

Devotional Commentary on the Lenten Readings for Week 6

Lent Theme: HEALED AND TRANSFORMED BY GRACE TO REIMAGINE THE NEW CHURCH THROUGH PROCLAMATION AND SOAKING OURSELVES IN GOD'S WORD

Overview

The apostle Paul tells us in Ephesians 4:12 that “the word of God is living and active. Sharper than a double-edged sword”. As we conclude our Lenten journey, we are reminded that Jesus’ life and mission was predicted throughout the Old Testament. The entire Bible points us to the cross and through the cross we have reconciliation and redemption with God. The Bible is more than just another story book or a self-help guide, it is the very Word of God, the Logos described in John 1. As you read the various daily scriptures take note of the thread tying the various Old and New Testament passages together.

Week 6 (Day 31) Wednesday, March 24, 2021

Psalm 119:9-16; Haggai 2:1-9, 20-23; John 12:34-50

When reading the Psalm, you get a sense of the wonder, awe and reverence the Psalmist has for the Word of God. It is more than just a set of rules to follow or commands to keep, it is the one thing that draws him close to God, the thing that he delights in above all else. It is this same Word that comes to the prophet Haggai. The Lord tells Haggai to encourage the High Priest, Joshua, son of Jehozadak, Zerubbabel the Governor and all the people, that even though the newly built temple is not as glorious as the former temple built by Solomon, it will become greater than Solomon’s temple. God is referring to the day when He will come to the Temple himself in the form of this Son, Jesus. When Jesus is questioned by the people in John 12 as to who the Christ is, he tells them that he is the Light. He is the one who brings light into darkness, the one who reveals truth and exposes lies. He is also the one who brings the Glory of God to the Temple, because he is the New Temple of God. He is the Word of God.

Week 6 (Day 32) Thursday, March 25, 2021

Psalm 118:1-2, 19-29; Deuteronomy 16:1-8; Philippians 2:1-11

As we journey toward the cross, we journey to Jerusalem. Jesus is about to enter the gates of Jerusalem on Palm Sunday. The Psalmist’s words are prophetically pointing us to the entry of Messiah into the City of Jerusalem, the place where Moses tells the Israelites in Deuteronomy that the Passover Lamb must be sacrificed. As Jesus enters the city, he enters to the praises of the people, but just as the psalmist says “The stone which the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone”, so too Jesus will be rejected by the Jewish leaders. He will become the sacrificial Lamb. Jesus is however more than just a sacrifice; he is the ultimate sacrifice. This sacrificial Lamb, as Paul says in Philippians, was equal with God, yet he chose to set aside his glory to become a Lamb to be slaughtered. But even though he gives his life as a ransom, he will be glorified above all creation and “every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”

Week 6 (Day 33) Friday, March 26, 2021

Psalm 118:1-2, 19-29; Jeremiah 33:1-9; Philippians 2:12-18

As Jeremiah delivers this prophecy, the City of Jerusalem is under siege by the Babylonians. The city is about to fall into the hands of Nebuchadnezzar, the Temple and the Holy city will be destroyed. Many Israelites will be taken into exile and many more will die. Yet in this atmosphere of doom and dread God brings a message of hope and restoration. A message of an “abundance of peace and truth”. Even though the gates of the city will be destroyed, the Messiah will enter through them. Even though the Temple will be no more, God will again visit His Temple. Healing and peace will come through Christ and together with Paul, we can say “Yes, and if I am being poured out as a drink offering on the sacrifice and service of your faith, I am glad and rejoice with you all. For the same reason you also be glad and rejoice with me.”

Week 6 (Day 34) Saturday, March 27, 2021

Psalm 118:1-2, 19-29; Jeremiah 33:10-16; Mark 10:32-34, 46-52

The restoration and healing that God promised Jeremiah in verse 1-9 is fleshed out in verses 10-16. Jerusalem will once again be re-built. The sound of joy and laughter will once again be heard in the city. It will be a place where weddings are celebrated and shepherds can graze their flocks. This will be a time when God will raise up a “branch of righteousness”. A Messiah who will save his people, one who will be called YHWH Tsidkenu “The LORD our Righteousness”. As Jesus makes his way to Jerusalem, he once again teaches his disciples that he must be rejected by the Jewish leaders, suffer and die and be raised from the dead on the third day. Even though he tells them these things plainly, they still don’t see what he is trying to say. When Jesus restores Bartimaeus’ sight, this is symbolical of the blindness of his disciples and even though Jesus reveals the truth to them, they are still as blind as Bartimaeus was.

