

*Bethany Lutheran Church  
2900 Parkview Drive  
Longview, WA 98632*

*January 2021 Devotional*

*God's Blessings to . . .*

# January 2021 A Pandemic Devotional Bethany Lutheran Church



During this difficult time of physical separation, God calls us together through the power of the Holy Spirit. We invite you during this time to join together each day with our Bethany family through this daily devotional.

Your Bethany family continues to hold you in prayer, and we look forward to being physically together again.

If you enjoy this devotional and would like this to continue for February, please let Pastor Megan know!

Lectionary texts and some quotes taken from Sundays And Seasons  
(Augsburg Fortress)

## A message from Pastor Megan:

Throughout this time at home, many of are experiencing “Zoom-out”, and as we begin to become accustomed to our new routines, making time for scripture, prayer, and connection becomes more difficult. We invite you during this time to use this daily devotional as little or as much as you like. Our devotional this month has a special focus on stewardship and our stewardship season theme “Building From Our Cornerstone” as well.

Each day follows a similar format:

**Scripture**—Spending time in God’s Word each day

**Story**—Meditate over the stories, questions, and applications

**Prayer**—Pray together with your Bethany family, connected through time and space with words and Spirit.

**Connect**—Make some time to connect with others, discuss the day’s devotions, touch base, help others to remember that we are in this together.

**Prayer**— Lord Jesus, make us messengers of your peace, of your Good News, help us to participate in your reign on earth, preparing the way for you by sharing your love and care with all. In your name we pray, amen.

**Connect**— Connect in prayer today, listen for how and to whom God might be sending you as a messenger today.

## Sunday January 31st, 2021

**Scripture**—Mark 1:21-28

**Story**— This is sort of a strange Gospel to have on the Sunday of our annual meeting (which begins at noon today! Log in or call in to our Zoom call, we need your voice!).

But it’s been a strange year right? So here we are.

One of my favorite things about this text particularly, is that although the religious leaders are amazed at Jesus’s teaching and wondering who he is, the unclean spirit don’t have that problem. The unclean spirit in the man don’t just know Jesus is the “Holy One of God”, but they say it out loud, in front of everyone!

So with the story of Jesus’s healing this man in need, is also this framing of how sometimes well-meaning and even well-educated in faith people can miss the point. We can have a blindfold on to who Jesus is and what he’s doing, even though those considered the very least of these (a man with an unclean spirit) is able to speak out loud the truth of Jesus’s identity.

And as church people in our modern time, even we struggle with speaking this truth outside of our church building. But maybe, as we have our annual meeting, 10 months into this pandemic, maybe we can speak loudly and openly more about who Jesus is to us and to the world.

**Prayer**— Lord, open our eyes to Jesus in our lives and open our mouths to speak the Good News of your Holy One to those in our community, amen.

**Connect**— It’s Sunday! Take some time today to reach out to members of your church family for coffee hour conversations!

## Thursday January 28th, 2021

**Scripture**—Psalm 67

**Story**— I love all this imagery around blessings, and I hope we can dive more deeply into giving praise for all that we have been given than a mug or a wall décor that simply says “blessed”. (Although I do have both and I love them)

**Prayer**— Lord, be merciful to us and bless us with your shining presence and light. Amen.

**Connect**— Connect with blessings today. What blessings has God poured out over you? Over our church family? What are some blessings you are giving thanks for today?

## Friday January 29th, 2021

**Scripture**—Luke 21:10-19

**Story**— This piece of apocalyptic (“eye-opening”) scripture from Luke is a reminder of endurance and faith in difficult moments. Certainly every generation has endured and faithfully found ways through wars, national disasters, and even pandemics. Part of this kind of eye-opening scripture is to get us thinking and wondering, and maybe even finding comfort in the “current form of the world” as Paul puts it fading away into something else.

**Prayer**— Lord, be with us in our suffering, strengthen our endurance, hold us in our faith, and continue to care for each of us, in the name of your Son, Jesus, we pray, amen.

**Connect**— Take some time to connect with this passage, is there something in this that might be opening your eyes?

## Saturday January 30th, 2021

**Scripture**—Malachi 3:1-2

**Story**— Malachi is filled with imagery of a refiner’s fire, of enduring the Lord’s coming. It’s similar to much of what we read in the prophets.

