

GLENKIRK CHURCH



WEEKLY DEVOTIONS

The DEVO

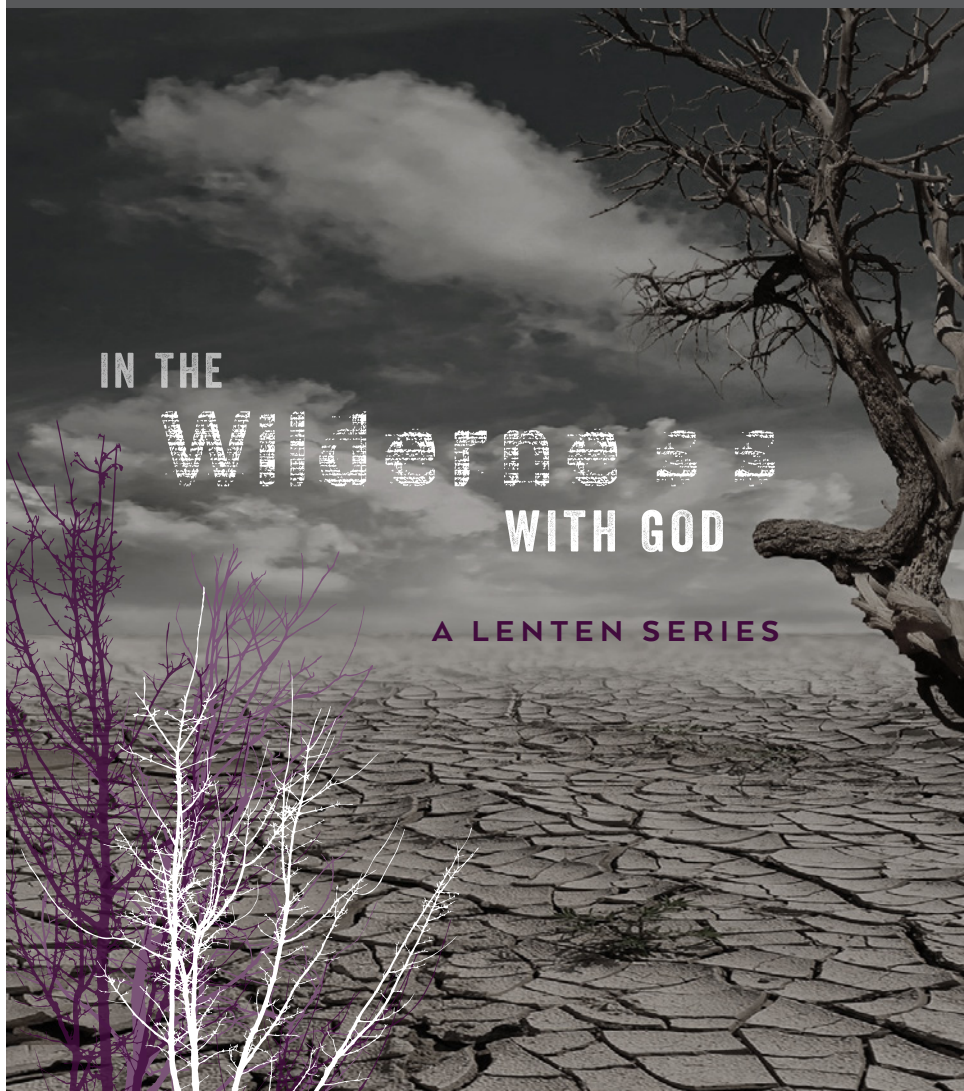
MARCH 25 - 29, 2019

IN THE

WILDERNESS

WITH GOD

A LENTEN SERIES



Thy Will Be Done

When reciting the Lord's Prayer, we pray: "*Thy will be done.*" But do we mean it? "Today we find ourselves a bit offended by what God seems to be requiring of us. His will—which requires self-denial—has come into conflict with our will that is bent on self-preservation. We've begun to wonder if it is really possible that our will could ever be lost in His." (Nancy Guthrie) In Jesus we find companionship, hope and help. It was in the Garden of Gethsemane that Jesus, so normally full of strength, prays: "Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from Me" (Matthew 26:39). In the Garden there is a very real human struggle between obeying the Father and avoiding the Cross.

“Somehow it helps to know that Jesus wrestled with the Father’s plan for His life and His death even as He sought to submit to it, because I, too, have wrestled with the Father’s plan for my life even as I have sought to submit to it.” (Guthrie) Jesus was able to submit because He had a greater longing: to fulfill the purpose and plan of God. It is possible, in faith, to push through our desires and gain Jesus’ perspective, allowing the Holy Spirit to actually change what we want. Confident that whatever God asks us to endure is purposeful, we begin to believe that the joy of surrendering is worth whatever it may cost.

