

## **Devotions for the week of the Seventeenth Sunday after Pentecost, October 6-10, 2025**

### **Monday of Pentecost 17 – Prayer of the Week**

O God, our refuge and strength, the author of all godliness, by Your grace hear the prayers of Your church. Grant that those things which we ask in faith we may receive through Your bountiful mercy; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

I used to have a colleague on staff at the university who was a quiet and unassuming fellow. He worked on the physical plant services team. When the lightbulb went out, when a door was sticking, when there was a leak somewhere, you put in a request, and he showed up. He was not flashy or particularly dramatic. Small of stature, he was a very normal looking guy, I would put him in his 50's.

One day in the late fall, our paths crossed while he was carrying a ladder across campus. We chatted and I asked him what he was doing that weekend. "Baking cookies," was his reply. It was coming up on the holiday season, so this was not unexpected. It was the season for cookies. "Do you make a lot of cookies?" I asked. "Yeah, about 3,200 or more. It's an all-day affair." The look on my face must have told him that I needed to know more. He went on. "We bring them to fire and police stations, emergency rooms, and anywhere that does good. I want to say thank you and Merry Christmas."

God is the author of all godliness. Is there something good in someone you know? Thank God for that. He is the author of such goodness. My friend's cookie baking stood out because it was a feat of baking endurance to make that many cookies in a day. But your circles of family, friends, co-workers, and others probably include many people who are doing good things, doing godly things. God is the author of all that, somehow. He often works in ways I do not understand. Pray for a little godliness of your own today. Trust that he will deliver on his promise and in response to your prayer.

### **Tuesday of Pentecost 17 – Habakkuk 1:1-4; 2:1-4**

<sup>1</sup> The oracle that Habakkuk the prophet saw.

<sup>2</sup> O LORD, how long shall I cry for help,  
and you will not hear?

Or cry to you "Violence!"  
and you will not save?

<sup>3</sup> Why do you make me see iniquity,  
and why do you idly look at wrong?  
Destruction and violence are before me;  
strife and contention arise.

<sup>4</sup> So the law is paralyzed,

and justice never goes forth.  
For the wicked surround the righteous;  
so justice goes forth perverted.

<sup>1</sup> I will take my stand at my watchpost  
and station myself on the tower,  
and look out to see what he will say to me,  
and what I will answer concerning my complaint.

<sup>2</sup> And the LORD answered me:

“Write the vision;  
make it plain on tablets,  
so he may run who reads it.

<sup>3</sup> For still the vision awaits its appointed time;  
it hastens to the end—it will not lie.  
If it seems slow, wait for it;  
it will surely come; it will not delay.

<sup>4</sup> “Behold, his soul is puffed up; it is not upright within him,  
but the righteous shall live by his faith.

I am glad we heard Habakkuk on Sunday. I think we too often get a rather sanitized version of God’s Word in our Sunday readings. God sometimes says and does things which shock me and others. What I love about my Bible is that it shows me that people, even those whom God called as prophets, sometimes struggled in their relationship to God. They too had questions. That means I can be completely honest with God; I don’t always have to be happy or serene about God and His ways.

Like many people today, Habakkuk saw great injustice in the world around him. He wondered how God could tolerate this. Was an unjust war by a powerful nation upon a weaker nation the problem? Was it rampant thievery? Was it gang warfare in the streets? Was it a political system which seemed to benefit the wealthy and not the poor? Or was it something else? Habakkuk does not say, only that justice is perverted, and violence surrounds him. Perhaps that allows us to plug in whatever we are seeing. It makes his complaint our complaint too. He wants to know how long God will let this go on. I find myself wondering about the same thing some days.

Habakkuk utters his complaint and then waits for God’s reply. But here is the thing. There is a whole conversation which gets skipped over in our reading on Sunday. In response to Habakkuk’s words, God says he will do something. He will send the Chaldeans (Babylonians) to deal with Judah’s injustice, violence, and wickedness. Then Habakkuk wonders how God can use such a blunt and violent instrument like the Babylonians who are cruel and idolatrous. It is a response to this second question which Habakkuk awaits in the second part of this text.

God’s answer is not entirely satisfying. The righteous person will live by his faith. “Trust me,” says God. There is a point when that is all we can do. He sent the idolatrous Babylonians to

destroy the temple, sack the city, and exile the people of God from their promised inheritance. That trust would be rewarded with a return from exile and eventually the birth of the Messiah. But it was hard. It is hard to trust sometimes, but God calls us to trust.