But something I deeply appreciate from our reading today is the way in which God sends messengers to prepare the way. In the Gospels this is often John the baptizer, but I wonder about us today—how might God be preparing us right now to be messengers sent to prepare the way for the Lord?

## Friday January 1st, 2021

**Scripture**—Jeremiah 31:7-14

**Story**— It’s sort of interesting to read scripture celebrating the joy of gathering God’s flock when we can’t physically be gathering together.

But I keep coming back to the ways in which we can celebrate gathering via technology, physically distanced events, etc.

And I think this may be where I am finding the heart of our Jeremiah reading today—because in spite of a pandemic, in spite of restrictions, regulations, and isolation, the people of God continue to gather.

Albeit in a very different way than we know, but whether it be calling in to the Zoom Sunday worship or commenting on the Facebook video or pages, or even worshipping through the Holy Spirit via DVDs, whether it be a Zoom Smorgasbord or a Drive-in Carol Sing, no matter what—God’s people gather. We celebrate. We give thanks.

And as we continue in this winter, with rising numbers, and a need to care for our and our neighbors’ safety, we have hope for when we can physically be together again, and we can still find joy and celebration in all the ways God brings us to one another right now.

**Prayer**— God, continue to connect us and surround us with your presence, help us to find ways to continue celebrating you and our lives together. Amen.

**Connect**— Who have you not seen or heard from in a while? Take some time to make some phone calls today!

## Saturday January 2nd, 2021

**Scripture**— John 1:1-9

**Story**— John's Gospel beginning is always one of my favorites. I do appreciate Mark's dive straight into the Jesus as the adult, although it does feel like we're missing something.

Matthew and Luke give us these lovely narrative stories of Jesus's birth, and Luke even goes into a few small stories of young Jesus.

But John goes even further back. To the beginning of everything. John gives us this clear picture of Jesus as a member of the Trinity as we know it today.

And as we move into January, when we often have rain and even snow, cold and long winter nights—these verses from John bring me such joy. "All things came into being through him", through Jesus, the Word of God. And even life itself came into being through Jesus.

This life that is found in God's Word, in Jesus, is a light for all people, a light that shines in the shadows of our lives.

And for all of this, as I read and reread these verses, I can hardly say more than—Thanks be to God.

**Prayer**— Jesus, you bring us light, help us to experience the joy and mystery in your words through John's Gospel today, in your name we pray, amen.

**Connect**— Take some time to connect with Scripture today, to connect with this introduction in John's Gospel, to hold these words in your heart.

**Prayer**— Lord, as the prophets of old, raise each of us up as your disciples, in all aspects of our lives, so that we might speak your Word and share your truths with others, in the name of Jesus Christ, we pray, amen.

**Connect**— Take some time today to reach out to those you are connected with in your different roles, share God's love by listening, laughing, and talking together.

## Wednesday January 27th, 2021

**Scripture**—Psalm 111

**Story**— There is a song that I'm hoping we may be able to incorporate into worship sometime soon that is based on this psalm that I'd love to share with you today. It's written by Bret Hesla and from Augsburg Fortress. It does have 10 verses, but here are a few from this really lovely song for Psalm 111.

### **"People, Give Thanks"**

**Refrain (followed after each verse):**

*People, give thanks, give thanks;  
to God with your whole heart. (x2)*

**Verse 3:** *Full of honor and majesty is God's work  
And God's mercy endures forever.*

**Verse 6:** *God has shown the people the healing works of love  
And illuminated the path of unity to the nations.*

**Verse 9:** *God has invited the people of the earth into an  
abiding peace*

*And offered abundant living without end.*

**Verse 10:** *The love of God is the beginning of wisdom.  
All those who practice it have a good understanding and  
know God's mercy endures forever.*

**Prayer**— Great are your works, O Lord, continue to grant us your enduring mercy, your healing love, and your peace in our lives, help us to share this thanks-giving with those in our community, in Jesus' name we pray, amen.

