



WESTMINSTER
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

September 16, 2018

Thy Word
Rev. Louise Rogers

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Psalm 1

*Happy are those
who do not follow the advice of the wicked,
or take the path that sinners tread,
or sit in the seat of scoffers;
but their delight is in the law of the LORD,
and on his law they meditate day and night.*

*They are like trees
planted by streams of water,
which yield their fruit in its season,
and their leaves do not wither.
In all that they do, they prosper.*

*The wicked are not so,
but are like chaff that the wind drives away.
Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgement,
nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous;
for the LORD watches over the way of the righteous,
but the way of the wicked will perish.*

Matthew 7: 24 - 29

'Everyone then who hears these words of mine and acts on them will be like a wise man who built his house on rock. The rain fell, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on rock. And everyone who hears these words of mine and does not act on them will be like a foolish man who built his house on sand. The rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell—and great was its fall!'

Now when Jesus had finished saying these things, the crowds were astounded at his teaching, for he taught them as one having authority, and not as their scribes.

Today we baptized Parker, Asher and Charlotte three beautiful children. As we welcomed these children into the family of faith each person in the congregation made a pledge; we were asked this question, “Will we nurture these children by word and deed with love and prayer?” We answered, “We do”. In the Presbyterian Church we do not have the official office of God parents because the congregation as a whole, on behalf of the Church universal, assumes responsibility for nurturing the baptized person in the Christian life. The faith journey for these children begins with the waters of baptism followed by a blessing; you are sealed by the Holy Spirit and marked as Christ’s own forever. As spiritual parents we take the baptismal pledge seriously as we guide them in discovering their beloved identity in Christ.

Gifts are given to those who come to be baptized. Here at Westminster we shower Bibles on the newly baptized. It begins this week when the families will receive the Big God Story, a summary of the Bible from Genesis to Revelation reflecting the theme of God’s love. When the child is 5 or 6 years old, a Storybook Bible will be provided. We are having a special storybook time for children and parents next Sunday afternoon where the families can select a special Bible appropriate for their child. In second grade, the children will receive their own Adventure Bible as they stand on the steps of the Chancel. For Confirmation, around 9th grade, Student Bibles with sophisticated helps will be given. These helps allow the student to dig into the word with more sophistication. The gifts are supported by Sunday school where Bible lessons are taught by dedicated teachers in addition to Vacation Bible School where we learn Bible

verses in fun and exciting ways while singing catchy tunes of Bible stories. We shower the children and families with Bibles because we know how important the word of God is for shaping who we are and whose we are in the faith. When we give the scriptures we are in good company, the Apostle Paul was nurturing young Timothy in the Christian faith and Paul declared, “*All scripture is inspired by God and is useful for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, the ways of God.*” (2 Timothy 3:16)

Children and adults grow and grow up. In a similar manner we are to grow up in our faith, not to remain infants. The Bible shows us the path where God has been present with humanity since the beginning of time and is present in our world today. God’s voice, God’s word is the rock upon which solid lives are built. By studying the scriptures we find God’s faithfulness, constant love and eternal goodness.

Where do you sense God’s presence? Many people feel close to God in the beauty of nature- the brilliant colors of a sunset, observing the seasons changing in due time, standing at the vast expanse of the ocean. The Psalmist confirms that “*the heavens are telling the glory of God*” in creation’s general revelation. Through special revelation, the revelation of the scriptures, the Lord God almighty comes into focus. John Calvin said, “Scripture is like a pair of spectacles which dispels the darkness and gives us a clear view of God.” God is not just sending us a cosmic homework assignment; God is gifting us with the holy word as a love letter. When we read the scriptures the word of God can

change our life, touching our hearts and put us on the right path.

Here is my testimony: When I was in middle school, Westminster Church was hosting a youth choir that was traveling through this area for a weekend. My family agreed to host two high school girls who would be staying with us for the weekend. I soon learned they would be staying in my room! Being the cool middle school kid, I kept dropping in to my bedroom whenever they were home to talk to them. Erika, one of the choir members, had her Bible with her and we talked a little about it. I was trying to impress her with my Sunday school knowledge. When she left on Sunday, Erika left behind her Bible for me with a note. “Louise, many thanks to you and your family for your hospitality. You can have this Bible. It is easy to read. God Bless you all.” I was amazed that someone would part with their Bible and leave it for me. I was so touched. That day I sat down and began to read the Bible for myself.

That day I stepped into the streams of faith and discovered the holy inheritance of the others who encountered the Lord long before me: Abraham and Sarah who obeyed the call of God and left their home to follow the call, Joseph who forgave his brothers, Peter, the Apostle and Paul at his conversion, the women encountering the angel at the empty tomb to hear first, “He is not here He is risen”, at the empty tomb, great cloud of witnesses in Hebrews. Jesus – “Love your enemies, pray in secret, Know that I am with you to the end of the age.” Reading the Bible myself transformed my life, changed my heart and from that time I committed

my life to following the Lord. Daily seeking to follow the teachings of his word with all I am and with all I have. I am deeply humbled that God would bring this word into my life.

Jesus came declaring, “I am the Living water.” Jesus offered this living water to the woman Samaritan woman at the well who learned when she accepted that gift, the water of God’s word restored her and gave her new life. In her excitement she shared the news with her entire village. The good news of the living water still flows for us. We too have voices that try to pull us away. We have to choose away from the disrespectful, the road of sinners, and the wicked advice. We can choose to listen to God’s voice. That’s when we will find ourselves planted anew, by streams of water. The Psalmist writes that those who walk in faith are like a tree planted by streams of water. A tree cannot grow by itself- every tree needs nutrients, water and sunshine to grow tall. Spiritually, we receive gifts from God. We are gifted with the Holy Spirit who adopts us and names us as part of the beloved. We have the community of faith, our church for nurture and love to care for one another and love each other, and the divine scriptures revealing God to us. The tree along the stream bears fruit and we will too. Bloom where you are planted. We are called to work in our corner of the world for His mission in the world – his mission of care, justice and love. Together we are transformed by the word into God’s people.

New resources of meditating on God’s word are available to us all the time. The Bible is translated into all languages and can be found in many different styles. The

Bible is even available on our phones. The Presbyterian Church has an app which provides daily selections of Bible readings and prayers. Pray as You Go is another app allowing us to listen to a section of the Bible with a short musical introduction from believers lifting their voices in praise to God from all over the world. If you have never ventured into the Bible yourself I suggest starting with a gospel, Matthew or Mark, the Psalms are a good place to begin reading.

Each week after the scripture reading we say, thanks be to God. The scriptures are a gift to all of us from God defining who we are and whose we are- Yes, thanks be to God!!



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