woven throughout. God is faithful to the Word He spoke to David.

God is faithful to the Word He has spoken, period.

God's Word is sure. It is a foundation upon which one can stake her or his life. The Lord is a God of covenant, promise, oath...

As pilgrims marched toward Zion, Jerusalem, they sang of God's faithfulness. As I live today I will sing of God's faithfulness. God has been there all my days. God was there in the past, God is present in my today and I know God will be there in the days to come

The LORD swore an oath to David, a sure oath he will not revoke: "One of your own descendants I will place on your throne. If your sons keep my covenant and the statutes I teach them, then their sons will sit on your throne for ever and ever" (11-12).

The Lord has sworn to us that all who believe in Jesus will be saved (Acts 16:31, Romans 10:9). I believe. Do you believe?

Lord, give me strategies to spread Your name and Your fame throughout all the earth, so that every tribe and nation and tongue will know You.

As the ancient temple stood as a beacon of hope pointing to the one true God, may Your church today stand tall and true to You declaring You the one true God. Father, Jesus, Holy Spirit to You and for Your glory I pray. Amen.

Tuesday, October 25: Psalm 133- Unity in God's family...

How precious is unity to the Lord? It is a pretty big deal if I read Psalm 133 correctly.

How good and pleasant it is when God's people live together in unity! It is like precious oil poured on the head, running down on the beard, running down on Aaron's beard, down on the collar of his robe. It is as if the dew of Hermon were falling on Mount Zion. For there the LORD bestows his blessing, even life forevermore (Ps 133).

Now I admit that the image of oil running down the head to the beard isn't exactly appealing to me. My immediate reaction is 'Yuck, what a mess!' But then I work to step into the word picture, it comes alive. Oil anointed Aaron when he became priest of Israel, so this is a sacred moment being described. The oil is a sign of God's anointing so gobs of oil signals gobs of anointing. Putting these together pictures the overabundance of God's anointing on Aaron, the priest of God among the people of God. And that is precious and wonderful.

I sit early in the morning. It has been a dry week and yet the grass is thick and wet with early morning dew. Morning dew on the ground is another precious sight. Grass frons lap it up. Small animals ingest life giving water as they scurry and taste and forage. Dew is a beautiful thing and in dryer climates it sustains life. Dew truly is a blessing bestowed from the Lord.

How important is unity? It is a precious to the Lord as abundant anointing upon the priest. It is as precious to the Lord as dew is to life...

Now my meditations push me to consider unity in God's family... denominationally divided, how do we exude unity?

Core beliefs... Israel had 12 tribes and yet the core beliefs are what kept them one (at least during the best of times).

The Lord God as singularly worshiped... there is no other God but the Lord revealed in the NT as Father, Jesus, Holy Spirit. Certainly this is a core belief so it could be implicitly included above but it is essential so it stands alone for me.

Celebrations... this causes me to appreciate in a deeper way Christmas, Easter, and Good Friday. On those days, like the great pilgrim feasts of Israel, God's world wide body of Christ stands together and proclaims our core truths.

Unity... it is a big deal to the Lord. How am I enhancing unity? How are you???

Lord, I believe in the holy catholic universal church and the common-union of saints. I believe, no matter our human differences we are one in Your sight. Help me, Jesus, to take these beliefs and make them a practical reality of how I live. I pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.

Wednesday, October 26: Psalm 134- loved, protected and cared for...

Praise the LORD, all you servants of the LORD who minister by night in the house of the LORD. Lift up your hands in the sanctuary and praise the LORD. May the LORD bless you from Zion, he who is the Maker of heaven and earth (Ps 134)

This simple Psalm reminds me that some days is it best to just praise the Lord. No litany of needs. No list of intercessions... just praise, adoration and love for the Lord.

Sometimes what the heart and soul need is to sit in the Lord's lap and bask in His glory... words are optional and when I do speak it is of His wonder, His grace, His mercy, His loving-kindness.

Sometimes what a child needs is to crawl up into mommy or daddy's lap and simply be present with them... feel safe... feel the rhythm of mom or dad's heartbeat and be in their embrace.

That's what this Psalm invites me and you to do.

Will you join me?

Praise You, LORD. I come to be with You... You who made the heavens and the earth. You who invite me into Your presence. Praise You, LORD.

Thursday, October 27: Psalm 135- I know...

As the Psalm moves from its opening into its substance, verse 5 offers the pivotal thought, *I know that the LORD is great, that our Lord is greater than all gods.*

I know... those words leapt up and shouted, "consider me."

For the Psalmist and for Israel, faith was so much more than simply following some rules and regulations that had been handed down over time.

