

DEVOTIONS TUESDAY, MARCH 31, 2020 – PSALMS 68:19 AND 2 TIMOTHY 2:1-7

Good morning --- it's Monday, March 30 and I am "behind" ... How can that be? These written devotions were not completed last evening so they will not be on today's APP ... BUT they should make it to the website by mid to late morning AND the video version should be on Facebook around 9 AM this morning ... Sorry ...

Two Verses for today:

Psalms 68:19 Praise be to the Lord, to God our Savior, who daily bears our burdens.

Just a couple of thoughts:

1. PRAISE BE TO THE LORD, OUR GOD & SAVIOR

- It is good to give thanks to God --- to praise Him--- if nothing comes to mind, ask God, "Please show me 3 things that I should be especially thankful and grateful for" and I believe God will give you these thoughts.
- Among many things this past weekend, I PRAISE GOD for a successful 1st transmission of a live, mini service on Sunday that was 'streamed' on Facebook and then transferred to You Tube!!! WOW!!! It was not perfect, but the team did a wonderful job, the quality was pretty good and it has set the foundation for future transmissions and, it seems, a growing ministry platform. Wow! Thank you, God!!!!
- Thank you God for providing for us all that we've had enjoyed this past weekend --- for moments of laughter and rest from the "stuff" of the news, etc.
- Thank you God for a church family that is becoming a CHURCH DEPLOYED --- calling one another – caring for one another --- and reaching out to one another.
- I could go on for pages --- **WHAT DO YOU GIVE GOD PRAISE FOR TODAY?**

2. WHO DAILY BEARS OUR BURDENS?

This simple Psalm reminds us ... to not only be "THANKFUL" but that GOD HELPS US TO BEAR OUR BURDENS and ENABLE US TO COPE AND TO PERSEVERE.

- EVERYDAY God is with us --- each of us ... and if we allow Him, His Spirit will settle upon us and encourage us ... enable us... and lift us up
- WHAT A WONDERFUL WORD TO START THE WEEK ---
- **WHAT BURDENS, CONCERNS, FEARS, NEEDS DO YOU WANT TO LIFT TO GOD THIS MORNING?**

2 TIMOTHY 1:3-7 I thank God, whom I serve, as my ancestors did, with a clear conscience, as night and day I **constantly remember you in my prayers**. ⁴Recalling your tears, I **long to see you**, so that I may be filled with joy. ⁵I am reminded of **your sincere faith**, which first lived in your grandmother Lois and in your mother Eunice and, I am persuaded, now lives in you also. ⁶For this reason I remind you to **fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you** through the laying on of my hands. ⁷For the Spirit God gave us **does not make us timid, but gives us power, love and self-discipline**.

1. I THANK GOD FOR YOU & REMEMBER YOU IN MY PRAYERS

- Need I say more? 😊
- Linda and I love you --- and God loves you even more!!!!

2. I LONG TO SEE YOU

- "Virtual church" is great --- but there is nothing like seeing one another!
- You make us smile! 😊

3. I AM REMINDED OF YOUR SINCERE FAITH

- I am impressed and encouraged as I see your FAITH & TRUST in GOD GROW
- IN CHALLENGING TIMES --- WE TURN TO GOD ...

4. FAN INTO FLAME THE GIFT OF GOD

- I remember as a Scout ... and many times since Of the act of nurturing and 'fanning' a small spark into a huge and roaring fire --- Paul is writing to Timothy to encourage him to nurture and fan the flame of the Holy Spirit in his life
- The Gift of God is the life of Jesus imputed and indwelling within us --- the Holy Spirit of God in us –
- **ARE YOU A GOOD HOST?**
- **WHAT CAN WE DO TO MAKE THE HOLY SPIRIT MORE WELCOME IN THE DWELLING PLACE OF OUR HEART & LIVES?**

5. THE SPIRIT OF GOD GIVES US POWER, LOVE & SELF-DISCIPLINE (a sound mind or a calm mind)

- POWER --- like dynamite!!!
- LOVE --- the ability and capacity to see others and to see their needs more than your own SO THAT you might encourage them and bring out the best in them
- SELF-DISCIPLINE (some translations use the words "sound mind" or "calm mind") – the ability to think straight ... and to make sound decisions...

TODAY'S PRAYER: Dear God --- THANK YOU for _____. In the name of Jesus, I CHOOSE THE POWER OF GOD and REFUSE TO BE CONSUMED BY THE SPIRIT OF FEAR & WORRY. Dear God, please help me to be an AGENT of "CALM" --- Help me to keep myself calm; help me to keep my family calm --- and God help me to spread your calm over the storms of life. Father, I claim your promise of the indwelling Holy Spirit --- help me to be a good host and to open my heart and soul and life to the Holy Spirit's influence in my life, my work, my family and my 'all in all' ... THANK YOU GOD. IN Jesus' Name, AMEN.

