

## **Devotions for the 12<sup>th</sup> Week after Pentecost, September 1 - 5, 2025**

### **Monday of Pentecost 12 – Prayer of the Week**

O Lord of grace and mercy, teach us by Your Holy Spirit to follow the example of Your Son in true humility, that we may withstand the temptations of the devil and with pure hearts and minds avoid ungodly pride; through the same Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Not long after we had arrived at my second parish in southern Oregon, a member of the congregation offered us the use of his canoe. We happily set off for a few days of camping and canoeing at a large lake in the mountains east of town. Soon after we arrived, we were down at the water's edge with our life jackets on and paddles in hand. The canoe was large. I had spent some time in canoes as a child and my parents had a little lake on their property with a small boat and a canoe, so I knew what was involved. I took the rear seat, my six-year-old son took the front spot and my wife and two-year-old daughter sat in the middle. We had a wonderful time. My son was a very good rower, and the lake was calm.

We returned to the dock, and everyone got out except me. My plan was to propel the boat toward the sandy shore where we could pull it out of the water. But when the canoe suddenly was lightened, it tipped to the right, I over-corrected to the left, and, before I knew it, I had flipped the silly thing over in four feet of water. Soaked and to the uncontrollable laughter of my wife and children, I sheepishly pulled it up onto the shore. The great canoeist had come down a few notches.

We pray that God teaches us to follow Jesus in true humility. It is not much fun to learn humility. I thought I was the expert. I was not. It is good to follow Jesus' example of humility. He was never too high to help the low, never too pure to forgive the wicked, and never too busy to stop and heal a leper, blind person, or the lame. Sometimes we all might need a good dunking to remind us of that.

Of course, lessons in humility are ongoing. That evening, after I had dried off and we had gone for walk and eaten something, we trooped back down the lake. There was a little teasing about whether dad would get wet again. I was just pushing the canoe into the water when the door to a nearby camper burst open. An old codger came busting out to talk to me. "Hey, are you gonna flip that canoe again? If so, I'm getting' my video camera, that was the funniest thing I have ever seen." Don't worry. God has many ways of teaching us humility.

### **Tuesday of Pentecost 12 – Proverbs 25:2-10**

<sup>2</sup> It is the glory of God to conceal things,  
but the glory of kings is to search things out.

<sup>3</sup> As the heavens for height, and the earth for depth,  
so the heart of kings is unsearchable.

<sup>4</sup> Take away the dross from the silver,  
and the smith has material for a vessel;  
<sup>5</sup> take away the wicked from the presence of the king,  
and his throne will be established in righteousness.  
<sup>6</sup> Do not put yourself forward in the king's presence  
or stand in the place of the great,  
<sup>7</sup> for it is better to be told, "Come up here,"  
than to be put lower in the presence of a noble.

What your eyes have seen  
<sup>8</sup> do not hastily bring into court,  
for what will you do in the end,  
when your neighbor puts you to shame?  
<sup>9</sup> Argue your case with your neighbor himself,  
and do not reveal another's secret,  
<sup>10</sup> lest he who hears you bring shame upon you,  
and your ill repute have no end.

One of David's mottos, according to his son, was "Never pass up an opportunity to say nothing." We gathered for David's memorial service today. It was a beautiful day filled with tears and laughter, memories and promises of God. The church was full of friends and family who had come to comfort one another and thank God for his grace and a life well-lived. This motto was one of the things we remembered. David lived the motto in my experience. He was not the sort of fellow who jumped into the conversation right off the bat. But when he did chime in, it was a good idea to listen.

The Proverbialist is dishing out good advice today, including the motto by which David lived. I am particularly struck by the aphorism which makes up verses 4 and 5 and wish I could choose some of the advisors to those in power. It would be good to take away the wicked from the presence of those who make the decisions. I think anyone who lives in a democracy needs to ask how we can contribute to that goal. The whole point of a democracy is that we should have some say in this.

But first you and I need to hear the exhortation to humility which is given to all in these words. In an age of social media, when hardly anyone has an untweeted, unposted, or unuttered thought, we do well to remember that motto of David's. Don't pass up an opportunity to be silent. Try it. Take a social media fast, hold the gossip, enjoy the silence.

