

then He sent His Son to die for their sins, and His Spirit to guide them into truth.

Should we not be assured He continues to do the same in our time?

Psalm 102; 1 Corinthians 9:16-27; Matthew 8:1-17

Saturday, October 7

1 Corinthians 10:1-13 ...*but when you are tempted, he[God] will provide a way out so you can stand up under it.* (v.13b)

As often with our Lectionary, this week's holds a theme. Things may appear to be going to you-know-what in a handbasket, but God is in control. He is in control of the universe, the direction our society is headed and, when we allow Him into our hearts, of us.

If we truly trust our Lord, then we know that even in discipline, He loves us, protects us, and cares about what happens to us. Just as a child trusts his loving parents' actions are for his or her benefit, even when they seem harsh, so we as children of the King should trust that He's got this. He knows more than we do. Our role is to humbly obey, learn, and follow.

Yes, that is easier said than done. But as long as we reach for His light to guide us, He will direct our paths. Try on our own, and we'll stumble. We know how this story ends, right? So, dear believer, stay the course. Remain positive and hopeful. As the old hymn says, trust and obey because, when all is said and done, there truly is no other way. Amen?

2 Kings 19:21-36; Psalms 107:33-43, 108; Matthew 8:18-27

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Sunday, October 1

2 Kings 17:1-18 *The LORD warned Israel and Judah through all his prophets and seers...* (v.13a)

The little girl's lower lip quivered as she stomped her foot. "No fair."

Her wise mom responded in a quiet, even voice. "I warned you twice. If you didn't clean your room you couldn't go to the birthday party. Did you clean your room?"

"No." She scraped her toe across the carpet. "I didn't think you'd really mean it. I thought you loved me."

God, like any good parent, warns us. He doesn't punish us without cause. But He does enforce disciplinary actions. Nowadays, many believe in a Santa Claus God who will love them no matter what and will give them their "heart's desire." There is some truth in that, but our Lord cares about us too much not to discipline us. If we fall into sin, there are consequences.

Today, we are blessed to have not only Christ's intercession for us but the Holy Spirit's promptings to guide us. We have Scripture to teach us and the ability to go to our Heavenly Father in prayer. And yet, often like the little girl, we don't clean up our act and then wonder why we are not being blessed as others are. Doesn't God love us?

The answer is yes, more than we can fathom. Which is why He may say no on occasion.

Psalms 66, 67; Acts 9:36-43; Luke 5:1-11

Monday, October 2

Psalm 89:1-18 *Blessed are those who have learned to acclaim you; who walk in the light of your presence, O LORD.* (v.15)

Have you ever stumbled out of bed in the middle of the night and stubbed your toe? In the darkness it is hard to see obstacles in your path. You can either pick it up, or trust your groggy memory that it is still there the next time. You could wait for your eyes to adjust, but even then you are peering into shadows. How much easier to grab the flashlight?

Often times, isn't that what we do in our walk on this earth? We stumble on our own without asking for God's guidance...until we stub our toe. Then we have a choice. Proceed with caution, trusting our own instincts, or turn around and go back for His light.

Repent means more than to ask forgiveness. It is to turn around, to reverse one's course. It is a conscious effort to not proceed in the direction one is headed. It is seeking guidance before continuing down a certain path.

Over the years, I have slowly learned to reach for God's light when I can't see the way I should go. My toes hurt a lot less. And the amazing thing? In

the presence of His light, I not only see obstacles to avoid but His blessings along the path as well.

2 Kings 17:24-41; 1 Corinthians 7:25-31; Matthew 6:25-34

Tuesday, October 3

Matthew 7:1-12 *“Do not judge, or you, too, will be judged.”* (v.1)

Our nation thrives on judge-mentalism. One cannot disagree with the philosophy of another without it being interpreted that they condemn them, hate them, or disregard their human dignity. Thus, often Christians who refuse to waiver in their beliefs are seen as hate mongers, hypocrites, and haughty.

Jesus claimed we have to exist in this world even though we believers are no longer a part of it. He also explained that because the world hated him, it will hate us (John 15). However, Jesus reserved judgement. Why?

