

GLENKIRK CHURCH



WEEKLY DEVOTIONS

The DEVO

JUNE 24 - 28, 2019

A close-up photograph of a succulent plant with thick, green, pointed leaves. The image is overlaid with several semi-transparent geometric shapes: a large green triangle on the left, a large blue triangle on the right, and a central white circle. Dotted lines in yellow, orange, and white connect various points on the plant's leaves and the central circle, creating a network-like pattern.

IN COMMON

SERMON SERIES

June 2 - July 28

MONDAY

Genesis 12:1-6, 17:1-27

This week our “In Common” series will focus on the common practices of the sacraments: Baptism and the Lord’s Supper/Communion.

In an ECO leadership video on the sacraments, the Rev. Dr. Gregory P. Wagenfuhr, ECO Theology Coordinator, comments that the sacraments are “Holy Theater.” More than just acts of remembrance, they integrate us into the Story of God through the empowering work and presence of the Holy Spirit. Through baptism we are “sealed” as belonging to God. In participating in Communion, we allow God to work in us and through us to fulfill his mission. They are like a work of art with layers of meaning.

As Protestants we celebrate two sacraments, the two Jesus participated in and redefined. The sacrament of baptism can be traced back to the Jewish practice of circumcision. Circumcision did not save an Old Testament believer; it was a sign, a seal of God’s covenant, His binding pledge to fulfill His promises. In the practice of circumcision, the Jewish people were saying that they would worship and follow God; they were His holy, set apart people. Abraham was saved through his faith (Romans 4:9, Genesis 15:6). The act of circumcision came later.

In Genesis 17 we see God making a covenant with Abraham, marking it with circumcision. I remember Jack Hayford once saying that the act of cutting off the flesh of Abraham’s foreskin was an act of marking Abraham at his most intimate place of creativity and ability to produce life. It is also a mark of cleanliness. Abraham and his descendants were brought into a life-altering relationship with God.

Abraham's identity was now found in the reality that Yahweh was his God. Abraham was to stake his life and that of his family's on God's commitment to keep His promises. He was being called to represent God to the world. God promised to bless him and his descendants that they might be a blessing to others. God was creating a people for himself to accomplish His mission of restoring the world back into relationship with Him.

Much like in marriage where rings are given as a sign, a seal of the promises made between a husband and a wife, circumcision and baptism show that we now belong to God. All His promises are for us, and we have entered into a new way of life. We now live with a new identity in and with Him.

QUESTIONS

What promises of God do you need to stake your life on today? Where do you find your identity in belonging to, in being "married" to God in your job or daily activities?

PRAYERS FOR YOUTH MISSION TEAM TO ALABAMA

Pray for a great start for Glenkirk's Youth Mission Team as they serve in Birmingham, Alabama! The team will be engaged in construction and running VBS at a local church.

TUESDAY

Matthew 3, 28:16-20

For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. (Galatians 3:27)

At the time of Jesus, baptism was required for converts to Judaism. Jewish people who had become impure, for example, through the touching of a corpse were also baptized as part of the temple ritual, representing a change in status in regard to purification and restoration, and qualification for full participation in the life of the community. Thus, when John comes along baptizing Jews, he is telling good practicing Jews that they are unclean, that they might as well be foreigners outside of God's covenant promises. This was highly insulting to those who were trying to keep the Law of God and seeking to remain clean, hoping that by their works of keeping the Law, Messiah would come restoring Israel to its former glory.

In Jesus' baptism, He was identifying with us, a sinful people who had so wandered from God that we needed help in being restored into God's holy people, restored into God's covenant promises. In baptism we recognize our need for cleaning. We admit that we are a sinful, rebellious, idolatrous people and we need to begin again. Jesus' baptism was an act of obedience, of submission to the Father; our baptism is an act of cleansing, rebirth, submission, and obedience.

Having said all this, it is also important to remember that Jesus did not need to be cleansed. His baptism was more an act of commissioning.

His job was to lead a new Exodus, to create a new people who were under the love, authority, ownership, and instruction of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. “Holy Theater,” works of art, so much depth of meaning.

In baptism we become part of God’s people, part of His story. Just as Noah went through the flood waters and the Israelites went through the Red Sea (being released from the slavery of Egypt) and then went through the Jordan river into the land of promise and salvation, so also in baptism we go through the waters, being released into the promises of God. John’s baptism in the Jordan was an invitation to return home to God. It was a call to repent of idolatry and take an oath of allegiance to God. Baptism is a commissioning into the mission of God.

QUESTIONS

In what ways do you need to clothe yourself with Christ, showing that you have passed through the waters of salvation into God’s promises?

PRAYERS FOR YOUTH MISSION TEAM TO ALABAMA

Pray that God would strengthen relationships amongst the student team members and adult leaders as they serve. We want our Glenkirk team to be loved well as they love the city of Birmingham.

WEDNESDAY

Hebrews 8; 9:11-27

In baptism we receive a new identity; we are set apart, adopted into the family of God. It is not what we do; it is what Father God has done through sending Jesus to die for us and sending His Spirit to live within us. It is a call to change, to live in a new way with new values. It is “a commissioning.” It involves responsibility. As parents we are responsible to bring up our children to know God, to be part of God’s redemptive story, to be holy and set apart for God. As adults we are a holy people with the responsibility of taking God’s love, grace and mercy to the world.

