



Week Eleven Devotions

Provided by the Ministry and Program Staff of
The Presbyterian Church of Stanley

Day 71

Scripture: Matthew 26:57-Mark 9:13

I love those Geico commercials with the cavemen: "So easy even a caveman can do it."

Matthew 28:18-20, known as the Great Commission, makes Church so easy even a caveman can do it. We are duped into thinking that Church is hard and difficult. We have committees and boards, stewardship drives, building maintenance, fancy websites, social justice position papers, evangelism strategies, technology knee deep and long range plans.

We are making it too difficult, much too difficult. Jesus Christ made it simple. "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe everything I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

The formula is simple--make disciples, seal them with God's grace through baptism, teach them to obey. It's a three part process. "So easy even a caveman can do it." That is all we are called to do- Nothing more. If we get this right, everything else falls into place. If we get this wrong, the whole thing falls to pieces.

Now, the cynics or maybe just the realists among us will say, "This is easier said than done." Maybe, but don't forget we have a lot of help. Jesus Himself promised two things. First, He has all the authority in heaven and on earth. If we pursue His purposes, we will prosper. He also promised His presence. Christ's cavemen don't work alone. He is always with us. With Christ's presence and His power, we cannot fail. It's so easy even a caveman can do it. That is assuming that the caveman does what Christ commands.

Eric Laverentz, Senior Pastor

Day 73

Scripture: Luke 2:1-Luke 9:62

Luke 2:25-26 Now there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name was Simeon, and this man was righteous and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him. And it had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ.

The story of Simeon found in chapter 2 was part of Luke's purpose of assuring his readers that Jesus was indeed the Messiah. He used the testimony of credible people to do this. Simeon was righteous and devout, one of the believing remnant in Israel who was looking for Messiah's appearing. The Holy Spirit led Simeon to be present in the temple courtyard when Mary and Joseph arrived to consecrate Jesus to God. Again the presence of Jesus became an occasion for joy and praise of God. This was consistently the response of the godly to Jesus in Luke's Gospel and should be ours as well today.

Now, Simeon acknowledged that Messiah had come. He equated the Messiah with God's salvation. He also viewed the salvation that Jesus would provide as being worldwide, not just for Israel. Mary and Joseph understood that Jesus was the Messiah. However they had evidently not connected some of the Old Testament revelation about Messiah to which Simeon referred with Jesus. God used a stranger to inform them of their Son's significance for the Gentiles. Some of them would reject Him and so fall spiritually while others would accept Him and therefore rise spiritually. He would be a sign in the sense that He would personify the decision to obey or disobey God's will. Faith in Jesus demands a choice and a declaration like Simeon's. What's yours?

Molly Jones, Associate Pastor for Discipleship

Day 74

Scripture: Luke 10:1-Luke 20:19

Several times in the Gospel of Luke, Jesus talked about the "Kingdom of God." It seems the Pharisees and the Jews had great curiosity about the Kingdom of God. What would it be like and when would it arrive? Through the use of parables, Jesus tried to explain some things about the kingdom of God. In Luke 13:18-19, he said it was like a mustard seed, one of the smallest of all seeds. Once planted in a garden it would grow to be a tree, big enough for the birds of the air to perch in its branches. He said it was like yeast that a woman mixes in with flour and works it all through the dough. The yeast then transforms that flour into a beautiful bread dough, both lovely to look at and delicious to eat. In response to a question by the Pharisees as to when the kingdom would come, Jesus answered in this way, "The kingdom of God does not come with your careful observation, nor will people say, 'Here it is,' or 'There it is,' because the Kingdom of God is within you." (Lk. 17:20) What a concept! The Kingdom of God is within each one of us. As we allow the Holy Spirit to work within us the way rain and sun cause a seed to grow and as yeast causes dough to rise, we become transformed in such a way that we are literally bringing God's kingdom into the world. It is our responsibility and privilege to bring God's Kingdom into our broken world. It is not something that will just happen. It begins with us, the disciples of Jesus Christ.

