

GLENKIRK CHURCH



WEEKLY DEVOTIONS

The DEVO

NOVEMBER 14 - 18, 2022

Hebrews 11-13

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Sermon Series

Oct 2 - Nov 20

MONDAY

Read **Hebrews 13:15-16, 18-19; Luke 24:52-53; 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18**

We have been in a series on faith and conclude this sermon and devo series this week exploring the theme, “Faith is offering our praise.” Through our faith we believe in and worship a faithful God, who is just, all-knowing, loving and true. Our God never changes, waiting continually for us to cast our cares and trials upon Him. Our faithful God is the Creator of the universe and everything in it. God is our Fortress. He is worthy of all praise!

In this week’s passage of Scripture found in Hebrews, we find a charge to “*continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God*” (v. 15). There are many things to consider with these specific nine words, the keys to abundant life.

Consider the word “*continually*”—how often do we do anything continually? We breathe continually and our heart beats continually. However, do I think about each member of my family continually, or my favorite sports team or favorite food continually? Not really. I do think about these things often, but not continually. *Continually* means “constant, incessant, perpetual, a close prolonged succession or recurrence.”

Biblegateway.com indicates 26 occurrences of the word “continually” in the Bible, 20 of these in the Old Testament. The six passages found in the New Testament encourage continual prayer—thanking God

persistently—and praising Him continually. See Luke 24:52-53 for just one example. Our passage from 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18 likewise calls us to pray continually. This is a significant statement, often very contrary to my faith journey—generally, I rather pray at regular times or in times of need and desperation. I am learning—I need to learn—how to praise God continually, walking prayerfully with Him throughout my day.

Praising God is much easier for me when I am continually in tune with my faith in Jesus, like the breath I breathe and the beat of my heart—assured every moment that Christ is my Savior, that He loves me in all situations! Hallelujah and Amen! But, unfortunately, daily obstacles can distract me from this awareness. I am a continuing work-in-progress, faithfully being refined (sanctified) continually by the Holy Spirit.

QUESTIONS

Do you continually ponder and rest in your personal faith in Jesus Christ? What things in your life continually consume your thoughts (family, work, hobbies, or something else)? Do these ever get in the way of your relationship with God?

PRAYERS

For Living Stones Ministry

Pray for Living Stones Ministry's growing children's book series, which addresses gender and sexuality from a biblical perspective. Pray for the young hearts being reached through our *Moving Forward in Hope: A Devotional for Families with LGBTQ+ Loved Ones*. Pray that the faith of family members will be strengthened through the Word of God.

TUESDAY

Read **Hebrews 13:15-16; 2 Samuel 22:49-50**

Yesterday we discussed “*continually*.” Today let’s consider another portion of Hebrews 13:15: “*praise to God*.” We know who God is: our personal Lord and Savior, the Triune God, Father, Son, Holy Spirit, and Creator of all created things. As addressed yesterday, God is worthy of all praise—but exactly what sort of “praise” should that be? Praise is “an expression of approval, worship, value, to glorify (adore and make known) another.”

We commonly express praise as singing, often in church hymns and praise songs. And this is absolutely appropriate—we are called to such heartfelt, corporate praise and worship of our God. The latter portion of Hebrews 13:15 calls such God-honoring praise “*the fruit of our lips, acknowledging His name*.” Hosea 14:2 uses these same words—“*fruit of our lips*”—to characterize our proper course when seeking God’s forgiveness, praising Him for His grace, patience, and love.

If you are at all like me, however, you know that it can sometimes be challenging to transition fully from an overpacked, rushed life into surrendered praise and corporate worship of our worthy God. Unfamiliarity with a song or an instrument that does not appeal to me can distract or dampen my worship. I can wrestle with being fleshily instead of gratefully surrendered at such times. However, the true

“Church” is a biblical community called together to praise and worship God. The related, grateful overflow should fuel our related sacrifice and God-honoring service of others.

Each Sunday’s hour or so of service, including perhaps 15 minutes of singing, is a modest commitment. It should be joyful, not feeling like a “commitment” at all. Hebrews 13:15 reminds us that church should be a corporate celebration of our individual, continual, personal praise to God.