Baptism, though, is less about us and more about dedicating ourselves to be part of the people of God. It is about dying to this world, dying to self, and being raised with Christ. After baptism we live under the name, identity, authority, possession, and resources of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

It is important to remember that baptism does not save us. It is instead a sign of God’s working, God’s calling, God’s promising. We submit to baptism in obedience, having received His grace and recognizing His calling. God finishes what He vows, and in baptism we trustingly receive His work in our lives. God’s promises are for us and our children. We are to bring our children up in God’s holy land to be His holy people.

In baptism we receive our adoption papers. These can never be rebuked. We can pretend as though they do not exist, but once adopted we are always welcome to return home. It is God's act, and thus it is not something we repeat. The Lord's Supper (Communion), on the other hand, is to be received regularly. It nourishes us, empowers us, enables us, heals us.

Both of these sacraments are about God preparing and empowering a people who are worthy to rule with Him, having clothed themselves with His character and His Spirit over a reconciled and renewed creation. We celebrate that we are the people of God becoming the image of God, through Jesus, to serve Him in the midst of a broken world that He is in the process of restoring. When we receive the elements of Communion, we remember our baptism and are nourished by partaking in the family meal.

QUESTIONS

How are you living out your responsibilities as members of God's family?

PRAYERS FOR YOUTH MISSION TEAM TO ALABAMA

The middle of the week can be a difficult time for energy! Pray that the team will be energized and encouraged for service. Pray for unity and grace amongst the team members even with tired bodies.

THURSDAY

Exodus 12, John 6:22-71

Just as baptism found its roots in the Old Testament so also the Lord's Supper finds its roots in the Old Testament Exodus story. In the Lord's Supper we celebrate that Jesus has become the once-and-for-all Passover Lamb. We are under His blood. We escape the "angel of death" by His action on a cross and are set free from all that would entangle us.

Sin is a word that we often use to refer to specific activities or actions. But it is really a word that describes the rebellion and slavery that is behind the action. Being drunk is an action that comes out of our slavery to alcohol. Being angry at an individual is often an action that comes out of our slavery to self and the misunderstanding that the world revolves around us and we know what is best. We are enslaved with the need to be in control. The Israelite slaves were saved as they submitted in obedience to God's Word; likewise, in the Lord's Supper we submit ourselves to God's terms of new life through belief in and trusting obedience to Jesus.

As the slaves ate manna in the desert, we partake of bread in Communion. We proclaim that we find our life not in our efforts but in the gifts of God. As we eat the bread, we are united with Christ. We declare that all we need is found in Him alone. We trustingly declare that He will meet our every need. Just as Jesus declared that He lives by the Word of God alone, and just as God

provided all that was needed when the Israelites lived in the wilderness on the way to the Promised Land, we affirm our dependence on God.

The meal is called the Lord's Supper, Communion, the Eucharist (thanksgiving), and it thus is "Holy Theater" rich with meaning. The call to partake together is to recognize that we are being called to be the people of God. It is about God and what He is doing, not about us individually. We are being nourished in the work of God, and we are thankful for who God is and for all He is doing.

The sacraments are an outward sign of an inward reality. They are not magic, nor are they just symbols. As we partake of baptism and Communion, the Holy Spirit works in us.

QUESTIONS

Where do you need to rediscover your first love, to renew your commitment to Jesus? In what ways do you ask Jesus to make your life about Him?

PRAYERS FOR YOUTH MISSION TEAM TO ALABAMA

Pray that Glenkirk's youth mission team would experience God in powerful ways. As they wind down the week, guide them to be open to the ways that God wants to work in their lives.

FRIDAY

1 Corinthians 10:14-11:1; 11:17-34

Paul writes 1 Corinthians as a corrective letter. What needed to be corrected was the way the Corinthians worshipped and the condition of their hearts. In many ways these Corinthians had accepted Jesus, but their hearts had not been transformed.

The common practice was to gather for worship at the conclusion of the day's work. The church would meet around a table at a large home. The first people to arrive were those whom the servants assisted. The servants came later. People brought contributions to the meal and began eating as they pleased. By the time the believing servants arrived, many were already full and some even drunk. Paul is asking that the Corinthians examine themselves before they partake of Communion—examine their hearts.

In many ways as we come to partake in the sacraments today, we too need to hear these words. Sometimes when we baptize infants, we see this sacrament more as a ritual. We make promises to pray for families and to bring up children, but do we follow through? Do we pray for the children in our youth and children's department? Do we engage them on the patio or go to their sporting and music events? We could spiritually "adopt" one of Glenkirk's children and become friends with them. As parents we make promises, but do we allow outside events to get in the way of worship and children's events? Do we pray with our children, and do we read Scripture with them at home on a regular basis?

When we gather together at the table, do we do so as a ritual? Do we recognize that we have been called into a new citizenship? Do we ask Jesus to show us where we have continued to worship the idols of the world, repenting and making the needed changes? When we are out of relationship with others, do we seek—in obedience to Jesus—to make the relationship right? Have we made “following Jesus” about going to heaven someday or about living now in the Kingdom, bringing the values and behaviors of heaven into our day-to-day lives?

QUESTIONS

Do we see ourselves as a part of God’s story, His story of bringing the world back into relationship with Him? Or do we just see this as a far-off reality? How might you need to examine your relationship with Jesus and others?

PRAYERS FOR YOUTH MISSION TEAM TO ALABAMA

Today is the last day of the trip. Pray that the efforts of the Glenkirk Youth Mission Team in Birmingham would be multiplied and would be more than we could have asked for or imagined. Pray that our time in Birmingham would end well with our team and with those we have partnered with this week.

Sources

- John P. Sartelle. *What Christian Parents Should Know about Infant Baptism*, Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing, 1985.
- https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_baptism

