

FIRST things FIRST Daily Devotionals

Devotional Guide for July 1-7, 2024

These devotions are prepared for you each week by Pastor Kevin to use for your own personal devotions with the Lord, and are designed to prepare you for the message next weekend.

Monday, July 1ST “Whoever finds their life will lose it...”

Scripture: Matthew 10:38-39 NIV

To follow Jesus is not a frolicking walk through a primrose path; it is a serious commitment of one’s life to the Lord. In fact, the path of discipleship may indeed be one of losing physical life—becoming a martyr if necessary. To take up the cross of Christ is to state that you are ‘ALL IN’ with your commitment to Him. Verse 39 translates as “Whoever finds their life (spiritually) will lose it (physically), and whoever loses their life (physically) for My sake will find it (spiritually).” We need to remember that the disciples were common men given a compelling task. Before they were the stained-glassed saints in the windows of cathedrals, they were somebody’s neighbors trying to make a living and raise a family. They weren’t cut from theological cloth... but they were an ounce more devoted than they were afraid and, as a result, did some extraordinary things.

Question: Does this statement by Jesus sound compelling to follow Him?

Tuesday, July 2ND “God’s indescribable gift”

Scripture: II Corinthians 9:6-15 NIV

Having spoken of the need for generosity in chapter 8, Paul now explains the twofold result of generosity: first, verse 7 speaks of the “cheerful giver” who sows generously and will also generously reap both the spiritual grace and material prosperity that God provides (“God is able to bless you abundantly,” v.8). This permits us to be constantly giving spiritual and material benefits to others (“you will abound in every good work,” v.8). Second, because generous giving is an evidence of God’s grace, it prompts “many expressions of thanks to God” (v.12). The overflow of giving to the needy is praise offered to God. The surpassing grace from God is His “indescribable gift” (v.15) where we are lavishly loved in our lives. Our generosity, as a reflection of God’s generosity, enables us to experience both the privilege and the grace of giving to others.

Question: How have you come to appreciate this “indescribable gift” of God’s lavish grace and love in your life?

Wednesday, July 3RD “Wisdom, knowledge and happiness”

Scripture: Ecclesiastes 2:17-26 NIV

No matter how hard a person works, they have no control over their legacy. King Solomon, the author of Ecclesiastes, reached the conclusion that toil is “meaningless.” A challenge is understanding the Hebrew word **hēbēl**, translated “meaningless,” which most certainly indicated the despair in his quest for meaning in life, but it should not be understood as a final conclusion. A parallel expression is seen when he wrote about “a chasing after the wind” (v.26). This helps us grasp what the Teacher meant by “meaningless.” It is not that there is no meaning in life; rather, if there is meaning in life, Solomon simply could not fully grasp it—just like he could not grasp the wind. Life is utterly perplexing at times.

Question: In your pursuit of your life’s dream, is it mostly ‘meaningless’ or have you found purpose in your living?

Thursday, July 4TH “It is for freedom that Christ has set us free”

Scripture: Galatians 5:1-26 NIV

★ Taking a break from our passages for this weekend, today’s reading is especially for the celebration of Independence Day. To live under the law would be symbolic of living ‘the American dream,’ while life lived by being led and empowered by God’s Holy Spirit is the true ‘dream’ for the pursuit of God’s intention for our freedom. Christian freedom is not a license to sin, but rather, it is freedom to serve God and one another in love.

Question: How can you give thanks to God for true freedom today?

Friday, July 5TH “Who will get what you have prepared?”

Scripture: Luke 12:13-21 NIV

Jesus used familiar themes from the Old Testament wisdom literature to express the need for a proper perspective in life: productivity, wealth, and pleasure are futile (refers to Ecc.2:1, 5–11); death also powerfully reveals the meaning of our present existence (refers to Ecc.2:16; 7:2-4); and also that future judgment is real (refers to Ecc.11:8-10). To “eat, drink and be merry” (v.19) can be a sign of God’s blessing, but in this context, it reflects a lax/irreverent lifestyle. The underlying point is life’s uncertainty and the need to be alert. Our ‘dream’ should be to be vigilant in our discipleship and service... all the while being prepared and awaiting the return of Christ.

Question: Does your life reflect the ‘American Dream’ or the generous and devoted life that Jesus calls you to live?

Sunday, July 7, 2024

8:30 and 10:45 am (Livestream @10:45 am)
Ecclesiastes 2:17-26 and Luke 12:13-21 NIV
Pastor’s message: “The American Dream?”

