

Saving Grace Daily Devotion

Monday, October 12

Listen

Matthew 22:21b

Then he said to them, "Give therefore to the emperor the things that are the emperor's, and to God the things that are God's."

"Where God places a. (period) let no man put a? (question mark)."

The Pharisees are looking to pick a fight. First, they flatter Jesus, ***"Teacher, we know that you are sincere, and teach the way of God in accordance with truth, and show deference to no one; for you do not regard people with partiality."*** (Matthew 22:16d) They continue by dividing the Jewish people into two different camps. ***"Tell us, then, what you think. Is it lawful to pay taxes to the emperor, or not?"*** (Matthew 22:17) If Jesus says, "Yes pay your taxes." He would be siding with the Herodians who have compromised their faith with God by giving support to the Emperor who was known as "the son of the divine Augustus," or "high priest of Rome" and as "a god." The Jewish people were forbidden to have graven images, yet on all of the coins were the image of Caesar. If Jesus answered "No." Then He would be siding with the Zealots and could be labeled a political agitator who was fanning the flames of rebellion against Rome. Either way they had him or so they thought.

Instead, Jesus calls them "hypocrites." Then he lays it straight to them. He acknowledges the test He is put to and shows their hypocrisy. He doesn't have a coin so He asks them to show Him the coin used for the tax. One of the Pharisees has a silver denarius of Tiberius Caesar and produces it. There's the hypocrisy. They are asking for judgement, yet they carry the offence themselves. Jesus doesn't even touch the coin He simply asks whose image is on it. They respond "Caesar's. The answer is obvious," Give ***therefore to the emperor the things that are the emperor's, and to God the things that are God's.*** (Matthew 22:21d) Wow... It leaves you speechless. What can you say to that?

Jesus calls us to not to take sides, so that we are caught in the middle. There are more important things in this world. We are to give back to the human authorities that which bears their image, while the boundary to God has no limits. God calls for us to love Him with "all our heart, soul, mind and strength." Nothing less. We are called to follow Christ and have been clothed with the new self, ***"which is being renewed in knowledge according to the image of its creator...Christ is all and in all!"*** (Colossians 3:10-11)

"Where God places a. (period) let no man put a? (question mark)."

In Christ we find life itself, everything else is just trivial.

Lord Jesus remind me daily that I am called to follow You. Let nothing get in the way of the Gospel of Jesus Christ and the honor to bear Your name in this world. Teach me not to divide, but to unite others through Jesus Christ my Lord. Amen

Saving Grace Daily Devotion

Tuesday, October 13

Pray

1 Thessalonians 1:2-3

²We always give thanks to God for all of you and mention you in our prayers, constantly ³remembering before our God and Father your work of faith and labor of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ.

“The fewer the words, the better the prayer. To have prayed well is to have studied well.”
(Martin Luther)

Paul calls us to prayer. He calls us to remember those who have come to the faith, that they might meet the days ahead with hope in the middle of ridicule and persecution. We pray for all of those going through difficult times feeling alone and separate from each other. We are called to follow Christ Jesus our Lord.

Today we feel the separation from one another we may wonder why we can't gather together or why we feel alone in a busy world. Faith is often encouraged as we gather together as a community of faith for worship. While that's true, faith in Christ starts with you and in your heart. It isn't about what others do or don't do, but it is about the One (Jesus Christ) to whom we are called to be faithful. So, we are called to lift one another up in prayer. To support one another in the struggles we endure. Paul says, ***“We always give thanks to God for all of you and mention you in our prayers, constantly remembering before our God and Father your work of faith and labor of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ.” (1 Thessalonians 1:2-3)*** He has called us to a life of prayer in thank giving for one another.

Martin Luther was right. ***“The fewer the words, the better the prayer. To have prayed well is to have studied well.”*** Prayer isn't about elaborate phrases, eloquent words or deep insight. As we pray, we call into action what the scriptures tell us. We know that we don't have to worry, because we are never alone. Paul writes ***“Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.” Philippians 4:6)*** The promise is that, ***“the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.” (Philippians 4:7)*** Jesus is always there to give us peace and encourage us in faith. Our faith should not be determined by our situation in life, but by the sole promise of God's steadfast love for us and a reliance on Christ for everything.

Paul gives a blessing to those who seek Him in all circumstances, ***“And may the Lord make you increase and abound in love for one another and for all, just as we abound in love for you. ¹³And may he so strengthen your hearts in holiness that you may be blameless before our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all his saints.” (1 Thessalonians 3:11-13)*** He has called us to trust in Christ who intercedes for us (Romans 8:24) and for all those who need His help.

Today think of those who need encouragement in their lives and reach out to them on the phone or in a card. Most importantly pray for them today and lift them up so they may know the peace of God that passes all understanding.

Lord Jesus, I as that you give Your strength and support to _____. Give them peace and guidance, encouragement and direction. Help them to know that You are “always present in a time of trouble.” (Psalm 46:1) Give me patience and understanding that I may pray for others as You desire and pray for those in need. Your Kingdom come. Amen

Saving Grace Daily Devotion

Wednesday, October 14, 2020

Ephesians 4:32

Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you. (NIV)

Activity 1: Make a list of kind things that you can do- at home, at school, at the park, etc. Try to do one kind act each day.