### **Wednesday of Pentecost 12 – Psalm 131**

<sup>1</sup> O LORD, my heart is not lifted up;  
my eyes are not raised too high;  
I do not occupy myself with things

too great and too marvelous for me.  
<sup>2</sup> But I have calmed and quieted my soul,  
like a weaned child with its mother;  
like a weaned child is my soul within me.

<sup>3</sup> O Israel, hope in the LORD  
from this time forth and forevermore.

Some time ago I happened to be at a gathering of adults. We imagined that we were talking about important things. Perhaps we were. I honestly don't remember what we were talking about so it must not have been quite so momentous. But I do remember one thing of that event. The daughter of one of the participants was dropped off and she spent the time with us as well. I would have put her at about 3 years old. It was not a space conducive to a child's play. She sat on his lap, leaned her head against his chest and quietly looked at a book for a while. Then she slept. I can close my eyes and still conjure up that beautiful image of that child sleeping in the arms of her father.

The psalmist says that he has calmed and quieted his soul, like a weaned child with his mother. I read those lines and I think of that little girl, quietly sitting on her father's lap. The psalmist does not lift his eyes too high or occupy himself with things too great and marvelous for him. He is content with what is his. And what is his? It is lofty in its own way. He hopes in the Lord and encourages us to join him in that trust, now and forevermore.

How many restless nights have I spent tossing and turning, worrying about things which belong to God's care? Luther recommends that we take all our troubles, lay them at God's feet in prayer, and go to sleep. He will take care of them to our blessing. He promises as much. Are you worried about things which you cannot control, or which are not yours? It is a hard habit to break and sometimes such anxieties can overwhelm anyone. The psalmist urges us to take stock of our status in the greater scheme of things. Much of what gives us ulcers in fact belongs to God to solve. Hope in the Lord. Do not occupy yourself with matters too great and marvelous for you. Know that God loves you. Rest in his arms like a weaned child in the arms of his mother.

#### **Thursday of Pentecost 12 – Hebrews 13:1-17**

<sup>1</sup> Let brotherly love continue. <sup>2</sup> Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels unawares. <sup>3</sup> Remember those who are in prison, as though in prison with them, and those who are mistreated, since you also are in the body. <sup>4</sup> Let marriage be held in honor among all, and let the marriage bed be undefiled, for God will judge the sexually immoral and adulterous. <sup>5</sup> Keep your life free from love of money, and be content with what you have, for he has said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you."

<sup>6</sup> So we can confidently say,  
"The Lord is my helper;  
I will not fear;  
what can man do to me?"

<sup>7</sup> Remember your leaders, those who spoke to you the word of God. Consider the outcome of their way of life, and imitate their faith. <sup>8</sup> Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever. <sup>9</sup> Do not be led away by diverse and strange teachings, for it is good for the heart to be strengthened by grace, not by foods, which have not benefited those devoted to them. <sup>10</sup> We have an altar from which those who serve the tent have no right to eat. <sup>11</sup> For the bodies of those animals whose blood is brought into the holy places by the high priest as a sacrifice for sin are burned outside the camp. <sup>12</sup> So Jesus also suffered outside the gate in order to sanctify the people through his own blood. <sup>13</sup> Therefore let us go to him outside the camp and bear the reproach he endured. <sup>14</sup> For here we have no lasting city, but we seek the city that is to come. <sup>15</sup> Through him then let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that acknowledge his name. <sup>16</sup> Do not neglect to do good and to share what you have, for such sacrifices are pleasing to God.

<sup>17</sup> Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls, as those who will have to give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with groaning, for that would be of no advantage to you.

I don't remember quite how old I was, but I must have been about 8 years old. My father had a decrepit VW beetle which he loved to drive but under which he spent as much time as in it just to keep the car running. It was forever breaking down. For reasons which I have never known, my mother named it Tilly. One day, we were driving through a small town in Nebraska, I think, and suddenly Tilly just stopped. Some small but vital component was not working. We were used to the drill. We piled out the car. My father ascertained what had broken this time and soon was off in search of a parts store or a mechanic to exact a repair. Meanwhile, we sought shade from the brutal summer sun.

We found a bit of shade not far from the car, in front of a modest home. We sat and waited, but soon the front door of the house opened, and an elderly woman came out, carefully balancing a tray, filled with glasses and a pitcher of lemonade. She had seen us and taken pity upon us. Bringing us something to make our wait a little less odious.

