

## **Devotional for May 6, 2020**

### **Announcements**

1. We continue to be socially distant and remain closed during this time. A small group of church leaders recently met on Zoom to begin discussing what opening up the congregation would look like once we get the ok from the scientists and the governor. Kathy Welch, Crystal Gomes, Liz Johnson, and I are part of this group. If you have any opinions or would like to be a part of this group, please send me an email at [revandysonneborn@gmail.com](mailto:revandysonneborn@gmail.com). You can also use the website to contact me. My information is also on the note pinned at the top of our Facebook page.
2. Thank you to everyone who continue to send in their tithes and offerings. Every little bit helps us to continue functioning while we remain closed. Please continue to send the tithes and offerings to Mickie Ulm at 516 Idlewhile Ct. Farmington, IL 61531.
3. Burning Bushes should have arrived either in your email or you mailbox. If you have not received a copy of the newsletter and you would like one, please reach out to me on Facebook comment section and I'll make arrangements.
4. We are going to continue with having music each week. Thank you to Diana Rolando and Beth Martin for all you do to bring us music during worship. If you are interested in sharing your vocal or musical talents, please comment below and I'll get in touch with you.
5. Don't forget that the Food Pantry will be open today from 1-2pm at New Hope Church. You are asked not to go inside. They will deliver a food box directly to your car.
6. We will be having our Youth meetup on Zoom tomorrow, Thursday May 7 at 1pm. If you have not received the zoom link and you would like to, please message me or comment in the comment section below.
7. Don't forget that each Friday, weather permitting, I will set out the church's grocery cart on the East side of the church building, near the intersection of Gold and Fulton. It will be out from 10-4. If you need to make arrangements for a different drop off time, once again, comment below or email me.

### **Psalm 50 (CEB)**

From the rising of the sun to where it sets, God, the LORD God, speaks, calling out to the earth. From Zion, perfect in beauty, God shines brightly. Our God is coming; he won't keep quiet. A devouring fire is before him; a storm rages all around him. God calls out to the skies above and to the earth in order to judge his people: "Bring my faithful to me, those who made a covenant with me by sacrifice." The skies proclaim his righteousness because God himself is the judge. "Listen, my people, I will now speak; Israel, I will now testify against you. I am God—your God! I'm not punishing you for your sacrifices or for your entirely burned offerings, which are always before me. I won't accept bulls from your house or goats from your corrals because every forest animal already belongs to me, as do the cattle on a thousand hills. I know every mountain bird; even the insects in the fields are mine. Even if I were hungry, I wouldn't tell you because the whole world and

everything in it already belong to me. Do I eat bulls' meat? Do I drink goats' blood? Offer God a sacrifice of thanksgiving! Fulfill the promises you made to the Most High! Cry out to me whenever you are in trouble; I will deliver you, then you will honor me." But to the wicked God says, "Why do you talk about my laws? Why do you even mention my covenant? You hate discipline, and you toss my words behind your back. You make friends with thieves whenever you see one; you spend your time with adulterers. You set your mouth free to do evil, then harness your tongue to tell lies. You sit around, talking about your own siblings; you find fault with the children of your very own mother. You've done these things and I've kept quiet. You thought I was just like you! But now I'm punishing you; I'm laying it all out, right in front of your face. So consider this carefully, all you who forget God, or I'll rip you to pieces with no one to deliver you: The one who offers a sacrifice of thanksgiving is the one who honors me. And it is to the one who charts the correct path that I will show divine salvation."

### **Meditation**

This is an interesting Psalm. On one hand, it seems all over the place. It starts out by praising God. Then there is all this discussion about animal sacrifices. And then we get this discussion about people who disregard God's laws. And it wraps up with verse 23, "The one who offers a sacrifice of thanksgiving is the one who honors me. And it is the one who charts the correct path that I will show divine salvation." I don't pretend to know fully what was going on in the mind of the author of this passage, but it's clear that they have a bone to pick with a bunch of people.

On the other hand, it seems that the author is upset with the people who claim to be righteous but actually ignore God's commandments. This sentiment is echoed several times throughout the Bible. Micah 6, "what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and love kindness, and walk humbly with your God." And there was the time that Jesus chased out the money changers in the Temple because they were desecrating God's Temple. And there was the time that Jesus summarized the law with two commandments: "Love God and love your neighbor." It seems time and time again in Scriptures, God is reminding us what is really important about worship. Worship isn't necessarily the rituals we perform. Worship isn't necessarily even what we do on Sunday, though it is part of it. Worship, it seems to the Psalmist, is about intentionality. How are we intentional in our actions? The rituals themselves, while they can be meaningful, are given their meaning by our intentions.

Don't get me wrong, showing up on Sunday mornings is a good thing. And the worship service is a good thing. But we have to always ask ourselves, where is our heart? Are we showing up to worship because we think it will make us good by showing up? Are we showing up to worship because that is what is expected of us and we don't want to disappoint a family member, or God? Are we trying to preserve the traditions of our church because they draw us closer to God or are we preserving them because they give us comfort and peace of mind? This gets to the heart of what the Psalmist writes.

The God who created the heavens and the earth is worthy of our honest and heartfelt praise and worship. All of creation declares God's greatness. During this time of isolation, I encourage you to look out at God's creation and see all the ways that creation declares God's goodness. And just know, we will be discussing soon, as a work group and as the Session, what worship is going to be like in the wake of Covid-19. Some

beloved things might have to be put on hold for awhile. We will have to make some tough decisions before we can reopen our church to worship. But the good news is, worship is less about the rituals and more about where our heart lies. Every time we gather for worship, whether it is online or eventually in person, we offer our whole hearts to God. Amen and Amen.

### **Prayer**

Let us pray. Good and gracious God, we come to you today, thankful for the beauty of your creation that you made good. We thank you for the trees blooming and the birds singing and the grass greening. Everything in nature is proclaiming the new life found in you. We ask you, in the midst of the newness of Spring, to be with us. While everything might be renewing, our spirits are heavy burdened. People are sick and dying every day. We can't do many of the things that bring us joy. Everything is different right now and it's hard. We turn our attention to you and your promise that you will carry our heavy burdens. So, we gratefully lay our heavy burdens at your feet. Be with the essential workers who are keeping us safe and fed. Be with the doctors and nurses and hospital workers keeping us healthy. Give us patience and endurance for this trial. All this we pray in the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord and savior, who taught us to pray, saying, "Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on Earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors. Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom and the power, and the glory forever. Amen.

### **Benediction**

Depart from this place trusting in the gracious mercy of God. And as you depart, go with the love of God, the peace of Jesus Christ, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, this day to do God's work. Amen.