**Connect**— Connect with your favorite song of thanks!

## Monday January 25th, 2021

**Scripture**—1 Corinthians 8:1-13

**Story**— This text needs more than even a full page of our devotional to get at the meat (no pun intended) of this part of Paul's letter. But for a short devotional today, I want to focus mainly on verses 1 and 2. Focusing mainly on love being the focus of our callings as disciples of Christ. Not necessarily knowing the most about scripture or tradition, but about loving God and loving one another.

And even in a conversation about meat, Paul is still able to make this the main point.

**Prayer**— Christ Jesus, guide us to find love at the heart of our motivations, of our conversations, and especially in our meals today, help us to see your love in all that we do, amen.

**Connect**— Take some time today to reach out to those you love and are missing right now. Even if it's a short phone call just to tell them you love them. Share this love that Christ has given us with those in your life today.

## Tuesday January 26th, 2021

**Scripture**—Deuteronomy 18:15-20

**Story**— Often this text is used to describe pastors, especially in our understanding as members raised up from the congregation to share their gifts for ministry in this way.

But I wonder if maybe we can imagine the way God raises up a prophet for Israel as something that God may also do with us. Not necessarily for ordained ministry, but within our own callings as people of God.

As god/grand/parents, as employees, as business owners, as volunteers, all of the different roles we take on in our lives and in our personal ministries, what if we thought about them the way Deuteronomy talks about prophets. That we don't just do these things as a means to an end, but rather as part of our greater calling, about God raising us up to be who we are called to be?

## Sunday January 3rd, 2021

**Scripture**—John 1:10-18

**Story**— “And the Word became flesh and lived among us.”

Yes. Yes. Yes.

I don't know why I'm so excited about this verse.

Maybe I do—maybe it's because in this one small sentence, I find the whole of my own personal faith summarized.

There is of course more to it than just this, but for me, this idea that God's Word, which is so often used against marginalized groups, used to push people in or out of churches or community groups. This Word is more than just writing on paper.

This Word is God, is living, and donned the imperfect, vulnerable flesh of humanity to live.

And in that living, as we see through Jesus's stories in the Gospels, Jesus grows, he changes his mind, he learns from others, he is touched by those on the outside of religious groups, and most importantly—he is not separate from the flesh beings he comes into contact with.

He lives among us. With us. In homes, in living rooms, in community centers, in religious centers, everywhere.

This Word is not static, honestly Jesus can't sit still at all during his life on earth, he just keeps moving and healing and loving, all people. Even me. Even you. Word made flesh living among us. Yes. Yes. Yes.

**Prayer**—Thank you Jesus, for upturning our expectations, for living and breathing and bringing your Word to us in new & amazing ways. Continue to guide us with your Word, helping us to live among one another with the same healing and loving care you gave to each of us. Amen.

**Connect**— It's Sunday! Take some time today to reach out to members of your church family for coffee hour conversations!

## Monday January 4th, 2021

**Scripture**—Psalm 29

**Story**— Psalms like this both tell us of the power of God’s voice, but also where we might find God’s voice in our lives.

Sometimes it’s simply listening to God’s creation: upon the waters, in lightening flashes, in trees, in wilderness.

God’s voice is both powerful and full of splendor.

God’s voice makes Lebanon skip like a calf.

If you’ve watched a lot of farming videos on the internet like I have (mostly to see adorable goats), you can see the way a calf skips. It’s joyful, it’s a bit erratic, and honestly it’s funny. So I love this image of God’s voice being powerful, breaking trees and changing creation, but also making an entire mountain nations are skipping like young animals.

God’s voice is more than one thing. It can do or sound like more than one thing. And today as we begin this week, I hope we can find more ways God’s voice might surprise us.

**Prayer**— God, help us to hear your voice today and this week, bringing us joy, guiding us, and calling us. Amen.

**Connect**— Listen for God’s voice today, whether it be quiet as a stream, loud as an ocean, or moving as erratically as a skipping calf.

## Tuesday January 5th, 2021

**Scripture**—Acts 19:1-7

**Story**— I love baptisms. Sometimes I think we forget about them, as Lutherans we were often baptized as infants, and we don’t always take the time to “remember our baptisms”, because we don’t remember the actual day!