Activity 2: Use sidewalk chalk to draw a picture or write a kind saying at the end of your driveway or on the sidewalk in front of your house. You'll brighten someone's day.

Saving Grace Daily Devotion

Thursday, October 15

Study

Isaiah 45:7

⁷ I form light and create darkness; I make weal and create woe; I the LORD do all these things.

A better translation is; ***"I form light and create darkness. I make peace and create evil. I am God, the One who does all these things."* (Isaiah 45:7)** These two things seem contradictory, but there is only One God.

Isaiah is speaking against the Babylonian religious cult that depicts two gods; a god of evil and a god of good. These two gods are equal and co-eternal. The New Age movement has adopted this idea that these two forces fight against one another. Good and evil are at war with each other. It's a similar concept to the yin and the yang in eastern thought. Two forces waring against each other for dominance in our lives. We have a few prominent talk show hosts who have said we have to think positive thoughts and so that positive things happen in our lives. That is to place ourselves in the center as god so that through our positive or negative thoughts we might change the world as we see fit.

Instead, there is One God, ***"I am God, the One who does all these things."* (Isaiah 45:7)** God is the cause of what we see as evil (negative) and good (positive), in our limited understanding. We are not the one who wield these powers. We don't have the power or influence to change our situation or circumstances just through the power of our thoughts. My life isn't dependent upon the power of positive thinking. Instead it's dependent upon God who is, was and is to come.

My situation in life isn't depended upon me, but God. ***"The LORD is my shepherd, I shall not want...Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for You (O Lord) are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me."* (Psalm 23:1, 4)** God is in control of all the things we have no control over in our lives. His rod is used to discipline me, and His staff is used to guide me, because He loves me.

Isaiah calls us to trust in the LORD, the one who created all that exists. He says, ***"do not fear, for I am with you, do not be afraid, for I am your God; I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with my victorious right hand."* (Isaiah 41:10)** He calms our fears, strengthens us when we are in need and lifts us up with His victorious right hand. We have nothing to fear, if we trust in Him. ***"Though I walk in the midst of trouble, you preserve me against the wrath of my enemies; you stretch out your hand, and your right hand delivers me."* (Psalm 138:7)**

There is only one God! It is Yahweh, God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit who guides our lives and protects and keeps us with His "steadfast love and mercy." ***"The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases, his mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness."* (Lamentations 3:22-23)** He is there to guide us as only God can. We are the sheep of His pasture.

Today and everyday God calls to you to understand He is shaping you as You follow Christ Jesus our Lord, so that we have nothing to fear. ***"The Lord is near. Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus."* (Philippians 4:5b-7)** He provides for all of your needs.

Almighty God, there are no other gods beside You. I trust in You completely to guide my path, You are my rock, my fortress, my deliverer, my God, my Savior, in whom I take refuge. Guide and protect me today. In Jesus Name. Amen

Saving Grace Daily Devotion

Friday, October 16

Devotion on Hymn of the Day: *Take My Life, that I May Be* by Frances Havergal

Holy Gospel: Matthew 22:15-22

Then he said to them, "Give therefore to the emperor the things that are the emperor's, and to God the things that are God's." [v. 21]

Frances R. Havergal (b. Astley, Worcestershire, England, 1836; d. Oystermouth, Glamorganshire, Wales, 1879) was the daughter of the Rev. W. H. Havergal. Although her formal education was sporadic because of poor health, Havergal learned six foreign languages, including Greek and Hebrew, and was well read in many subjects. She began writing poetry at an early age and, as a singer and pianist, a glittering career in society was open before her. But she considered all her talents to be only loans from the Lord, to be used in His service. *Take My Life and Let it Be* was originally composed in eleven couplets as a hymn of "self-consecration to Christ" on February 4, 1874. She told the following story about writing this hymn:

I went for a little visit of five days [to Areley House, Worcestershire, in December 1873]. There were ten persons in the house, some unconverted and long prayed for, some converted but not rejoicing Christians. [God] gave me the prayer, "Lord, give me all this house." And He just did! Before I left the house, everyone had got a blessing. The last night of my visit. . . I was too happy to sleep and passed most of the night in praise and renewal of my own consecration, and these little couplets formed themselves and chimed in my heart, one after another, till they finished with "Ever, only, all, for Thee."

Following the composition of this hymn, she would often use the words for her own devotion time. On one occasion, as she pondered the words, (Vs. 3) - "Take my voice and let me sing/ Always only for my King", she felt she should give up her secular concerts. Her beautiful voice was in demand, and she frequently sang with the Philharmonic. But from that moment, her lips were exclusively devoted to the songs of the Lord.

