

Daily Devotions

Monday July 10

Zechariah 9:9-12

⁹Rejoice greatly, O daughter Zion! Shout aloud, O daughter Jerusalem! Lo, your king comes to you; triumphant and victorious is he, humble and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey. ¹⁰He will cut off the chariot from Ephraim and the war horse from Jerusalem; and the battle bow shall be cut off, and he shall command peace to the nations; his dominion shall be from sea to sea, and from the River to the ends of the earth. ¹¹As for you also, because of the blood of my covenant with you, I will set your prisoners free from the waterless pit. ¹²Return to your stronghold, O prisoners of hope; today I declare that I will restore to you double.

For Reflection

Reading this prophecy from Zechariah, we're immediately thrust back into Palm Sunday in our imaginations, as we hear of our king coming to us, and as we picture Jesus riding into Jerusalem on a donkey. When Zechariah spoke this prophecy, the Israelites were returning to their home after being captives in Babylon. It was a time of physical and spiritual rebuilding for God's people. Zechariah comforted people by telling them that eventually, their king would come. Their king would put an end to war and bring a lasting peace. As *The Message* translation of the Bible puts it, "Your king is coming! A good king who makes all things right" (v. 9). That is still a hopeful promise for us today.

Questions for Reflection

1. How is Jesus, both in Zechariah's description here and in the New Testament, different from the kings, rulers, or leaders we see in our world today? What could modern leaders learn from Jesus' humility, self-sacrifice, and generosity?
2. How is peace something you long for as you read this passage? You might think of peace in our troubled world, peace in a relationship, or peace inside a person's heart. Spend a few minutes reflecting on peace and praying to God for the peace you seek for yourself or others.

Read Psalm 1-5

Today's Prayer Focus: Pray for victims and communities grieving from gun violence. Pray for the safety of all people, for reasonable laws, and for resources to combat the mental health crisis in America.

Tuesday July 11

Read Psalm 6-8

Today's Prayer Focus: Pray for all those who travel over the summer, and for all who offer hospitality to travelers. Ask God to be with students and teachers on summer break, and for workers in every profession to find times of rest and refreshment during this season. Pray that young people and their families will experience joy together, that neighbors will get to know each other better as they spend time outdoors, and that people everywhere will delight in and care for God's creation.

Wednesday July 12

Psalm 145:8-14

⁸The LORD is gracious and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.

⁹The LORD is good to all, and his compassion is over all that he has made.

¹⁰All your works shall give thanks to you, O LORD, and all your faithful shall bless you.

¹¹They shall speak of the glory of your kingdom, and tell of your power,

¹²to make known to all people your mighty deeds, and the glorious splendor of your kingdom.

¹³Your kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and your dominion endures throughout all generations. The LORD is faithful in all his words, and gracious in all his deeds.

¹⁴The LORD upholds all who are falling, and raises up all who are bowed down.

For Reflection

This short passage from Psalm 145 highlights how our God is loving, kind, and caring in a personal way for each one of his children. At the same time, our God is the almighty king over all of creation. He's "slow to anger" and he's king over an "everlasting kingdom" that endures forever. Along with God being full of grace, God helps those who are facing trouble. It's comforting to hear that he upholds "all who are falling" and lifts up those who are discouraged or physically bowed down. This passage from Psalm 145 helps us remember and give thanks for our wonderful God who loves us forever, no matter what.

Questions for Reflection

1. Which description of God in this psalm resonates with you the most, or gives you the most hope or comfort, and why?
2. The middle of this passage describes how people who have been blessed by God can't help but tell others about his goodness. When is a time when you experienced God's grace to an extent that you had to share the story? How did the person or people listening to you respond to your testimony?
3. The first line of our passage is familiar as part of our sung liturgy at certain times during the church year: "The Lord is gracious and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love" (v. 8). How can the idea of being "slow to anger" guide you in your daily life? How about being "gracious and merciful" toward others? In our culture today, people are quick to get angry and slow to be gracious. How can you show those around you a different way to act, based on God's mercy toward you?

Read Psalm 9-11

Today's Prayer Focus: Pray for the ministry of Reformation Lutheran Church, that we would be devoted to serving God, bearing witness to the Gospel so that others may come to believe, and serving our community so that we may bless others.

Thursday July 13

Romans 7:15-25a

¹⁵I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate. ¹⁶Now if I do what I do not want, I agree that the law is good. ¹⁷But in fact it is no longer I that do it, but sin that dwells within me. ¹⁸For I know that nothing good dwells within me,

that is, in my flesh. I can will what is right, but I cannot do it. ¹⁹For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I do. ²⁰Now if I do what I do not want, it is no longer I that do it, but sin that dwells within me. ²¹So I find it to be a law that when I want to do what is good, evil lies close at hand. ²²For I delight in the law of God in my inmost self, ²³but I see in my members another law at war with the law of my mind, making me captive to the law of sin that dwells in my members. ²⁴Wretched man that I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death? ²⁵Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!