But here, as Paul invites those in Corinth to be baptized into Jesus’ name, which promises the Holy Spirit, we can find our own reminder here—the promises we receive in baptism are not just a tradition to please grandma, but actually the promises of God, particularly in Acts, the promise of the Holy Spirit’s presence with us.

A Holy Spirit that gifts us with so much, spiritual gifts of course, but also connects us to one another and to Jesus.

**Prayer**— Lord, pour out your Holy Spirit upon us today, help us to remember the promises we have been given through

## Sunday January 24th

**Scripture**—Mark 1:14-20

**Story**— This is one of my favorite call stories from scripture, and it inspired one of my favorite hymns that I’d like to share with you this Sunday.

### “You Have Come Down to the Lakeshore”

**ELW#817**

*1 You have come down to the lakeshore  
seeking neither the wise nor the wealthy,  
but only asking for me to follow.*

#### **Refrain (repeated after each verse):**

*Sweet Lord, you have looked into my eyes;  
kindly smiling, you've called out my name.  
On the sand I have abandoned my small boat;  
now with you, I will seek other seas.*

*2 You know full well what I have, Lord:  
neither treasure nor weapons for conquest,  
just these my fish nets and will for working.*

*3 You need my hands, my exhaustion,  
working love for the rest of the weary--  
a love that's willing to go on loving.*

*4 You who have fished other waters;  
you, the longing of souls that are yearning:  
O loving Friend, you have come to call me.*

**Prayer**— Sweet Lord, you have come to each of us, knowing who we are and what we have to give, you call us into this work of love and hope in your world, continue to call us into life with you, in Jesus’ name, amen.

**Connect**— It’s Sunday! Take some time today to reach out to members of your church family for coffee hour conversations!

## January 21st, 22nd, and 23rd, 2020

### **Scripture**—

Matthew 16:13-19, Acts 9:1-22, Galatians 1:11-24

I've combined our weekend scripture readings for our daily devotionals because each of these verses are stories of faith, and rather than repeating myself, I invite you these three days to read one of the above scriptures and engage below.

**Story**— All of our faith stories are different. Some have been raised in a faith that continues with them to this day. Others are new to faith. Some have left, some have come back. Some have had big life experiences, some have had small ones, some have had none. Like Peter and Saul/Paul each of our journey's is our own, is God's own, and sometimes we take for granted this faith we have. We can even see between the telling of Saul/Paul's story in Acts and Paul's own recounting in Galatians how our own stories retold can have different moments of importance.

**Prayer**— Lord, help us to remember the moments when you have felt close enough to say our names with pride and joy, guide us in our faith journeys and hold us close, amen.

**Connect**— Connect with your own faith story today. Map it out on a piece of paper, journal, or in your mind as you think about when God has felt close, far away, and how God continues to speak to you in your faith.

our baptism in your name, and guide us to sharing the joy and connection we have received with others. In your name we pray, amen.

**Connect**— Take some time to connect with your own baptism or the baptismal promises today. Whether it be looking at photos, your baptismal candle, or wondering about the gifts you have received through the Holy Spirit.

## Wednesday January 6th, 2021

**Scripture**—Genesis 1:1-5

**Story**— One of my favorite commentaries on Genesis 1 is by Christian author Austen Hartke, particularly around the bookending of this creation story. Because not only does God create light, or separate light from shadows and name them, but there is so much more in creation than “day” and “night”. There is sunrise, sunset, dawn, dusk, and so much more. In these few bookends, God creates everything!

**Prayer**— Thank you God, for the beauty of your creation, for light and shadows, for day and night, and for everything in between. Amen.

**Connect**— Take some time to connect with God's creation today, whether it be the light of the day, the darkness of the night, or somewhere in between. What is God showing you today that God sees and says, “this is good.”

## Thursday January 7th, 2021

**Scripture**—Matthew 2:1-12

**Story**— One of my favorite memories with Bethany Lutheran is in planning our Small Seeds pageant a year or two ago. The kids asked what the “wise men” or “magi” were in the reading. The moment I told them, “Well...I guess you could think of them as ancient wizards...” All the kids immediately wanted to be wizards for the pageant.