He also said in Luke 18:16 that "anyone who will not receive the Kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it." Children had very little status in the ancient world. How odd it must have seemed to hear that one must become like a little child to enter the Kingdom of God.

Jan Zimmerman, Children's Ministries Director

Day 75

Scripture: Luke 20:20-John 5:47

The faith challenge presented in these verses is that we have to be aware, and to see God in everything, perhaps a new way of thinking. From Luke 21,

"...Be careful, so you are not fooled. Many people will come in my name saying, 'I am the One.'"

"...Be careful not to spend your time feasting, drinking, and worrying about worldly things."

"...Pray for strength against temptation, all things were made by him, and nothing was made without him."

"...Human life comes from human parents, but spiritual life comes from the Spirit. Don't be surprised when I tell you, 'you must all be born again.'"

How do we gain understanding? How do we follow the path Jesus has set? How can we begin to be the people that God wants us to be? It starts by inviting Jesus into our thoughts, it starts by reading scripture faithfully, it starts by us knowing that God loves us, and surrendering our will to His, every day.

~Harlan Harper, Youth Ministries Director

Harlan Harper, Youth Ministries Director

Day 76

Scripture: John 6:1-John 15:17

In the 13-16 chapters of John, Jesus and his disciples are in the upper room celebrating Passover just before his arrest and crucifixion. Jesus has told his disciples he is going away and in chapter 14 Thomas asks the question on all of their minds, "Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?" I think this is still the question for us today. How can we know the way to God?

In verse six Jesus gives Thomas the answer. "Jesus said to him, **'I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.'**" "He not only shows people the way (i.e., by revealing it), but he *is* the way (i.e., he redeems us). In this connection 'the truth' . . . will have saving significance. It will point to Jesus' utter dependability, but also to the saving truth of the gospel. 'The life' will likewise take its content from the gospel. Jesus is both life and the source of life to believers."

Jesus was not saying that He was one way to God among many. He was not saying that He pointed the way to God either. He said that no one comes to God the Father but through faith in Himself. This means that religions that assign Jesus a role that is different from the one that the Bible gives Him do not bring people to God or eternal life. This was an exclusive claim to being the only way to heaven (cf. 10:9; Acts 4:12; 1 Tim. 2:5). Believing in Jesus Christ as God's Son and our savior is the way to God.

Finally, "We should not overlook the faith involved both in the utterance and in the acceptance of those words, spoken as they were on the eve of the crucifixion. 'I am the Way,' said one who would shortly hang impotent on a cross. 'I am the Truth,' when the lies of evil people were about to enjoy a spectacular triumph. 'I am the Life,' when within a matter of hours his corpse would be placed in a tomb.

Molly Jones, Associate Pastor for Discipleship

Day 77

Scripture: John 15:18-Acts 6:7

In the last days, God says, "I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions, your old men will dream dreams." Acts 2:17

Today's reading marks the end of the teachings of the four gospels. It is hard to imagine with only these four brief accounts of his life, the story of Jesus has been preserved throughout centuries for every generation, translated into virtually every language on earth and believed by countless millions who have responded in obedient faith. I love how John sums up the enormity of Jesus' life, by emphasizing that "Jesus did many other things as well, if they were all written down even the whole world would not have room for the books that would be written." As the gospel accounts come to a close with Jesus' ascension, Luke tells us, in the book of Acts, the story of the beginnings of the church and the significant work of the Holy Spirit in guiding and strengthening the church as it spread across the Mediterranean world.

I am inspired by the "acts" of the apostles and how they demonstrated unwavering faith in spite of retribution. What about our "acts" in today's world? Do our words and actions reflect that of Jesus? Are we allowing the Holy Spirit to work in and through our lives so as to help others come to know Jesus as their personal Savior? Dear Lord, help us to be convicted to act out our faith, as were the early apostles.

Robyn Hartfield, Music Ministries Director