DEVOTIONS WEDNESDAY, APRIL 1, 2020 – 1 CHRONICLES 12:8 & 12:32

Good morning: These are certainly interesting times Filled with challenges ... threats ... changing times ... disoriented perspective and feelings of being displaced ---

It is easy to "shut-down" and "curl up" ... or become absorbed with social media, the news, or assorted wastes of time ...

BUT WE CANNOT --- WE MUST NOT ... NOW IS THE TIME THAT WE MUST BE BUILDING AND PREPARING FOR THE FUTURE ... NOW IS THE TIME TO BE AWARE, BE SHARP AND BE STRONG --- FOR, WE KNOW THAT TOUGH TIMES MAY LOOM AND WE MUST BE READY ...

I was reading 1 Chronicles 12 today ... an interesting chapter. While we be focusing on 2 particular verses --- some of you may enjoy the entire chapter.

Here's what is happening: David has been running from the aging King Saul. Saul has deteriorated into a generally godless mess --- anxious in spirit and defeated in every essential way ... yet David, who has already been anointed and designated as the next king to succeed Saul refuses to take Saul's life.

David has been proactively preparing for the day that he will become the official king over all of Israel --- but David was not going to make the final moves until it was God's time.

We read in 1 Chronicles 10-11 that Saul tragically took his own life ... and then there was a mad scramble to fill Saul's void. Many different contenders and forces try to move in ... **BUT DAVID WAS READY --- ARE WE READY FOR THE OPPORTUNITY TO STEP UP WHEN IT IS TIME?**

As David begins to put everything in motion and consolidate what had been a divided kingdom, his blessing from God, and his preparedness were obvious ... and before long ... the **STRONGEST AND BEST** were **JOCKEYING FOR POSITION TO BE A PART OF KING DAVID'S LEADERSHIP TEAM.**

1 Chronicles 12 outlines and highlights many of the factions and groups that are stepping forward to pledge their loyalty to David.

The 2 verses that I want to highlight today are:

1. **1 Chronicles 12:8: "Some Gadites defected to David at his stronghold in the wilderness. They were BRAVE WARRIORS, READY for battle and ABLE to HANDLE THE SHIELD & SPEAR. Their faces were FACES of lions, and they were SWIFT as gazelles in the mountains."**
2. **1 Chronicles 12:32: "... from Issachar, men who UNDERSTOOD THE TIMES and KNEW WHAT Israel SHOULD DO – 200 chiefs, joined David with ALL OF THEIR RELATIVES under their command."**

OK --- has Pastor Keith lost it? What kind of devotional can come from this chapter and these two verses?

1. David was PREPARING and READY --- David was at his STRONGHOLD in ZIKLAG.
 - David had been prudently accumulating and storing supplies --- not indulging the temptation to over eat or waste --- but rather to protect and preserve... to prepare for the day they would be required.
 - David was 'in-shape' and so were his people ... they trained, worked and prepared every day --- they knew that it was not the time to be lazy or to flitter away time --- their day was coming.
 - David has prepared a safe-place --- stocked and ready for whatever the future may hold.
 - ARE WE READY? ARE WE PREPARING? ARE WE BEING PRODUCTIVE OR WASTEFUL?
2. As David's superiority was being realized --- people from all around began to approach David to join forces with him ... consider these Gadites --- I WANT THEM ON MY SIDE! FACES LIKE LIONS (wow! I can only imagine) -- BRAVE --- READY FOR BATTLE --- SWIFT & ABLE ---
 - I feel that our church has come together as David's forces have come together --- SHUMC is blessed by each of you joining together to be a part of God's work at and through SHUMC --- YOU ARE A GIFT TO SHUMC as the Gadites were a gift to David!!! THANK YOU GOD FOR EACH PERSON WHO IS A VITAL PART OF THE SHUMC FAMILY!
 - This verse is a REMINDER TO ME TO BE ---
 - + BRAVE (Am I being brave?)
 - + READY FOR BATTLE (Am I ready?)
 - + SWIFT & ABLE (Am I swift and able?)
 - *** Probably not as much as I should be – **DEAR GOD PLEASE HELP PREPARE ME TO STEP UP AND BE READY WHEN THE TIME COMES**
3. Now, consider verse 32 --- the tribe of Issachar "**UNDERSTOOD THE TIMES AND KNEW WHAT TO DO**"

