



March  
15-20

Lenten  
Devotions  
Inspired by  
Handel's  
Oratorio  
Messiah

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March 22

Psalm 68:11

The Lord gave the word; great was the company of preachers.

I love it when people say I am a great preacher. I especially love it when God says preachers are great. Oh, wait a minute. I think I misread that. Darn, it is saying there are a great many preachers or proclaimers of good news, NOT that those who proclaim the Word of the Lord are great. Ah, man!

Telling the good news of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ is a great thing to do. It is even better that every one of His people can do this. That is certainly a great many preachers! Obviously, there are some who are called upon to preach His Word to His people in churches all over the world. All believers are called upon at times to share His Word with someone, though. We teach it to our children. We bear witness of it in our lives, and we proclaim the great things He has done when we have the opportunity.

We do have a rather great number of preachers when you consider the call we all have to share the good news. When you stretch this out over time and space, it is an astronomical number.

No matter how large the number of preachers, there is still only one message. The Almighty God took on frail human flesh in order to take upon Himself the sin of the world. He suffered, died and was buried. On the third day He rose again and gives life to you, me and all who believe. We need this message during Lent, on Easter, today, tomorrow and the next day. We are joined together in hearing the Word of the Lord, and we are joined together in living and speaking this Word.

By Rev. Matthew Brackman

Prayer

*O Lord my God, how great Thou art, and how great is the message that Jesus Christ has set us free from sin, death and the devil. How great it is to hear this good Word. How much greater it is to live in this Word. Amen.*

March 27

LSB 442

The company of angels is praising you on high. And we with all creation in chorus make reply.

Our Sunday morning songs may not sound like much. The man next to us sings off key. The woman behind does not see well and belts out wrong words. All the noise encourages young children to bellow. Unfamiliar hymns cause us to sing in hesitant and muted tones.

Indeed, our hymn singing may be less than impressive. However, "All Glory, Laud, and Honor" reminds us that when we lift up our voices in song to God, it is not just we who are singing.

The Scriptures clearly teach that the angels sing God's praises continually in His heavenly courtroom. Mysteriously, even the cosmos is bound up with this worship, testifying to the wisdom of its Creator and groaning in eager expectation for His sons to be revealed. When we sing, we harmonize with the world and the angels in something that has no end, the worship of God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

What a mystery, that our feeble and limited songs unite with the eternal and unending song of heaven. Though mysterious, it is not a surprise, for this is the way of Christ. By His suffering and death He fully experienced the frailty and limitedness of human life. By that same suffering and death, He opened for us the wholeness and infinite possibility of eternal life, for He was not only human, but also God.

By Rev. Christopher Jackson

Prayer

*Lord Jesus Christ, may our hymns remind us of your two natures, human and divine, and the salvation they accomplished for us. Amen.*

March 26

Psalm 2

Kiss the Son,  
lest He be angry,  
and you perish in  
the way, for His  
wrath is quickly  
kindled. Blessed  
are all who take  
refuge in Him.

In recent years we have seen news videos of the massive forest fires in the western portions of our country. The furious fires swiftly rage through the parched forested areas. Picturesque homes nestled in the hills are in danger of the violent fires. Videos show planes dropping large amounts of water on the fires. Firefighters use the most sophisticated tools available to fight the inferno. Now imagine a different tool, a squirt gun. "What?" you say. "That's ridiculous!"

The idea presented in the Messiah from Ps 2 is just as ridiculous. David's prophecy points to Christ. It is a ridiculous idea that God's plan could be stopped by ordinary men, even the rulers of Jesus' day! The ruling priests should have known their foolishness. They knew how Jacob struggled with the Lord until he was touched in the hip by God. They knew how Jonah, trying to run away from God's plan, was swallowed by a big fish to send the prophet on the right path. They knew how a boy with a slingshot and a stone could stop a giant and save a kingdom.

The priests knew that God's plan could not be thwarted by men, and yet they tried to stop Jesus. Again after the resurrection and ascension they tried to stop the apostles. The apostles would reference the folly of the priest by quoting Ps 2. However, one wise man, Gamaliel, advised the council, "For if this plan or this undertaking is of man, it will fail; but if it is of God, you will not be able to overthrow them. You might even be found opposing God!"

Handel uses Ps 2 to remind us that while the crucifixion appears to thwart God's plan for the Messiah, it has no more effect than a squirt gun on a fire. Instead, the crucifixion becomes our salvation.