In his sermon on the Lord’s Prayer, Helmut Thielicke reminds us that all of the first petitions of the prayer are uttered from the depths of our souls. This petition, too, is prayed before the dark backdrop of a world in which, notoriously, His will is not done. Rather, the will of man has resulted in so many wars, persecution and suffering. Even as we look within our own hearts, we see that our will, filled with egotism, pride, and want, gets in the way of truly loving others. Is it not our own will that really makes us so unhappy?

We would not have to pray for God’s will to be done if it were really being done amongst us. Jesus said, “*My food is to do the will of the [Father] who sent me*” (John 4:34). It is not an “extra,” a “dessert.” No, it is the principal meal of my life. Unfortunately, our standards of value have become so twisted and distorted that we are determined, for example, to have a certain standard of living. We want to achieve success; we want our families to be

happy—and if it turns out otherwise, we clench our fists and curse the will of God that spoils our plans, or we fall into doubt and despair and our love grows cold. And all the while we are protesting, we grow hungrier and emptier. (Thielicke)

Jesus' struggle in the Garden was not to make God accept His plan; He was not asking that He be able to fulfill the Messianic destiny without suffering. He was struggling in order that His own will should not get between Him and the Father. Jesus shows me that I can pray to my Father that His will is done—even beyond my own prayer and understanding—and therefore in prayer I can put my fate and my lot into His hands. (Thielicke)

Source

- Nancy Guthrie. *Christianity Today*. Lent/Easter 2019.
- Helmut Thielicke. *Our Heavenly Father: Sermons on the Lord's Prayer*. New York City: Harper and Row Publishers, 1960.

This week why not try this. Every morning slowly, intentionally pray each line of the following prayer. Listen for what God might say to you. Ask, “Lord, what might Thy will be for me today?” Then make the commitment to do whatever He brings to mind.

Lord, give me Your
eyes
to see with, Your
ears
to hear with, Your
mind
to think with, and Your
heart
to care.
Give me Your
voice
to speak with, in gentle
strength I'll share.
Give me
hands
to serve with, Your
feet
to move with.
I anticipate Your
power
through me to do
exceedingly,
abundantly,
beyond.

(by Carolyn Baker and Megan Hutchinson)

MONDAY

1 Samuel 16

David's life takes up a significant portion of the Old Testament. His story begins in the wilderness. God sends Samuel to Bethlehem to anoint David king, but when he gets to Jesse's house and asks that Jesse have all of his sons parade before Samuel, David is left completely out. Later, when his brothers are at war and Jesse sends David to check on their well-being, his brother Eliab called him conceited and wicked.

Towards the end of his life, his own son Absalom tried to steal Israel's kingdom from him. On that occasion, as David flees Jerusalem, he is pelted with rocks and curses by Shimei (2 Samuel 16). David's army will eventually overthrow Absalom, but rather than praising his men, we find David mourning Absalom's death to the extent that the men themselves feel defeated, ignored and ashamed. Yes, he is a king, but he is also a warrior, an adulterer, and a scheming murderer; he definitely did not do a good job managing his household. And yet he is known as a "man after God's own heart."

There are exceptions, but over and over again rather than reacting, rather than taking matters into his own hands, David consistently seeks to honor God. When Shimei was cursing him, he left the matter in God's hands, allowing God to be his justifier. And when

his men pointed out that Saul had been delivered into David's hand while David was hiding in the cave as Saul went in to relieve himself, David refused to harm "the Lord's anointed," relying on God's methods and timing instead.

David was sought out by God. God set him aside for His purposes. Did David do things right? Far from it. But David continued to honor God, to worship God. When appropriate, he spent days fasting, praying and repenting. After looking at his riches, he wanted to figure out a way to thank God, asking God if he could build Him a temple. David had a soft heart towards God. He failed, but failure is not the bottom line; his response to God is.

At the end of the day, do we respond to God with hearts of praise, gratitude and worship? Will we let God transform us throughout our lives? Will we endure situations, seeking God in the midst of them rather than taking matters into our own hands? The issue is not whether we get it right or wrong, whether we are successful or not, but whether we are humbly dependent on God to be our justifier and provider.

PRAYERS FOR MISSIO COMMUNITY CHURCH

Pray for Missio Community Church, a new ECO church in Pasadena that launched in January 2018. Missio is embodying the Gospel through outreach to Caltech students, equipping Fuller students, and working towards racial reconciliation in Pasadena. Glenkirk supports Missio through prayer, finances, and an elder (Steve Sharp) serving on the leadership team.