### **Wednesday of Pentecost 17 – Psalm 62**

- <sup>1</sup> For God alone my soul waits in silence;  
from him comes my salvation.
- <sup>2</sup> He alone is my rock and my salvation,  
my fortress; I shall not be greatly shaken.
- <sup>3</sup> How long will all of you attack a man  
to batter him,  
like a leaning wall, a tottering fence?
- <sup>4</sup> They only plan to thrust him down from his high position.  
They take pleasure in falsehood.  
They bless with their mouths,  
but inwardly they curse. Selah
- <sup>5</sup> For God alone, O my soul, wait in silence,  
for my hope is from him.
- <sup>6</sup> He only is my rock and my salvation,  
my fortress; I shall not be shaken.
- <sup>7</sup> On God rests my salvation and my glory;  
my mighty rock, my refuge is God.
- <sup>8</sup> Trust in him at all times, O people;  
pour out your heart before him;  
God is a refuge for us. Selah
- <sup>9</sup> Those of low estate are but a breath;  
those of high estate are a delusion;  
in the balances they go up;  
they are together lighter than a breath.
- <sup>10</sup> Put no trust in extortion;  
set no vain hopes on robbery;  
if riches increase, set not your heart on them.
- <sup>11</sup> Once God has spoken;  
twice have I heard this:  
that power belongs to God,
- <sup>12</sup> and that to you, O Lord, belongs steadfast love.  
For you will render to a man  
according to his work.

Have you ever pondered the difference between a rock and a stone? In a sense, the words can be interchanged, but there is a difference. A stone fits in your hand. You can throw it. In the Old Testament, stone is almost always a judgment word. Egregious sinners were stoned. God said he would turn hearts of stone into hearts of flesh (Ezek. 11:19). But a rock is a larger thing. It is almost always a good news word in the Bible. You can build a fortress on a rock. Over and over in the Bible, God is called a rock, as David does here, three times (vss. 2, 6, and 7).

There is a large rock which juts out into the Columbia River not far from here. It was named Beacon Rock by William Clark of the Corps of Discovery. For untold years it has presided over the comings and goings of Native Americans and more recently the barges and pleasure boats of current residents. Countless tons of wheat have slipped by on their way to the Port of Portland where it is loaded into ships to make noodles in Asia. The river has been dammed and tamed for the better part of a century. Beacon Rock quietly bears all.

Two things David heard in this psalm (vs 11) and those two things are that God has power and God has love. David felt surrounded by the tumult of conflict and compared himself to a tottering fence, a leaning wall, ready to fall over. Wicked people would have cast David down, but he was not worried. He rested on God, his Rock and Salvation. God has the power; He can do it. God has the love; He will do it. Our hope is in Him. Hear the exhortation of David across these millennia to you – Trust in the Lord always. He is our fortress. His love and presence do not change. We do not know exactly why William Clark called it Beacon Rock. It must have stood there like a sign of some sort to him. Paul draws our gaze to another beacon, a rock on which we stand.

#### **Thursday of Pentecost 17 – II Timothy 1:1-14**

<sup>1</sup> Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God according to the promise of the life that is in Christ Jesus,

<sup>2</sup> To Timothy, my beloved child:

Grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord.

<sup>3</sup> I thank God whom I serve, as did my ancestors, with a clear conscience, as I remember you constantly in my prayers night and day. <sup>4</sup> As I remember your tears, I long to see you, that I may be filled with joy. <sup>5</sup> I am reminded of your sincere faith, a faith that dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice and now, I am sure, dwells in you as well. <sup>6</sup> For this reason I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you through the laying on of my hands, <sup>7</sup> for God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control.

<sup>8</sup> Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony about our Lord, nor of me his prisoner, but share in suffering for the gospel by the power of God, <sup>9</sup> who saved us and called us to a holy calling, not because of our works but because of his own purpose and grace, which he gave us in Christ Jesus before the ages began, <sup>10</sup> and which now has been manifested through the appearing of our Savior Christ Jesus, who abolished death and brought life

and immortality to light through the gospel,<sup>11</sup> for which I was appointed a preacher and apostle and teacher,<sup>12</sup> which is why I suffer as I do. But I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed, and I am convinced that he is able to guard until that Day what has been entrusted to me.<sup>13</sup> Follow the pattern of the sound words that you have heard from me, in the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus.<sup>14</sup> By the Holy Spirit who dwells within us, guard the good deposit entrusted to you.

