

**Devotions - June 17-23, 2007**  
**by, Jeff Bonn**  
**Wartburg Theological Seminary**  
**Graduate awaiting Call**

**Sunday, June 17**

“Therefore, I tell you, her sins, which were many, have been forgiven; hence she has shown great love. But the one to whom little is forgiven, loves little.” Luke 7:47

God’s greatest gift through Jesus Christ is forgiveness of sins. We all find forgiveness at the foot of the cross. This story in Luke of Jesus’ feet being washed by a woman with tears and anointed with oil is his teachable moment showing the disciples that he forgives all sins and that our natural response of thankful love can be overwhelming.

Unfortunately, this story can also be taken as an excuse to sin more because God will of course forgive more and then love can “abound more.” It is important to remember that sin does not in any way please God. What pleases God is our repentance and joyful thanks for the forgiveness found in Jesus.

*Almighty Forgiving God: Thank you for your gift of forgiveness. Help us not to see each other in terms of our sins, but as your clean children, washed in the joyfully tearful waters of baptism. We pray in the name of your Son, Jesus Christ. Amen.*

## Monday, June 18

The priests went into the inner part of the house of the LORD to cleanse it, and they brought out all the unclean things that they found in the temple of the LORD into the court of the house of the LORD; 2 Chronicles 29:16

These priests in 2 Chronicles are answering the harsh call of their king Hezekiah to cleanse the house of the Lord and to renew the worship of the Lord. Our own houses of worship might not need to be cleaned in the same way, but this story is still a reminder that we are reforming church.

We are called to bring new life to our worship in the house of the Lord. A balance of old and new tradition should be regularly evaluated so that people are always drawn into worship where we can be deeply present with God and each other.

Take a look at where and how you worship. Does it only serve your traditional needs for being present with God? Can it be renewed in ways that deepen everyone's experience and even welcome those who want and need to hear a word of Gospel?

***Diverse and Powerful Trinity: We thank you for all the ways you are present with us, especially in worship. Help us to be open to renewal of tradition, to make the old new again. We pray in your name: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Amen.***

## Tuesday, June 19

So the couriers went from city to city through the country of Ephraim and Manasseh, and as far as Zebulun; but they laughed them to scorn, and mocked them. Only a few from Asher, Manasseh, and Zebulun humbled themselves and came to Jerusalem. 2 Chronicles 30:10-11

After the house of the Lord was cleansed and worship renewed, King Hezekiah sent word out for people to come back to the house of the Lord and to renew their own worship. What the messengers received was scorn and mockery, and with very little results in the numbers of people responding.

But there should be no doubt that spreading the word was still the right thing to do. It may not be easy, but it is still our cross to bear. We are called to tell the good news in word and deed and to invite people into the house of the Lord. We do not necessarily need to travel from city to city, because there are people we know at work and in our neighborhoods who will respond if approached. That response might be laughter and scorn. But God makes us strong enough to carry the load so that God's efforts through us can bring even a few.

***O Holy God, Worthy of Being Proclaimed: We struggle with sharing your good news to all the world and even our neighbors. Please forgive us. Help us to be strong in the face of potential laughter and mockery. Your Son Jesus was mocked on the cross that we now proclaim. Make this burden light, but do not take it from us. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.***

## **Wednesday, June 20**

Which is easier, to say to the paralytic, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Stand up and take your mat and walk'? Mark 2:9

Jesus' question here ends up being a false choice as he ends up equating the two. Healing is often connected to forgiveness and here it is most dramatic.

But it is especially dangerous when sin is directly connected with infirmity. People will then conclude that the sick and tragically diseased are so because of their sins. It is important to remember that we are all sinners and are all in need of healing, and that sickness is not punishment for unforgiven sins.

So why then is forgiveness connected to healing? While the need for forgiveness and physical healing are not connected, true forgiveness and healing **are** connected in that they come from God. This healing is not just the relief of aches and pains, but rather something much greater and on a grander scale. The healing that Jesus provides is beyond just our physical bodies. It is healing that puts us at peace with what we have done, what has happened to us, and what God calls us to do. And that is certainly connected to forgiveness.

***Miraculous God of Peace and Wholeness: We come before you as sick sinners. We thank you for your forgiveness and healing as it comes through the work of your Son, Jesus Christ. Amen.***

## **Thursday, June 21**

You, then, that teach others, will you not teach yourself? While you preach against stealing, do you steal? You that forbid adultery, do you commit adultery? You that abhor idols, do you rob temples? You that boast in the law, do you dishonor God by breaking the law? Romans 2:21-23

Amidst the greater passage of Romans with so many interpretations of Paul's message about the Jews, these verses give more concrete explanation of his theme about judgment. After Paul's harsh words about others who sin, he follows with what is the more important point. Any judgment we make is foremost judgment against ourselves.

Whenever we look at others and see their sin, we do so because of our own sin. In these questions of Paul from Romans we are demanded to look at our own sin first. And when we do so honestly, we see that we are the sinners condemned by God.

But then we can know and truly feel the joy of God's saving grace through Jesus Christ. We are condemned by our sin, but saved by grace through faith in Jesus Christ. We are to look at our own sin first, but God has the last word through Jesus Christ. And so we welcome sinners as God welcomed us, condemning the sins in us and celebrating the waters of baptism that can cleans anyone.

***God of our Wondrous Baptism: Thank you for your gift of grace through Jesus. Help us to see all of our neighbors with us at the foot of the cross humbled by our sins and thankful for your Son, Jesus Christ. Amen.***

## **Friday, June 22**

The scripture has imprisoned all things under the power of sin, so that what was promised through faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe. Galatians 3:22

There are times when we don't seem to understand what is going on with certain passages of the Bible and even wish the Bible didn't say what it says. Someone that reads the Bible and doesn't have trouble with it sometimes is probably not looking closely enough or out and out ignoring what they do not want to deal with.

But this passage puts a general focus on reading scripture. What the Bible sets in writing is there for a reason. We do not know all those details, but the scripture that Paul talks of here is that which shows our limits and names sins.

What we do without God, those things cannot ultimately be good. They cannot save us. Scripture makes that clear. And so we live in the promise that through Jesus we are with God, and what we do through Jesus and the Holy Spirit is good.

***God of Grace: We are imprisoned under the power of sin. Thank you for breaking these bonds and giving us the gift of your Son, Jesus Christ. Amen.***

## Saturday, June 23

But you, O LORD, do not be far away!  
O my help, come quickly to my aid!  
Deliver my soul from the sword,  
my life from the power of the dog!  
Save me from the mouth of the lion!

From the horns of the wild oxen you have rescued me.  
I will tell of your name to my brothers and sisters;  
in the midst of the congregation I will praise you:  
You who fear the LORD, praise him!  
All you offspring of Jacob, glorify him;  
stand in awe of him, all you offspring of Israel!  
For he did not despise or abhor  
the affliction of the afflicted;  
he did not hide his face from me,  
but heard when I cried to him.

From you comes my praise in the great congregation;  
my vows I will pay before those who fear him.  
The poor shall eat and be satisfied;  
those who seek him shall praise the LORD.  
May your hearts live forever!

All the ends of the earth shall remember  
and turn to the LORD;  
and all the families of the nations  
shall worship before him.  
For dominion belongs to the LORD,  
and he rules over the nations.

Psalm 22:19-28

***Eternal God, your Son cried out in anguish from the cross, and you delivered him. Do not hide your face from those who cry out to you. By his death and resurrection bring life where there is death: feed the hungry, strengthen the weak, and break the chains of oppression, that all people may rejoice in your saving deeds through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen.***