As soon as we judge we shut doors. It is hard to lead someone through a closed door, isn't it? A priest I know states, “I love everyone, all the way to repentance.” When someone's behavior doesn't measure up, how much better to show them a new way rather than to just condemn the path they are on. Jesus loved people in the messy state they were in, then encouraged them to repent.

Our churches should be open doors so the sick can enter to be healed. After all, aren't we still in need of healing ourselves? Would we want the door slammed in our faces when we slip into sins of anger, pride, or anxiety?

2 Chronicles 29:1-3, 30:1-27; Psalms 97, 99, 100; 1 Corinthians 7:32-40

Wednesday, October 4

1 Corinthians 8:1-13 *Now about food sacrificed to idols...* (v.1a)

When you read this passage today did your eyes glaze over? What does this have to do with me? A great deal, actually. We can apply Paul's wisdom to us living in the twenty-first century by examining what our idols are today and how we are feeding them.

I see two that are prevalent in our society—sexuality and physicality. They are two sides of the same coin. Everywhere we look we are bombarded by sex. It seems you can't watch a movie or TV program without it sneaking in. Newspapers, magazines, commercials, even tweets and posts on social media are all about our physical natures and desires. Clothes, diets, pills, and creams are designed to make us sexier. Everything is carnal. Feed the flesh. Spirituality is rarely mentioned in the media, unless it is to ridicule it.

While how we treat and see our bodies is important, it is what is in our hearts and souls that should be our emphasis. For example, it is easy to make losing weight an idol, i.e., our entire focus 24/7. Or having tight abs, youthful skin, or an enhanced sex drive no matter our age. Eating healthy and exercise is great, but some turn it into an obsession, an idol. And the media encourages us to do just that because their profit lines depend on feeding our appetites to look and feel great.

In our Christian walk, let's make sure our priorities are straight and we are not leading others astray by focusing on the idols in our own lives.

2 Kings 18:9-25; Psalms 101, 109; Matthew 7:13-21

Thursday, October 5

Psalm 105:1-22 *They bruised his feet with shackles, his neck was put in irons, until what he foretold came to pass, till the word of the LORD proved him true.* (vv.18-19)

The story of Joseph in the Book of Genesis is one of faithful tenacity. But it is also one of surrender and growth. A proud, haughty boy is brought low and humbled so God can then raise him up. Through Joseph's experiences, he learns to listen and obey God as well as to thank Him for His blessings, even when they are hidden.

Perhaps at this moment you are feeling a bit persecuted. Hopefully not to the extent other Christians around the world are, but the lashes of tongues strike across your soul as much as a whip on someone's back. You see your ideals being burned down and destroyed like others' houses and villages are. The “Christian way of life” is being toppled. You feel shackled by the worldliness of our culture and recent legislations. Freedom of religion seems to apply to everyone else except believers in Jesus.

In spite of it all, realize, like Joseph, who is in control. Hang tough, do not waiver and keep the faith. In the end, the word of the Lord will prove out. It might not be in our lifetime, but it will happen. As Paul states in Philippians 2:10-11, one day, every knee will bow and every tongue confess that Jesus is Lord.

2 Kings 18:28-37; 1 Corinthians 9:1-15; Matthew 7:22-29

Friday, October 6

2 Kings 19:1-20 *Give ear, O LORD, and hear; open your eyes, O LORD, and see...* (v.16a)

King Hezekiah pleaded for God to make things right, to bring just punishment to the Assyrians who blasphemed His people and His omnipotence. Isaiah prophesized it would happen, and the king prayed for it to begin. He wanted things to happen right then.

Sound familiar? It does to me. Oh, how I'd love a revival of Christian beliefs to sweep our culture. I want God to intervene and set things right. May the Assyrians of our time who wish to destroy anything faith-based be dealt with mightily and brought to their knees!

However, I need to acknowledge that God does see and hear. He knows not only what is happening today but what will happen tomorrow. He has not clucked His tongue and turned His back. Why? Because you and I are remaining steadfast.

At first glimpse, the Assyrians won. The Israelites were defeated and taken into exile. But God never forgot them. He stayed with the remnant and protected the faithful. Eventually the Assyrians were defeated as well by the Babylonians, who were in turn defeated by the Persians. God returned the people to the land, and their hearts to Him. And when things slid backwards,