We didn't have a Joseph or more than one shepherd, but we certainly had a lot of magi that year!

**Prayer**— Lord, we give you thanks for these wise ones who came to celebrate the birth of our Lord, help us to find ways to continue in our celebration as well, amen.

**Connect**— Connect with your own memories of joy or laughter in these Christmas narratives today.

## Friday January 8th, 2021

**Scripture**—Isaiah 60:1-6

**Story**— Now that we're a bit away from the Christmas season, I wonder how we can read together this text from Isaiah not just as a prelude to the Christmas story, but to our own story in this new year?

**Prayer**— God, gather us together in your light of love and hope in this time as your children, waiting to physically be together again, in Jesus' name we pray, amen.

**Connect**— Spend some time connecting with these verses from Isaiah today, how might we arise in God's light today? This week? This year?

## Saturday January 9th, 2021

**Scripture**—Acts 4:8-12

**Story**— There is a lot going on in this chapter of Acts, but something that stood out to me today is the way in which the apostles are being persecuted for healing a man in the name of Jesus. I wonder about the ways in which communities seem to become frustrated or angry with groups who work for, serve, and even heal the least of these, even when this is done by Christian, religious, or ministry groups.

I think particularly of our own community and the backlash that groups like Love Overwhelming, the KLMA Emergency Cold Weather Shelter, and even to a lesser degree, Community House, get for caring for those in our community who are unhoused, particularly those who are in active addiction or dealing with mental health issues.

Although Peter is trying to get at a different point here, there is also this thread that we can recognize as the core issue for the rulers gathered, one that is continuing to this day—what are these people doing healing? How can they be doing this? And maybe most importantly the implication from Peter and those who follow Christ—why aren't those who are condemning participating in the healing?

As we continue in this coldest season, when those who are unhoused in our community are most at risk, today I am

## Wednesday January 20th, 2021

**Scripture**—1 Corinthians 7:29-31

**Story**— This passage from 1 Corinthians is a reminder of the context of the early church. For them the end of this current world would happen at any moment. When Jesus said, "The time is near", they assumed that "near" was now.

And to be fair, it could be. We pray for Jesus to come again, for God's reign to be fully realized on earth. We proclaim this each Sunday in reciting the Apostle's Creed.

But we don't always think of it this way.

And certainly none of us are separating from our spouses or ceasing to purchase things we need. Our context is different than those first 50-75 years after Jesus. We are called to be ready certainly, but it doesn't necessarily feel like it may be tomorrow.

That doesn't mean we should entirely ignore this passage, there is something us modern believers can take from Paul's words. Particularly a reminder about the way we are so often encumbered by the "present form of this world".

And so we can read this as a reminder that we can be connected to this world, but that we are also connected to a better one to come, and hopefully we can live as if we really believe and proclaim that truth.

**Prayer**— Good & gracious God, we pray for your reign in its fullest on earth, and as we participate in your work in our world, guide us to live our lives for you and for our neighbor. In the name of your Son, Jesus Christ, we pray, amen.

**Connect**— Take some time today to connect with your own relationship with the "current form of this world", how are you living into God's callings? What might be growing edges for you?

## Monday January 18th, 2021

**Scripture**—Psalm 62:5-7

**Story**— “For God alone, I wait in silence.” I really just love this part of Psalm 62, all with the lyrical refrain, “God alone”.

I think in the midst of this time, of this waiting, as we continue to find ourselves more isolated and bored sitting in silences or the white noise of a television, the psalmist’s focus on “God alone” might ring differently to us.

Because when we are alone, when we feel alone, the rock we can lean upon, the refuge we can turn to, is God alone. And God is with us, present among us, through it all.

**Prayer**— For you God, we wait in silence. Help us to put our trust in you, to wait patiently for what is to come, and guide us to share your refuge with those in need, amen.

**Connect**— Connect with God in prayer today, take some meaningful time to sit in silence waiting for God’s quiet voice to come to you.

## Tuesday January 19th, 2021

**Scripture**—Jonah 3:1-5, 10

**Story**— This is always one of my favorites, because finally Jonah has agreed to do as God has called him to—preach to Nineveh. But Jonah still hates them so much, so he preaches the worst one sentence sermon ever.