By Rev. Andy Guagenti

Prayer

*Our Father,  
who art in  
heaven, search  
me and know  
my heart! Try  
me and know  
my thoughts!  
And see if there  
be any grievous  
way in me, and  
lead me in the  
way everlast-  
ing, that we  
may do your  
will for your  
glory.  
Amen.  
(Ps 139: 23-24)*

March 23

Romans 10:15

How beautiful  
are the feet of  
them that preach  
the gospel of  
peace, and bring  
glad tidings of  
good things.

One of my favorite hymns has this line: "How sweet the name of Jesus sounds in a believer's ears." The name of Jesus is sweet to us. Daily in our baptismal grace, but especially in this Lenten season, we are reminded of what Christ has done for us on the cross. We find joy and hope in His atonement for our sins, and hope in His promise of eternal life. This is our faith. But where did such belief come from?

Faith is a gift of the Holy Spirit, working through the means of grace, that is, the Word proclaimed. Apart from proclamation, the Holy Spirit does not work to create faith. Without the telling of the gospel, no one will come to faith. The Word must be vocalized. Unfortunately, too many think this is the job of the pastor alone. People feel either unprepared or unwilling to share the Good News with others.

Our pastors' preaching should prepare and equip us to tell others about Christ. But Scripture tells us repeatedly that all believers are called and expected to proclaim the salvation that is ours in the Lord. We are to stand ready to give reason for our hope, to be salt and light, and to shout this message from the rooftops. Unless each of us actively tells lost and broken people about God's love, they will remain just that, lost and broken.

God put someone in your life to introduce you to Him. Now He wants to use you to meet someone else. Keep your feet moving from person to person, in any and all situations and circumstances. The person you tell about Jesus today may be the person going to heaven tomorrow.

By Rev. Richard Gizynski

Prayer

*Lord Jesus, use  
me to reach  
others with the  
Good News of  
your grace.  
Move my feet to  
find these op-  
portunities,  
steady my  
heart to have  
the courage to  
do so, and fill  
my lips with the  
Word of your  
love.  
Amen.*

March 24

Romans 10:18

Psalm 19:4

Their sound is  
gone out into all  
lands, and their  
words unto the  
ends of the  
world.

In Rom 10:17, St. Paul proclaims the Good News that saving faith is not something we work in ourselves. He declares that “faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of Christ.” That is, saving faith is born of the Gospel through which the Holy Spirit engenders, sustains, and strengthens our faith.

So then, it is not about us; it is about Christ *for* us. But a question arises: what is the “Word of Christ”? Christ’s Word is to be equated with the apostolic Scriptures, i.e., the New Testament Scriptures. And, of course the New and Old Testament Scriptures agree in all points.

Paul says in v. 18 that the Gospel has gone out to the ends of the inhabited earth. The Gospel is not for the Jews only, but for all people. We can be certain that no racial, geographic, or ethnic group is excluded. The Gospel is for all. Indeed, all who trust in Christ’s merits have forgiveness and eternal life.

The saving Word has even gone out in Haiti. There is both sad and good news from that country. The sad news is that, on March 12, a Lutheran, Haitian pastor was murdered there. The good news is that he was proclaiming the Gospel of the Christ that he loved. Indeed, the sound of the Gospel has gone out to the ends of the earth!

By Rev. David Grassley

Prayer

*Blessed in the  
sight of the  
Lord is the  
death of His  
saints.  
Amen.  
(Ps 116:15)*

March 25

The Annunciation  
of our Lord

Luke 2:26-38

And Mary said,  
“Behold, I am the  
servant of the Lord;  
let it be to me ac-  
cording to your  
word.”

Who is the true servant here?

Mary must indeed suffer for the sake of God’s mission by bearing our Lord. She will know the discomforts and pains of childbearing and birth. She will carry the shame of a pregnancy outside of wedlock—an undeserved shame out of the ignorance of others, but shame nonetheless. Milk from her breasts and food from her hand will nourish the Savior. A sword will pierce her heart as she witnesses the death of her firstborn Son. Indeed, Mary is the servant of the Lord.

And yet God is her servant as well. God graciously grants her His favor. By bearing the boy, all generations have and will call her blessed. On account of His death, a death that is yet a future event for her, she has atonement for her sins. And, mysteriously, Christ Jesus, the Son of God, the Divine Word through which the Father created, orders, and sustains the world, upholds the life of Mary, even as she upholds His according to the human nature.

This Lent, as you consider how you might serve God, remember that your service of Him is grounded in and empowered by His service to you.

By Rev. Christopher Jackson

Prayer

*Father, make  
us always  
mindful of your  
service to us in  
Christ Jesus  
through the  
power of the  
Holy Spirit.  
Amen.*