Week 6 (Day 35) Monday, March 29, 2021

Isaiah 42:1-9; Psalm 36:5-11; Hebrews 9:11-15; John 12:1-11

Isaiah 42 is yet another prophecy of the Messiah to come. The Word spoken to Isaiah tells us that this coming Messiah is not only for Israel, but he will also bring light to the Gentiles, non-Israelites. He will open the eyes of the blind and set the captives free. This points to the spiritual nature of Jesus’ ministry. He will not only cure physical ailments, but more importantly, he will open spiritual eyes and release those who are held captive by the powers of evil, he would bridge the gap between all mankind and God. In the Old Testament the high priest acted as a mediator between the Israelites and God, but before he could take up his office as priest he had to be anointed with oil (Exodus 29). In John 12 we see that Mary, Martha’s Sister, anoints Jesus with a fragrant perfume. Jesus says that this is preparation for his burial, but it also symbolizes his ordination to be our high priest, our mediator before God. Hebrews 9 explains how Jesus’ offering of his own blood is a permanent and final offering that atones for our sin and that he is now the High Priest for us.

Week 6 (Day 36) Tuesday, March 30, 2021

Isaiah 49:1-7; Ps 71:1-14; 1 Cor 1:18-31; John 12:20-36

The themes of light in darkness, opening blind eyes, bringing Gentiles to know God has been prominent in the readings leading up to Easter. The Old Testament is constantly pointing us to a coming rescuer. A person that will not only save Israel, but will also bring the nations to know and worship the God of Israel. In today's Gospel reading in John 12 a group of Greeks want to speak to Jesus and again Jesus speaks about his coming death, but this time there is a voice from heaven saying "I have both glorified it and will glorify it again." Even though Jesus teaches plainly about what is about to happen and his message is validated by the audible voice of God, there are still those who don't believe. Do you know someone who has heard the Gospel and still refuses to believe? Paul tells us in 1 Corinthians 1 that the message of the cross is a stumbling block to the Jews and foolishness to the Greeks. For some people religious rituals give them hope and purpose, but this is a stumbling block that keeps them from accepting the truth. For others the message of the cross is foolishness because they rely on science and knowledge. It is only when we rely on God's wisdom that the stumbling block is removed and we can truly understand the purpose of the cross.

Week 6 (Day 37) Wednesday, March 31, 2021

Isaiah 50:4-9a; Psalm 70; Hebrews 12:1-3; John 13:21-32

For some of us this Lenten journey has been hard. Our fasting and spiritual discipline has taken a toll on us physically and spiritually. Now as the cross looms before us we need to look to the Lord for encouragement and strength. Isaiah and Psalms speak about finding strength in God in the midst of adversity. Even Jesus has to confront the one who will betray him to his death in John 13. But we are not alone. There are those who have walked this road before us. In Hebrews 11 and 12 we are told to consider those saints who trusted in the Lord and looked for his salvation. In our lives we have men and women who have walked this road before us and we can find strength in their example of courage and faith in God.

Week 6 (Day 38) Thursday, March 24, 2021

Exodus 12:1-4, (5-10), 11-14; Psalm 116:1-2, 12-19; 1 Corinthians 11:23-26; John 13:1-17, 31b-35

As we approach Good Friday, we are once again reminded of who Jesus is, the Lamb of God (John 1:35). The Passover feast was the most important feast for the Jews. They were commanded to slaughter a spotless lamb and apply the blood of this lamb to the door posts of their homes. The amazing thing is that the blood of this gentle creature had the power to keep death out of the household who trusted in God's Word. In the same way we receive eternal life when accepting the sacrifice of God's perfect Lamb, Jesus. On this very night Jesus and his disciples are celebrating the Passover feast, but this night is different, this is the eve of the true Passover. Jesus, however, has one more lesson to teach his disciples; the lesson of servanthood. By washing his disciple's feet, he demonstrates what our attitude should be towards each other. No matter what our status in society and the church, we are to show humility and a willingness to serve others.