And still, Nineveh repents and believes in God. Not because Jonah’s sermon was good, or even that he really put his heart into it, but because God is always working through us, through our words, and God is always seeking reconciliation. Always.

**Prayer**— God, help us to share your Good News with enthusiasm, and when we are lacking, Lord pour out your Holy Spirit and speak through us when we do not have the words. Amen.

**Connect**— Reach out to someone who maybe you’ve been putting off and make some time to connect with them today.

hearing the reminder in Peter’s words that the healing, the care, the service we do, is done through us as Christians, only through the love and healing and care we have received in Christ. And that reminder that caring for those most in need is often not as popular as we might hope.

But that didn’t stop Jesus. It didn’t stop the apostles. And it won’t stop us either.

**Prayer**— Lord give us the courage to care for those most in need, to provide healing, care, and services to those in our community. Change the hearts of those who seek to stop such important work, and continue to share your presence with us as we serve you, Christ, in our neighbor, amen.

**Connect**— Take some time to connect with local non-profit organizations today to see how you can help provide for those in need in our community. Whether it be through donations, volunteering, or even time on the phone, our community needs you today.

## Sunday January 10th, 2021

**Scripture**—Mark 1:4-11

**Story**— I know normally I give a whole page for Sundays, but that Acts scripture really got me going yesterday!

But I do love the beginning of Mark’s Gospel, how it dives right in to Jesus’s baptism, how this is our starting place. Not Jesus’s birth, not creation, but the moment Jesus’s ministry began—his baptism.

My favorite part of the Gospel of Mark’s baptism of Jesus is the Greek word used for “torn” in reference to the heavens.

It’s not “opened up” like clouds parting on a nice day, but a violent tearing that occurs. And from that violent tear?

The Spirit, like a dove, with words of love for Jesus.

**Prayer**— Lord, as you spoke over Jesus, speak over us each day, reminding us that we are your children, that in the midst of violence, sorrow, or fear, you softly come to us like a dove upon our heads. Amen.

**Connect**— It’s Sunday! Take some time today to reach out to members of your church family for coffee hour conversations!

## Monday January 11th, 2021

**Scripture**—Psalm 139:1-6, 13-18

**Story**— This is by far one of my favorite Psalms, and I know for many others as well. I think the best way to interact with this Psalm today however, rather than just having me tell you how amazing it is, is to really spend some time with it today, especially since it's one some of us know well.

**Prayer**— Lord, you know us, you created us, you knit us together—fill us with the knowledge of your deep and unending love for us, for all our faults, all our gifts, for everything. Amen.

**Connect**— Really take some time connecting with these verses today, I'd recommend 10-20 minutes if you can spare the time. If you can, circle or mark up the page—what stands out to you, what brings you joy, where do you find hope?

## Tuesday January 12th, 2021

**Scripture**—1 Samuel 3:1-10

**Story**— Being a pastor, we're sort of trained (and required) to have a "Here I Am" moment with God. Often many of them. But sometimes we forget, God's calling to us is not just for ministry leaders, but for all people of God.

God might be calling your name to connect with you, to guide you in a direction, to strengthen you to serve others, to inspire you, etc.

**Prayer**— Lord, help us to hear your voice calling to us in the night, in Jesus' name we pray, amen.

**Connect**— Spend some extra time in prayer today or this week, how might God be calling your name? Where might God be calling you to?

## Wednesday January 13th, 2021

**Scripture**—1 Samuel 3:11-20

**Story**— Continuing from yesterday's reading, when Samuel finally realizes that God is in fact calling him, it ends up being more difficult than Samuel was expecting.

own context. This isn't meant to be a message that all are not welcome in the Body of Christ, but rather that our physical bodies are to be valued, and devaluing them through practices that can harm both the sex worker (see human trafficking that still goes on to this day) and the follower of Jesus participating in this, may be lawful, but are not "right", and don't celebrate the gift our bodies truly are.

**Prayer**— Jesus, help all God's children to see the gift of creation in our bodies, and guide us into doing what is right, even if we have the ability via the law to do wrong. Amen.