For Reflection

Paul's spiritual psychology is insightful and deeply honest. He sees the fractured and contradictory nature of our human experience. Even though we are created in the image of God, and therefore should desire only those things that are in line with God's will, sin's power over us corrupts and twists us. We do not do what we want, even when what we want is indeed good!

We need to be very careful about one aspect of Paul's thinking here. When he talks about "my inmost self" and "the law of my mind," he does not mean, like modern pop psychology teaches, that to find truth, we just need to look deeply within ourselves. Paul sees the depths of the human soul delighting not in its own truth, but "delighting in the law of God." Discerning the presence of Jesus and the image of God in us isn't so much an exercise in focusing on ourselves as it is paying attention to the correspondence between the voice of God internal to us, and the voice of God external to us in Scripture as interpreted by the Christian community.

The key to this passage is the realization that on our own, we cannot sort out our own sinful desires from the will of God, and even when we focus on God's law, we cannot obey it in our own strength. Sin is simply too much for us to overcome by our own wisdom, intellect, willpower, patience, or skill. We need a Savior to deliver us. And as Paul says, "thanks be to God through Christ Jesus our Lord," for he is the one who rescues us from this deadly situation!

Questions for Reflection

1. What is an area where you have a hard time knowing God's will? Have you searched to see what Scripture teaches? Have you asked other wise Christians for their help? Most in line with this reading, have you paid attention to how your own inner temptations might be influencing you?
2. When you are stuck in temptation and can't get out, what would it look like for you to simply stop trying to win on your own and call out for Christ to rescue you?

Read Psalm 12-14

Today's Prayer Focus: Pray for the spiritual growth of yourself and all our members, that we would be filled with the Holy Spirit, increase in our knowledge of God's will, and overflow in love for each other and the world around us.

Friday July 14

Matthew 11:16-19, 25-30

¹⁶[Jesus said,] "But to what will I compare this generation? It is like children sitting in the marketplaces and calling to one another, ¹⁷"We played the flute for you, and you did not dance; we wailed, and you did not mourn.' ¹⁸For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, 'He has a demon'; ¹⁹the Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, 'Look, a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!' Yet wisdom is vindicated by her deeds."

²⁵At that time Jesus said, "I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and the intelligent and have revealed them to infants; ²⁶yes, Father, for such was your gracious will. ²⁷All things have been handed over to me by my Father; and no one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.

²⁸"Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. ²⁹Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. ³⁰For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."

For Reflection

“My yoke is easy, and my burden is light.” Every idol will make you work for your worth, for your validation, for your peace. Our current social media-saturated age will have you chasing your own feelings and then insisting that everyone around you affirm what you think. The crowds will demand you fit in to whatever the mood of the moment is.

It all adds up to more burdens, more expectations, more demands on us. Until Jesus steps in. “Come to me,” he says, “and I will give you rest.” Not as something we earn through our obedience, good behavior, or right thinking. Just as a gift. No more burdens. Simply grace. In him, our souls can finally rest.

Will there be obedience? Yes. Will there be following? Yes. Will there even be struggle? Yes. But with it all comes the promise that Jesus’ yoke is easy and burden is light. He does not pile on more demands. He leads us into the freedom our souls have always wanted. His yoke will guide us, not in ways we “have” to go, but on the paths we have always longed to travel, but just could not find.

Questions for Reflection

1. What is something in your life that is loading you up with burdens? What would it look like to lay those burdens down at the feet of Jesus?
2. What is an area of your life where you are looking for rest? What would it look like for you to go to Jesus for that rest? What would you have to lay down? What would you have to give up?

Read Psalm 15-17

Today’s Prayer Focus: Pray for peace in the world, especially in Ukraine. Ask God to sustain those who suffer under persecution for the name of Christ. Pray that all people would have freedom and good government.

Saturday July 15

Read Psalm 18

Today's Prayer Focus: Pray for police, fire fighters, all emergency workers, health care workers, and those who serve in the military. Pray for farmers and those who transport food. Ask God to grant well-being to all in our community, and to stir up generosity to meet the needs of those who lack food, shelter, or other needs.

The Mission of Reformation Lutheran Church is to:

Invite our neighbors as Jesus invites us.

Engage in a community of graceful discipleship.

Equip our members to grow in faith and ministry.

Embody the love of Jesus in our world.