

FIRST things FIRST Daily Devotionals

Devotional Guide for July 15-21, 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 15TH “The ground was covered with weeds”

Scripture: Proverbs 24:30-34^{NIV}

In this proverb, a valuable lesson is presented: the vineyard of the sleeping sluggard is an analogy for an inheritance that has been lost through negligence. The author of this proverb urges us to live a life like a diligent vineyard worker, rather than to be lazy and unjust. One stumble does not define or break a person. Though you failed, God’s love does not. Face your failures with faith in God’s goodness. In God’s hands, no defeat is a crushing one. We must believe that God’s grace is greater than our failures. Turn over the struggling vineyard of your life to the power and guidance of the Lord. Apply this lesson to your heart and to your life, to succeed with God.

Question: See how easily weeds can grow in the lives of the non-faithful?

Tuesday, July 16TH “He gave the right to become children of God”

Scripture: John 1:9-13^{NIV}

The apostle John begins his gospel with an introduction to Jesus as the Word, the true light, one who had created the world yet was not received by the world. A personal pastoral peeve of mine is when I hear someone say, “We are all God’s children.” Not true—we are all God’s creation, yes... but we only become the children of God, when we receive and accept Jesus as our Lord. Being a child of God is a “right” given in this way: “to those who did receive Him, to those who believed in His name, He gave the ‘right’ to become children of God—children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband’s will, but born of God” (vs.12-13).

Question: How could you explain how to become a child of God to someone who made the statement, “We are all God’s children”?

Wednesday, July 17TH “The grass withers and the flowers fall”

Scripture: Isaiah 40:6-8^{NIV}

God’s grace is more powerful than anything our lives can produce. People present no barrier to God’s grace on behalf of His children. Humans are like grass and wild flowers: they wither and fall to the ground, for they are completely unreliable. In contrast, “the Word of our God endures forever” (v.8).

The apostle Peter used this very passage to affirm the infallibility of God’s Word, especially when it comes to its life-giving power. Our life is made eternal through this life-giving power of God’s Word of grace given for our lives.

Question: How does God’s Word refresh your life?

Thursday, July 18TH “An enemy sowed weeds among the wheat”

Scripture: Matthew 13:24-30^{NIV}

Although the actions in this parable may seem far-fetched and even impossible today, there are recorded examples in history of people behaving exactly like this—using a primitive form of what today would be called bioterrorism. The weeds sown by the enemy were called *tares* or *darnel* (in Greek *zizanon*), which often looked like wheat as the plants grew. The surprising twist in this parable is that the farmer forbids his servants to do any weeding at all. Although there was the real danger of uprooting the wheat while pulling the weeds out, the far greater danger is to do nothing and lose the entire crop. The farmer remains confident, nevertheless, that he will have an adequate harvest, and then he will instruct his harvesters to pull out the weeds and burn them.

Question: How has the world sown weeds into your life of faith?

Friday, July 19TH “The good seed stands for Kingdom people”

Scripture: Matthew 13:36-43^{NIV}

Jesus explains the parable of the weeds. Other than the parable of the sower seen earlier in this chapter, this is the only time in all of the Gospels that Jesus interprets one of His parables in elaborate detail. Like the sower (vs.3–9, 18–23) and the mustard seed (vs.31–32) and yeast (v.33), this parable is about the growth of the Kingdom of God. Despite all the obstacles it faces, and without necessarily removing them, God’s purposes will be accomplished throughout His creation. As more explicitly seen in the gospel of Luke 9:54–55, Jesus forbids His followers from trying to exterminate His opponents. When Jesus says that “His angels... will weed out of His Kingdom everything that causes sin” (v.41), He is not referring to a mixed church of believers and unbelievers, but rather to the entire human community, which combines good and evil people. Jesus will be their final judge; for now, the Kingdom does not come with irresistible power, but leaves room for those who want to reject it to do so. But, why in the world would anyone want to reject God’s Kingdom!?

Question: How can you “weed out” that which limits Your faith?

Sunday, July 21, 2024

8:30 and 10:45 am (Livestream @10:45 am)

Isaiah 40:6-8 and Matthew 13:24-30,36-43^{NIV}

Pastor’s message: “Holy Tares!—
the Parable of the Weeds!”

Worship theme: “Powerful Parables!”