Another occasion is written that when she was praying over verse 4, she took seriously her own words: "take my silver and my gold / not a mite would I withhold". She sent all her jewelry to the Church Mission Society to be sold. In a letter she wrote to a friend, she said, "*Take my silver and my gold' now means shipping off all my ornaments to the Church Missionary House, including a jewel cabinet that is really fit for a countess, where all will be accepted and disposed of for me...Nearly fifty articles are being packed up. I don't think I ever packed a box with such pleasure.*"

As you sing this hymn this week, may you reflect on the meaningful words that Francis Havergal wrote about giving yourself fully to Christ. Focus and meditate on all that our Lord and Savior has so graciously given you. Then ask yourself, how can I give back to God "the things that are God's" (v. 21)? Take purposeful action to thank and praise Him fully for all He has provided and commit yourself to Him: "*ever, only, all for Thee.*"

1 Take my life, that I may be
Consecrated, Lord, to thee;
Take my moments and my days;
Let them flow in ceaseless praise.

2 Take my hands and let them move

At the impulse of thy love;
Take my feet and let them be
Swift and beautiful for thee.

3 Take my voice and let me sing
Always, only, for my King;
Take my lips and let them be
Filled with messages from thee.

4 Take my silver and my gold,
Not a mite would I withhold;
Take my intellect, and use
Ev'ry pow'r as thou shalt choose.

5 Take my will and make it thine;
It shall be no longer mine.
Take my heart, it is thine own;
It shall be thy royal throne.

6 Take my love; my Lord, I pour
At thy feet its treasure store;
Take myself, and I will be
Ever, only, all for thee.

Let us Pray: Heavenly Father, You are our true giver and provider. For everything, we thank You and praise You. Help us to use all the gifts You bestow upon us to glorify Your name and give to You what is Yours. Amen.

(Source: www.hymnary.org; www.cyberhymnal.org; www.christianity.com)

Saving Grace Daily Devotion

Saturday, October 17

Prepare for Worship

1 Thessalonians 1:9-10

⁹ For the people of those regions report about us what kind of welcome we had among you, and how you turned to God from idols, to serve a living and true God, ¹⁰ and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead—Jesus, who rescues us from the wrath that is coming.

Those from the church in Thessalonica had a remarkable faith. Life didn't get easier when they heard about Jesus. Instead their lives immediately reflected the suffering of Jesus, "you became imitators of us and of the Lord, for you received the word in much affliction," (1 Thess. 1:6). Word got out about these Christians, "your faith in God has gone forth everywhere, so that we need not say anything," (1 Thess. 1:8). From the get go, their faith was remarkable. Now, what other people notice is their worship. They've turned from worshiping false idols to worshiping the living and true God. These verses remind us that we can prepare for worship by remembering what we are waiting for. And, what are we waiting for? Jesus the Son of God to come again and rescue us from the wrath to come. Often, we don't like waiting. We hate the feeling that our time is being wasted. But sometimes we forget that we are waiting on Christ—so, we don't have any feelings about it one way or the other! We can rest assured that our waiting on Jesus is not a waste of time. Instead, it exercises a hearty hope that guides us throughout all of life. Remember that we are waiting for Jesus as we prepare to worship him tomorrow.

Prayer: Dear Lord, Heavenly Father, you have done something truly spectacular in Jesus Christ. He was sacrificed for our sake and raised from the dead. If there was any question about your love for us, then it was answered at the cross of Christ. You are a good and gracious God and we ask that you would send your Holy Spirit to help us praise you, in Jesus' name, Amen

Saving Grace Daily Devotion

Sunday October 18

Praise

Psalm 96:1-3

- ¹ O sing to the Lord a new song;
sing to the Lord, all the earth.**
- ² Sing to the Lord, bless his name;
tell of his salvation from day to day.**
- ³ Declare his glory among the nations,
his marvelous works among all the peoples.**

Our God is really quite magnificent. We can only begin to imagine just how powerful and brilliant our God really is. But God doesn't expect us to have him totally figured out. Instead, our worship is meant to be full of wonder. We can have wonder when we take a moment to think of our God's majesty. People can come together and form a city or even build a nation. Cities and buildings can be quite extraordinary. But there wouldn't be any city if there wasn't an Earth to build on. And there wouldn't be any Earth if there wasn't the Sun to rely on. And all of this couldn't exist like it does without the surrounding universe to exist in. Humanity builds a city; God creates a universe. That is why, in this Jewish hymnal, the worship leader is not just trying to get the Israelites stirred up for worship. "All the earth," and "all the peoples," are being led in singing a new song to the Lord. He is magnificent and worthy of a world-wide rejoicing! It is this God of majesty that comes down to us in Jesus Christ. He sits with us. He talks with us. He teaches us so that we might come to know him and get our bearings in life. Without him, we can be so aimless. But, the God of wonder has come down in order to save us, lead us, and guide us.

Prayer: Dear Lord, Heavenly Father, we are in awe before you. We can only begin to imagine just how marvelous you are. Thankfully, we have your word to guide us along. Stir our hearts up to worship. Help us to receive the Good News we pray, in Jesus' name, Amen