**Connect**— Spend some time connecting with your own body today. Notice the gifts your body continues to provide you, and spend some time giving thanks.

## Sunday January 17th, 2021

**Scripture**—John 1:43-51

**Story**— We're in the season of the church year where we focus most on the beginning discipleship stories. Summer we focus on growing in our discipleship, but these are the origin stories. So you'll notice there is a lot of reading about following God, following Jesus, listening for God during this month.

And following Jesus looks different for each of us. Whether we excitedly follow Jesus wherever that might lead, or we have some more skeptical beginnings like Nathanael, but we find ourselves in this same place.

Seeking God, following Jesus, and being reminded how meaningful sharing our own "come and see" moments with others can be.

**Prayer**— Lord, continue to call us into your discipleship. Help us to have the enthusiasm of Philip, the consideration of Nathanael, and courage to say, "Come and see" to those around us, amen.

**Connect**— It's Sunday! Take some time today to reach out to members of your church family for coffee hour conversations!

## Thursday January 14th, 2021

**Scripture**—1 Corinthians 10:1-4

**Story**— Nearly a decade ago I got really into Ancestry.com, it was a fun way to look at the history of my family, and to connect deeper with my grandparents on my dad's side who died when I was young.

Paul here is trying to help the Corinthians to see that they too have a long ancestry, one that they've been adopted into. And that adoption does not preclude them from that same spiritual rock that acts as their foundation.

**Prayer**— God, help us to continue to receive from your spiritual gifts. Guide us as you guided our ancestors, amen.

**Connect**— Call one of your ancestors or one of your progeny today. And remember, it's not just about those who are biologically connected to you, but those who have been adopted into your family through love and connection.

## Friday January 15th, 2021

**Scripture**—Psalm 18:1-6, 16-19

**Story**— How do you experience God as your rock?

**Prayer**— Lord, our rock and our salvation, continue to be our foundation for love and hope and peace, amen.

**Connect**— Connect deeply with our scripture today and find ways these verses speak specifically to you.

## Saturday January 16th, 2021

**Scripture**—1 Corinthians 6:12-20

**Story**— I know, I know that Paul is trying to help the Corinthians understand that their bodies do in fact matter to God, and something being lawful doesn't always make it right.

But I think this is one of the many places we see that Paul wasn't one of the original disciples. Because who does Jesus spend time with? Who does Jesus invite to the table? Who are part of the Body of Christ throughout the Gospels? Oh right, prostitutes.

Personally, I think it's important here to get at the actual message Paul is presenting (listed above), and also note his

The first call for Samuel is to listen to and share the judgment of God upon his mentor and his mentor's family.

I know that sometimes this story is used by those deemed "judgmental" to tear down those who are different or have different life experience than they believe to be "right".

We often hear this as "I'm only telling this to you because I love you and I want you to be saved." And it comes across to the person being "saved" just as it sounds—a self-righteousness that is in fact more often harmful than not.

But in Samuel's case, he is an actual prophet, God is speaking to him with actual words, and Samuel isn't trying to change Eli to fit the mold of what Samuel thinks is "right".

He's sharing with Eli, after being pressed to do so, that God has been so upset by the blasphemy against God in Eli's household, that God's judgment has been cast and the punishment decided and there is absolutely nothing Eli can do to change this. It's not necessarily so that Eli and his sons repent, but rather so that God can show all of Israel the importance of living into God's covenant.

And Samuel feels awful having to be the messenger here, because the lesson, the reminder isn't judge people you think are wrong and let them know "out of love" what you think their punishment will be. The reminder here is that following the call from God we are given—whatever that call may be, is often uncomfortable, awkward, and even incredibly difficult for us to follow. But that doesn't mean we stop trying.

**Prayer**— Lord, as we listen to you call our names, help us to listen deeply to your guiding words, so that we might follow in the footsteps of our Lord, Jesus Christ, amen.

**Connect**— Samuel's story is a heavy one, we invite you today to take some time wrestling with 1 Samuel chapter 3, thinking about ways you may have misheard God's calling, or moments when you sensed God calling to you and are still working up the courage to follow. Take this time to connect with Scripture and with the God who loves you and calls you for exactly who you are.