

Devotions for the Week of June 18, Tuesday - Friday

Have you left for work without your Bible? Did you forget to download the free Bible to your smart phone? It's ok! Through an online search you can find your favorite translation of the Bible and use it to follow along with the devotions. www.oremusbiblebrowser.com is recommended and contains the New Revised Standard Version (NRSV), the most updated and most complete translation to date.

June 27

Psalm 6:1-3

The opening words of the psalm tell us that it is indeed a psalm of David, but also that there is instruction to the leader, the conductor as it were, who would lead the 'stringed instruments.' There is a curious further notation in that opening "to the Sheminith," which is instruction to the conductor as to how to play. There are many thoughts, all conjecture even from rabbinical midrash, as to what the sheminith means. Some consider it to be the 8th octave, but there is no evidence that the ancient Hebrews would have been familiar with our understanding of octave. Therefore, we are left with understanding the sheminith as an ancient psalm tone, one that is low and deep. Consider this day, what psalm tone is leading your life? What is your personal 'song,' as it were? Is your tune bouncy and happy? Is it low and forbidding? Is your personal tune jazz-inspired, or do you dance to music no one else can hear? Whatever tone is in your life, know that it is your gift of song from God.

June 28

Psalm 6:4-5

Who can give the Lord praise in sheol?! Wow! What a plea to God in a time of deep and sincere distress, David.

Sheol is understood as a real physical place in the ancient time - a place where trash and all sorts of unwanted things and people were dumped. David's plea indicates that he is feeling thrown away by God's seeming lack of concern. Sheol further developed, with Greco-Roman influence upon the Hebrews, into a concept of hell. Clearly, the place is not somewhere you want to be either figuratively or physically. Today, our concept of hell is a place over which Christ has won victory, for believers there is a place in the kingdom, not a damnation. David's words are then difficult to hear with the modern believer's ear, perhaps. Perhaps.

Perhaps, it is still for some who have not heard the saving grace of God in Christ to wonder about God's wrath upon us. Some may still fear God in a selfish way, a way that considers not God's grace, but one's personal safety. We should be cautious as believers to not confuse a sense of safety and a personal sense of security with salvation. In Christ, we are free - free of this torment! Thanks be to God!

June 29

Psalm 6:6-7

Have you ever had a good old-fashioned pity party? David seems to have melted into one in these two verses, has he not? What might be an annoying selfish fit to someone witnessing the act, is actually a painful experience for the one in the midst of the self-pity. Feeling alone against the world is a frightening experience for anyone. Children who are bullied experience it. Adults who face terminal illness experience it. Congregations dealing with abusive situations can experience this sense of loneliness. It is for these times we must remember Christ's reassurances to us in the Beatitudes. To recall that we are blessed. If David had had the living, dying, and resurrecting Messiah with him, this psalm might not have been written. Still, if you are experiencing a sense of misery today, know that you are in good company with King David. But, also be assured, Christ is with you and loves you!

June 30

Psalm 6:8-10

I'm sure most people over a certain very young age have heard the word 'exorcism.' To exorcise in a spiritual sense is not a light matter, nor should it be tended to from a standpoint of personal power. There are rites of exorcism in the Catholic and Episcopal Churches and, as a Lutheran representative, we might question if we also have such a ritual. We do not have a formal ritual for exorcising what some would call demons, others would call spirits, and still others, simply evil.

But, we do indeed pray. We pray a great deal as Lutherans. In the Sunday liturgy, we pray several times, from the prayer of the day, to the offering prayer, to the prayers at the Table, to the Lord's prayer, prayer after communion, the blessing prayer... We pray because we know that our defense, our protection, our value, our salvation, is in God and in God alone. We trust in the Lord God to keep us in all matters. Here, David says a brief prayer of what could be considered exorcism of evil from his life. This prayer of a believer trusting in God's power to remove all that is causing emotional harm, brings healing peace to David.

We also pray today that all evil be kept from us - that temptation, illness, malice, impurity, hatred, injustice, and all that causes us to be separated from God - be put out of our lives. Pray to the Lord God and know that you are saved by his grace through Christ!