The writer to the Hebrews encourages us to show hospitality. He even offers up that some who have done so have entertained angels without knowing it. I can still see her wrinkled face and the smile she had for us as she shared that lemonade with us. She sat on a chair and talked to us for a while that afternoon. Soon my father had the car running and we were on our way, at least for a while. She did not entertain angels that day, but sometimes I wonder if she wasn't one.

We live in a day when such acts of hospitality are more difficult. The man or woman beside the road in my city may well be struggling with an addiction or worse. I want to help them, but a few dollars will probably only buy them another hit of heroin or methamphetamine. My act of charity may in fact be harming them. Christians have a call to help the vulnerable and needy. Jesus Himself did so and He lives in us today. But we need His Spirit to guide and help us. Pray that we can do good and share what we have (vs. 16) in such a way that we please God.

## Friday of Pentecost 12 – Luke 14:1-14

<sup>1</sup> One Sabbath, when he went to dine at the house of a ruler of the Pharisees, they were watching him carefully. <sup>2</sup> And behold, there was a man before him who had dropsy. <sup>3</sup> And Jesus responded to the lawyers and Pharisees, saying, “Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath, or not?” <sup>4</sup> But they remained silent. Then he took him and healed him and sent him away. <sup>5</sup> And he said to them, “Which of you, having a son or an ox that has fallen into a well on a Sabbath day, will not immediately pull him out?” <sup>6</sup> And they could not reply to these things.

<sup>7</sup> Now he told a parable to those who were invited, when he noticed how they chose the places of honor, saying to them, <sup>8</sup> “When you are invited by someone to a wedding feast, do not sit down in a place of honor, lest someone more distinguished than you be invited by him, <sup>9</sup> and he who invited you both will come and say to you, ‘Give your place to this person,’ and then you will begin with shame to take the lowest place. <sup>10</sup> But when you are invited, go and sit in the lowest place, so that when your host comes he may say to you, ‘Friend, move up higher.’ Then you will be honored in the presence of all who sit at table with you. <sup>11</sup> For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.”

<sup>12</sup> He said also to the man who had invited him, “When you give a dinner or a banquet, do not invite your friends or your brothers or your relatives or rich neighbors, lest they also invite you in return and you be repaid. <sup>13</sup> But when you give a feast, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, <sup>14</sup> and you will be blessed, because they cannot repay you. For you will be repaid at the resurrection of the just.”

The people of ancient Rome had some odd customs when it came to honoring their dead relatives. In wealthier strata of society, the family of a deceased person would have an annual memorial meal to honor a deceased person, often in proximity to the place where the deceased's ashes had been interred. In fact, usually a person who died allocated money to pay for the meal. It wasn't long before the Christians latched onto this practice. You might have grown up attending a church with a cemetery around it. You have surely driven past such a church at some point. In the oldest churches of Christendom, it appears that the cemetery was there first. Christians started building churches to house the eucharistic gatherings which were taking place in the cemeteries, usually at the tomb of some heroic martyr or other notable Christian.

Had you been alive in Rome in the late 4<sup>th</sup> century or early fifth, you might have even been able to attend a particular mingling of this practice and the words which Jesus speaks here. Toward the end of the century a very wealthy man left a detailed set of instructions in his will. Outside his large tomb there was to be a long stone table. Every day a meal was to be prepared and 100 poor people from the city of Rome were to be given a meal to eat at that table. He saw this as a way to listen to and heed Jesus' words in the final paragraph of this text. His motivation was

simply that he wanted to be repaid at the resurrection of the just. He did not want his family to gather, he wanted to feed the poor, those who could not repay him.

I don't know how long the funds for the free feast outside the grave of the wealthy man in Rome lasted. I imagine that Alaric's invasion and sacking of Rome in 410 might have put an end to it. I do know that Jesus' words have continued to have a profound impact on the attitude of his followers to the impoverished and needy people of our communities. The Pharisees put a man with a visible disease across from Jesus, using a human being as a trap of sorts, hoping either to ensnare Jesus or that he would fail to help the poor man, who was suffering from what we would call edema today. Jesus sees the man, a needy man, helps and quickly gets him away from there. He then calls on us to have a care for others and not for ourselves first. Wouldn't the world be a much better place if everyone did that?