Praise is not limited to singing. We can praise God in prayer; we can praise God in our lives by faithfulness and serving in His name; we can praise God by graciously facing trials while praising Him throughout. Our featured Hebrews passage reinforces that glorifying God should be intentional, not muted nor obscured. Psalm 30:12 encourages us accordingly: *“that my heart may sing Your praises and not be silent.”*

QUESTIONS

Are you comfortable praising God? When are you less comfortable praising Him? In which ways are you able to praise God comfortably and most naturally (singing, listening, arms raised, prayer, dancing, other)?

PRAYERS

For Living Stones Ministry

Pray for Living Stones Ministry’s support group leaders as they minister to many families through both in-person and online meetings. Pray also that those who attend that the support groups will be encouraged and strengthened by God as others come along side to be of support for them. Pray that they experience God’s comfort and peace.

WEDNESDAY

Read **Hebrews 13:15-16; 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18; Acts 16:23-25**

This week has emphasized how we should continually praise God. Hebrews 13:15 terms it a “*sacrifice of praise to God.*” However, why a sacrifice of praise? When I consider the term “*sacrifice,*” I think of Jesus’ atoning death on the cross. What “*sacrifice*” are we being called to in our praise? Sacrifice is generally thought to be something valuable, costing the sacrificer financially and/or in time and effort. How is praise—something piling in comparison to what Jesus has done—a sacrifice?

In 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18, Paul reminds us to “*rejoice always, pray continually, and give thanks in all circumstances.*” Thus, when circumstances are problematic, we are called still to praise God. In other words, we should praise God when we are in the eye of personal storms—I believe this exemplifies the sacrifice referred to by these verses. I might be naturally inclined here to worry, doubt, question, or default only to trusting in my own ingenuity when engulfed in a trial. The “*sacrifice*” is to put fleshliness aside and trust fully in God amidst challenging circumstances.

The call to praise God amidst often confusing and painful storms (including harm, loss, death, sickness, divorce, war, chaos, etc.) is “unnatural” and challenging. Thus, we read today’s Scriptures

characterizing this as a “*sacrifice of praise*”—praise to God while enduring problems. Such praise is a fruit of faith in a just God who loves us and adopts us eternally in Christ. Acts 16:23-25 recounts how Paul and Silas did this even while chained in prison!

Hebrews 13:15 reinforces how we are called to continually praise God in good times and bad, intentionally and outwardly through our attitudes, words, and actions. Such a call can feel like it’s beyond us, even overwhelming. However, my experience has been that I am closest to God when offering Him praise and worship. These are times when I am most comforted, hopeful and assured about life in this world. My aim and prayer are that praising God would be a continual pattern in my life, not evident only when praying, in Bible study, or in Christian fellowship. I want to praise God also during life’s inevitable “storms.”

QUESTIONS

Have you considered praising God in the storms of your life? Do you consider it a sacrifice to praise God when things aren’t going well?

PRAYERS

For Living Stones Ministry

Pray for the Living Stones Ministry’s staff and board of directors. We want to be open and sensitive to God’s leading in every aspect of this ministry. Pray that God will protect us and our families as we continue to proclaim His message of healing to hurting families and help them move forward in hope.

THURSDAY

Read **2 Corinthians 9:7-15; Matthew 28:16-20**

Hebrews 13:16 follows the prior verse's encouragement to continually offer sacrifices of praise to God with a call to "*not neglect to do good and to share what you have.*" Some Bible translations and commentaries call doing good and sharing generously acts of kindness. Hebrews 13:16 again refers to these as "*sacrifices,*" acts that often include an intentional sacrifice of time, resources, and/or gifts and talents. Such kindness is enabled by all that God has done for we who follow Christ. If "*my cup (of gratitude) overflows*" (Psalm 23:5), acts of God-honoring service and kindness should result.

In 2 Corinthians 9:11, Paul reinforces that these generous acts will result in "*thanksgiving to God*" and that, thereby, "*others will praise God*" for our obedient sacrifice of generosity and/or service. Hebrews 13:16 calls us not only to do acts of service and kindness that include sharing our resources, but also to share our faith stories—how Jesus Christ is alive and working in and through our lives as we serve others and walk with Him. This is the very stuff of "*glorifying God*"—knowing Him and making Him known. Glenkirk's mission statement aligns with this theme: "Glenkirk Church is a worshipping community, inviting everyone to join in the journey of becoming fully devoted followers of Christ, loving God and His world."