Faith in the Lord was a deep knowing and a cognitive knowing... here are things the Lord has done. The Lord is not simple, some 'idea' that humanity cooked up to guide them through dark days. The Lord is real. He acted in our world. He does what pleases Him (6) because He made the world. He acts on behalf of His people, saving Israel out of Egypt.

Far more than some carving or statue, the Lord is the God over heaven and earth.

And so Israel praises the Lord and we, who follow the Lord –Father, Jesus, Holy Spirit– today, follow a God who acts in history and acts on behalf of His people.

We praise God for who He is and what He has done and does today.
Praise you, Lord. Praise You, Lord God Almighty. Amen.

Friday, October 28: Psalm 136- His love endures forever...

As I read this Psalm, I hear in my mind's ear a cantor or reader loudly projecting each line and an assembly of people echoing back, *His love endures forever!*

I place myself in the crowd and feel my love, appreciation and faith for God elevating with each echoing refrain. Look at all God has done... "Yes, *His love endures forever.*"

This Psalm, this cry of God's people, brought me back to a similar devotional place like yesterday... we praise God, and rightly so. We praise God for who He is and for what He has done and will most certainly continue to do.

In times of trouble and heartache this Psalm infuses life and love for God, Who has acted in the past and will act again in the future. During times of joy and gladness this Psalm could be a resounding crescendo during a service of praise. It would act like an exclamation mark! Yes, Yes! *His love endures forever!*

I cannot help but feel my gratitude for the Lord increasing as the refrain of this Psalm pounds in my heart... *His love endures forever.*

A wonderful facet of this Psalm is that it need not end with the lines recounted here. Each of us could write our own lines recalling what God has done for us, for the people we know, in history... continuing from Jesus till today. And we can do this because *His love endures forever* and God has never stopped acting on behalf of His people.

Alleluia, His love endures forever.

O God, You are the GREAT GOD... *Your love endures forever.*

You sent Jesus into the world... *Your love endures forever*

He taught us about You, healed the sick and raised the dead... *Your love endures forever*

He died for the sinful... *Your love endures forever*

He forgives all who believe in Him... *Your love endures forever*

He rose on the third day defeating death... *Your love endures forever*

You sent the Holy Spirit... *Your love endures forever*

To be You living presence in all who believe... *Your love endures forever*

To empower us to be Your witnesses... *Your love endures forever*

You sent us to the ends of the earth... *Your love endures forever*

Your Gospel to tell, disciples to make... *Your love endures forever*

Praise be to You, Father, Son and Holy Spirit... *Your love endures forever*

Saturday, October 29: Psalm 137- ...

Life is full of challenges. One is how to pray when you are in pain. Another is how to pray when you have been hurt, betrayed and/or abused.

Israel is in exile because of her sin. God is punishing them. People are mocking them.

Israel had a 'land' theology; so to be separated from the land is to be separated from the Lord.

In their pain they remember how the Edomites did them wrong as their beloved Jerusalem was being leveled.

During the days described above today's Psalm was written. It is a lament of the heart. It is not the last word on prayer, but maybe a first word. It is filled with pain and a desire for retribution... ugly retribution against Babylon and even her children.

I have felt that way. There are times when I just wanted God to 'get them.' I have been deeply wounded and wanted the other person to pay. I wanted to get even, or get ahead, to inflict more than I received.

Honesty compels me to admit I have had thoughts like those in this Psalm.

One difference, I harbored my thoughts, I kept them in. I never verbalized them to myself much less to the Lord. The Psalmist gets them out and expresses them to the Lord. Neither of us acted... everything occurred in our thought life.

But with the Psalmist, praying his heart gave God the green light to bring change. Hearing the words of the Psalmist, realizing how honest he was with the Lord, gives me courage to voice my true concerns along with my 'junk'. This allows the Lord to work in my situation which likely means He will change me!

My hope would be not to stay with this prayer... but to be changed until I could pray as Jesus prayed, "Father forgive them for the do not know what they are doing..." (Luke 23:34).

Oh, God, teach me to be honest with myself so that I can be honest with You and open doors for the work of Your Holy Spirit to come and change me to be more like Jesus. I pray in His name. Amen.

Sunday, October 30, 2016, Sunday Worship

If any of my thoughts or the Bible readings spark questions send an email reply and I will do my best to answer all questions from people on the list... I will answer personal questions privately; general questions will be answered in a subsequent email installment.

If you are reading along with me from the PCOG website you can send questions or request being placed on the weekly email list by emailing Lisa at office@pcogonline.org.

Click here for a link to my sermons on the web. Sermons are generally posted within 2 days.