TUESDAY

2 Samuel 24

One of the last events in David's life is found in this chapter. What a way to end. Had David learned anything? Well, first it is important to note that we never outgrow sin. In fact, the more mature we are in Jesus, the more readily we recognize the sin in our life. Furthermore, the sin is less about our actions and more about our attitude.

What is so bad about taking a census? There are a number of theories, but most revolve around taking note of how rich, how powerful one is. There is a sense that David is counting his laurels, so to speak: "Look what I have done with my life! Look at how successful I am!" David is becoming less dependent on God and more dependent upon himself.

Tim Keller points out: "Israel was moving in the direction of doing what all the other nations did, and that is they were simply building up a military force to be used in order to colonize weaker countries, to get tribute from them in order to enrich themselves. But God in the Old Testament never says Israel is supposed to be the terror of the whole earth ...

"Rome and Babylon were terrors of the whole earth ... Jerusalem was supposed to be the joy. Why? Because God says, in Deuteronomy 4, and other places ... "I want you to be the joy of the whole earth. I want you to be a light to the nations, not a terror to the nations.

I want the other nations to see how you treat one another, how your society works. Other societies are built on power and wealth. Your society must be different. Your society must be built on service, not power, service to God, service to your neighbor.” (Tim Keller)

This chapter ends on a high note. Note verse 17. David is asking that the sin be on the shepherd’s shoulder’s, not on sheep. The threshing floor that is bought will become the place where Solomon builds the temple. It will be at the temple where the Passover lambs will be sacrificed each year, cleansing Israel of their sin. This is a picture of what the Good Shepherd will do on Good Friday for all of us.

What had David learned during his life? That it is better to depend on God’s mercy than on anything else. Elisabeth Elliot, a Christian writer, once summed her whole life up like this: “[This is what I’ve learned.] God is God. If He is God, He is worthy of my worship and my service. I will find rest nowhere but in His will, and that will is infinitely, immeasurably, unspeakably beyond my largest notions of what He is up to.”

PRAYERS FOR MISSIO COMMUNITY CHURCH

Pray for favor to reach unbelievers at Caltech through Missio’s science and faith forums on campus.

WEDNESDAY

1 Samuel 17

No weekly devotional focused on David is complete without looking at this story, especially in a series based on “meeting God in the wilderness.” This story shows us the results of meeting God in the wilderness. It was because David had lived so long in the wilderness, in solitude, keeping the sheep, doing the mundane day-to-day task of work, learning to protect the sheep against lions and bears that David is prepared to meet the real enemy. We often discount what God is doing in our lives through the years of preparation, the years of the mundane, but it is in the preparation that a foundation is laid for the real victory.

Because of the wilderness experience, David gained the confidence that others lacked; he did not see Goliath as an all-consuming giant of a problem, but as he really was—an uncircumcised Philistine, (in the eyes of God) a mouse of a man. When we look at our problems from the world’s perspective, we too see giants; but when we see them from God’s perspective, they are cut down to their proper size.

The temptation is always to fight as the world fights. Saul gives David his tunic, armor, and sword; these were confining to him. Instead, David takes his shepherd’s staff and sling shot. When doing battle, what are you tempted to fall back on. The Sermon on the Mount seems so counter to world’s ways of doing things: turning the other cheek, heaping coals of love on our enemies,

walking an extra mile, being humble and gentle. The world laughs and mocks at these, but we must remember: every battle that we face really belongs to the Lord. We do not win in our own power for our own glory, but we are engaged in His battles for the purpose of advancing His Kingdom. It is always good to ask: What am I really fighting for?

The world will often mock us. We will often look small in their eyes. All of this is part of the wilderness experience because truly at the end of the day, what we have to offer is not ourselves but our God. To the extent that we try to lift up ourselves, we will fail. But to the extent that we point to our God, His presence and power, His victory is assured.

The temptations of the world are strong. Often we are not willing to learn in the wilderness; instead, we seek to escape it, engaging with the world's weapons and the world's value system. But we are called to point to our God and to be ready to allow Him to help us face giants in His love for His glory.

PRAYERS FOR MISSIO COMMUNITY CHURCH

Pray for God to open up ways for Missio's four Neighborhood Groups to bless and reach their neighborhoods with the Gospel.

THURSDAY

Psalm 63

The gods of old were to be feared, appeased, won over in order that the people might find life. In Psalm 63 David is saying that rather than fearing God, he has come to know the love of God, and that knowledge and experience of God is better than life itself.