Through God-honoring service to others and sharing the joy of Christ throughout, we offer praise and worship to our worthy, loving, faithful God. We are called to align such intentional acts in the Great Commission issued by Jesus in Matthew 28:16-20, our joyful and glorious charge to “*go and make disciples of all nations.*”

In my own faith journey, I’ve recently been struck by how Glenkirk’s mission statement “loving God and His world” harmonizes here. Some state it simply as “love God and love people.” I’ve always known God loves me unconditionally, but for some reason I haven’t always realized the call to love others (all people) as God loves us. This is what Hebrews 13:16 implores. Faithfulness here—loving God and loving others in His name—brings praise and glory to God, pleasing Him.

QUESTIONS

Are you comfortable sharing God’s love and kindness with others? Even people you don’t know? Do you embrace Glenkirk’s mission statement?

PRAYERS

For Living Stones Ministry

Pray for our development of our “Moving Forward in Community” project and the hurting family members who will listen to videos accompanied by a Bible study workbook. Ask God to fill the participants with encouragement, love, and His strength as they view the video stories and lean into God and develop a stronger faith.

FRIDAY

Read **Hebrews 13: 15-16; Colossians 1:9-14; 1 Timothy 2:8**

In Hebrews 13:18-19 the author appeals for the prayers of fellow believers: *“Pray for us, for we ... desire to conduct ourselves rightly in every respect. ... Pray [also] that I may be restored to you very soon.”*

Prayer can be an act of praise, thanking God for all He has done, for His promises, for His working in our lives, for His provision for our sustainability, for His loving concern for our cares, wants, and needs. Prayer should not be taken lightly, but should not be thought of solely as something formal. The Bible’s shortest prayer—exclaimed by Peter as he began sinking while walking to Jesus on the Sea of Galilee—was short, direct and unadorned: *“Lord, save me!”* (Matthew 14:30). In 1 Timothy 2:8, people everywhere are called *“to pray, lifting up holy hands”* in grateful praise.

Prayer is a personal conversation we each have with God; as well, we are called to corporate prayer among brothers and sisters in Christ. I have found introducing prayer in non-church settings to be extremely exciting, albeit a bit intimidating to initiate. I have suggested several times to some Christian work colleagues that we share times of prayer together. On a mission trip with Glenkirk’s high schoolers, I found it initially challenging to stand on a street corner in downtown Vancouver, Canada, holding a handwritten cardboard sign offering “free prayer.” Over the course of two hours, the two Glenkirk students and I had about 20 individuals approach us with sincere requests for prayer.

Colossians 1:9-14 describes prayer being used continually for Kingdom works: “We continually ask God to fill you with the knowledge of His will ... that the Spirit gives ... giving joyful thanks to the Father ... [for providing] the inheritance of His holy people in the kingdom ... For He has rescued us from ... darkness and brought us into ... redemption, the forgiveness of sins.” Such prayer embodies praise for our God.

Hebrews 13:15-19 shares our calling to continually offer sacrifices of praise to God through various means. It reminds me to focus my attention on Christ evermore, to praise Him in words, song, prayer, service, acts of kindness, loving God and His world.

QUESTIONS

Are you comfortable praying? Examine Colossians 1:9-14, reflecting upon prayer. Have you been convicted of anything through this week’s devo? Which of the words we unpacked challenge you most—“continually,” “sacrifice,” or “praise”?

PRAYERS

For Living Stones Ministry

Pray for all those caught in the LGBTQ+ lifestyle and for children and teens who are confused about their sexuality and God-given identity. Pray that they will come to know Him as their Savior and King, for He is the only one who can meet their deepest needs and heal the wounds in their hearts.

Sources

- *Nelson's Quick Reference Bible Concordance* (Nelson Reference & Electronic Publications, January 1, 1993).
- *Webster's Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary* (Merriam-webster+ Inc; 9th edition, January 1, 1983).
- Got Questions?org found at <https://www.gotquestions.org/sacrifice-of-praise.html>.