Dick was a friend of mine. I am glad to say that. I met him shortly after he took on a huge project. A local institution was failing, and he had come to serve as its administrator of last resort. Honestly, the situation was grim. The finances were ruinous, the governing body was at times toxic, and there were strong personalities with conflicting ideas about what should happen with this entity. I saw three things in Dick that I really admire. Dick really was fearless. He jumped in without a second thought. I knew his position was tenuous at best, but you would never have known it to watch him in action.

Compounding his problems, a staff member was going through a crisis. This was a well-liked man upon whose work the entity had often depended. The stress of the prior years had led him to make some poor decisions and now it was public and somewhat scandalous. But Dick did not see the damage to the institution in this, he saw the person. He gently and capably counselled this young man into another career where life could be lived healthily. Dick loved his people. That was not a thing he simply said, but a love he put into action.

Finally, I remember a particularly difficult meeting. A member of the community hurled vicious accusations at him. It was personal and ugly. I was hurt listening to this being leveled at someone else. I could not imagine what it was like to be in Dick's shoes, bearing all this. I also had come to know him by this point. It was why I was at the meeting. I knew that there had been difficulties with this man before. I knew that Dick struggled with just how to respond. I was amazed at how Dick professionally and firmly handled that situation. The venom was not met with rancor or accusations in kind, but with appropriate and fruitful responses.

Paul said that the spirit which was poured out on us is not a spirit of fear but a spirit of love and self-control. He called Timothy to service in that same spirit. He called my friend Dick to service as well. He is calling you not to fear or to all the behaviors which flow out of fear, but to love and self-control. Dick was considerably older than I was when all this happened. I hope and pray that I can grow into that same spirit and by the grace of Jesus, I believe He is leading me in that direction.

### **Friday of Pentecost 17 – Luke 17:1-10**

<sup>1</sup> And he said to his disciples, "Temptations to sin are sure to come, but woe to the one through whom they come!" <sup>2</sup> It would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck and he were cast into the sea than that he should cause one of these little ones to sin. <sup>3</sup> Pay attention to yourselves! If your brother sins, rebuke him, and if he repents,

forgive him, <sup>4</sup> and if he sins against you seven times in the day, and turns to you seven times, saying, ‘I repent,’ you must forgive him.”

<sup>5</sup> The apostles said to the Lord, “Increase our faith!” <sup>6</sup> And the Lord said, “If you had faith like a grain of mustard seed, you could say to this mulberry tree, ‘Be uprooted and planted in the sea,’ and it would obey you.

<sup>7</sup> “Will any one of you who has a servant plowing or keeping sheep say to him when he has come in from the field, ‘Come at once and recline at table’? <sup>8</sup> Will he not rather say to him, ‘Prepare supper for me, and dress properly, and serve me while I eat and drink, and afterward you will eat and drink’? <sup>9</sup> Does he thank the servant because he did what was commanded? <sup>10</sup> So you also, when you have done all that you were commanded, say, ‘We are unworthy servants; we have only done what was our duty.’”

“Robert” stopped by the office the other day. He is a middle aged, developmentally delayed man who makes some very interesting clothing choices. He is a gentle soul who lives in a group home nearby. He was immaculately clean and well cared for. Someone loves this guy. He wanted to talk and pray a bit, so we did. He told me his mom and dad were both dead of tragic circumstances in middle age. Now his Aunt “Alice” is his payee. A Payee is someone who receives his government support and is entrusted to use it to pay for Robert’s necessary expenses. To prevent fraud, there are many hoops to jump through and much bureaucracy to contend with when one serves as a payee. It is not an easy job.

Robert also plays the guitar. He has a YouTube channel. We watched one of his long and somewhat tuneless creations. It has four likes. He was especially proud of the comment – from who else but his aunt. She liked it a lot, said she could not get the tune out of her head. I am sure that being Robert’s aunt must be a challenge some days. I would guess that Aunt Alice has other things she could be doing. He showed me a picture of her. It is the lock screen on his phone.

Jesus speaks of God’s care and concern for the little ones of His kingdom. He reserves a particular wrath for any who would cause them to sin. He also has a particular blessing for those who express his boundless and gentle love for the little ones who trust in Him. Well done, Aunt Alice. You probably won’t ever read these words or get to hear that from me personally. But God has seen, and His smile is upon you.