C.S. Lewis calls this an appetite for God. Do you long for God? Would you say you have an appetite for just being with God? The enemy seeks to distract us, but David has found his true joy in God alone. Lent is a good time to put aside distractions and, like David, cry out to God.

This psalm moves from a longing for God to a commitment to worship Him, to a meditation on His care, ending with confidence in His victory. David begins by crying out to God. He has a personal relationship with Him, putting his whole being into the search for God. David's thirst for God is set in the context of the wilderness. "The wilderness strips us of our defenses and reveals our vulnerability; it quiets us before God. Now we are ready to hear Him and to do battle with ourselves and with the devil." (David Williams)

"[As] a result of worship, God gives His own food to David and he is filled." (Williams) David not only engages in public worship, he actively remembers and meditates on God in private. Remembering

what God has done for us encourages faith and reminds us of God's faithfulness. David dwells on God's help, protection, and authority. David's joy is not in winning the battle but in God who wins the battle. Do we worship God for His benefits? If we do, we will end up worshipping the benefits rather than God Himself.

Our lives, like David's, are full of battles. We must recognize that behind the battle is the one who seeks our defeat but whose "doom is sure." Thus, we must take on every battle as if it were a spiritual battle and fight it accordingly. "We too must worship and meditate before we fight, because we can only fight in the power of God. Thus, we need to follow close behind Him and be held up by Him. As this becomes our spiritual lifestyle, we too will see God's power and glory, and our hunger for Him will be satisfied." (Williams)

Today read each line of Psalm 63 slowly and then pray it back to God, using your own words and thoughts, and expanding on the words as they relate to your current situation. Learning to pray the psalms is a great act of individual worship.

PRAYERS FOR MISSIO COMMUNITY CHURCH

Pray for protection and strength for Missio's lead pastor, Len Tang, and his family.

FRIDAY

1 Samuel 23:13-29

“It is typical of human nature to see God’s hand where and when we choose to do so and to ignore it on other occasions.” (David F. Payne) Do you ever do this? Often we look for miracles in the supernatural, but more often than not the miracles of God occur in the everyday events of daily life if we would just be open to perceiving them and meeting God in the wilderness.

David has done nothing wrong. God has lifted His protective hand from Saul and decided that David should be the next king of Israel. In many respects David is an innocent bystander swept away into the wilderness even though he has done everything right. And yet, it is through this wilderness experience that we see Jonathan abdicating his rights to the throne. It is in the wilderness that David learns to be a leader and to seek God’s guidance. It is in the wilderness that we see God positioning him to become king. And it is in the wilderness that we see God’s miraculous protection of David through the day-to-day events of life.

All too often we would have played the victim card—we would be crying out, “Why me?” All too often we would have lashed out against those who were not on our side, like the people of Horesh and the Ziphites who are siding with Saul. These groups did not know any better; for all they knew, Saul was the rightful king pursuing David for good reason. How easy it is to misread people and situations.

God protects David by raising up the Philistines against Israel at just the right moment and by sending Johnathan to David to strengthen him. Do we see God in the little events of life? Through what set of glasses do we view the events of our day-to-day lives? Even on a national and international level, we often do not understand what God is doing. But He is working to bring into being the Kingdom He wants to establish.

One of the best illustrations comes in the midst of Al Qaeda. Over and over we are hearing from mission partners that many Muslims are coming to Jesus because they do not like what they see in Islamic extremism. They are reading their Korans and yearning towards the grace and mercy of Father God. We, like David and Johnathan, need to be open to God's ways and works. We need to seek His guidance in the little things, as well as the big, and trust that all the events of today and of history are in God's hands accomplishing His will in His way.

PRAYERS FOR MISSIO COMMUNITY CHURCH

Pray for wisdom for Al Han, Missio's church planting resident, as he prepares to plant an ECO church in Glendale.

Sources:

- Timothy J. Keller. Sermon on March 14, 2004, “The Hands of the Lord” (The Gospel According to David Sermon Series, 2004). *The Timothy Keller Sermon Archive*. New York City: Redeemer Presbyterian Church.
- Elisabeth Elliot’s quote can be found at <https://www.goodreads.com/quotes/8649075-god-is-god-if-he-is-god-he-is-worthy>
- Donald Williams. *Mastering the Old Testament: A Book by Book Commentary by Today’s Great Bible Teachers (Psalms 1-72)*. Nashville: Word Publishing, 1986, pp. 428-433.
- David F. Payne. *I and II Samuel (OT Daily Bible Series)*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1982, p. 122.