- As important as the Gadites were to David --- consider the tribe of Issachar --- if I had to choose between the two --- I do not know whom I'd choose ... I THINK THAT I WOULD select the tribe of Issachar--- it is REALLY IMPORTANT to have a KEEN UNDERSTANDING, inklings and sense as to:
 - + WHAT IS GOING ON ?
 - + WHY? and
 - + WHAT TO DO ABOUT THINGS!
- I've seen the term lately called SITUATIONAL ANALYSIS --- knowing the situation and being able to assess and understand the situation correctly ... and then respond correctly --- quickly & effectively.
- The tribe of Issachar EXCELLED at SITUATIONAL ANALYSIS

NOW – MY CLOSING APPLICATION & CHALLENGE TO YOU ... I got all excited reading about David putting everyone and everything together SO THAT he and his team were ready to BREAK-OUT and RISE TO THE POSITION THAT GOD HAD ORDAINED FOR THEM YEARS BEFORE.

I AM IMPRESSED --- DAVID AND HIS PEOPLE WERE READY!!!

AM I READY FOR WHAT'S TO COME?

I AM NOT GOING TO LOSE SLEEP OVER THIS ... BUT I AM MOTIVATED TO BE READY AND TO WORK DILIGENTLY TO BE AS READY AS POSSIBLE WHEN THE TIME COMES AND WHEN THE TIME REQUIRES.

WE FIND OURSELVES IN THE MIDST OF INTERESTING TIMES (as did David) ... DAVID WAS READY and I PRAY THAT I AM READY ... READY TO HELP MY FAMILY --- READY TO LEAD SHUMC --- and READY TO DO AND BE WHATEVER MIGHT BE REQUIRED ... I AM STOKED WILL YOU COMMIT AND RECOMMIT YOURSELF TO BE READY FOR WHATEVER THE FUTURE MAY HOLD? FOR WHATEVER GOD MAY SET BEFORE US?

DEAD GOD, Please help me and all of us as part of the SHUMC family and beyond PREPARE OURSELVES FOR THE DAYS TO COME. May we be ready --- and able ... and may we have people with us who are gifted and skilled at SITUATIONAL ANALYSIS SO THAT WE MIGHT PROCEED WISELY, EFFECTIVELY and RIGHTEOUSLY – as a PART OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD HERE ON EARTH. AMEN.

DEVOTIONS THURSDAY, APRIL 2, 2020 – THE JOURNEY TO EASTER & BEYOND

LUKE 18:15-17 & LUKE 18:31-34

Good morning friends!

We're preparing for Holy Week --- Holy Week is typically considered the week beginning with PALM Sunday thru EASTER ... and includes the recognition of Maundy Thursday (The Last Supper) and Good Friday (Jesus' crucifixion).

Our celebration of Holy Week today corresponds to 3 Jewish celebrations --- PASSOVER, the FEAST OF UNLEAVENED BREAD and the FEAST OF FIRST FRUITS.

In the days of the Bible, every Jewish male was expected to travel to Jerusalem to celebrate PASSOVER. IMAGINE --- for a week every spring --- virtually every Jewish adult male would make a pilgrimage to Jerusalem to celebrate 3 the significant blessings from GOD and remembered with PASSOVER; The Feast of Unleavened Bread and the Feast of First Fruits.

PASSOVER was one of three feasts that required every Jewish adult male to make a pilgrimage to Jerusalem. This requirement ended with the Roman destruction of the Jewish Temple in 70 AD.

PASSOVER celebrates the Israelites' escape from Egypt in the days of Moses. PASSOVER COMMEMORATES GOD'S REDEMPTION OF THE JEWISH PEOPLE FROM THE OPPRESSION OF THE EGYPTIANS.

The FEAST OF UNLEAVENED BREAD is the **day after Passover** and is meant to remind the Jewish people of the hastily prepared meal that they ate before escaping Egypt. ... Today we know this day as GOOD FRIDAY.

The FEAST of FIRST FRUITS is **3 days after Passover** and celebrates God's blessings of NEW LIFE and the FIRST HARVEST of the SEASON. ... today we know this day as EASTER SUNDAY!

THE FEASTS OF PASSOVER, UNLEAVENED BREAD AND FIRST FRUITS WAS A BIG DEAL!!! The population of Jerusalem would blossom from a normal of about 80,000 people to an excess of 275,000!!!

If you wanted a BIG AUDIENCE --- if you wanted to MAKE A BIG STATEMENT --- IF YOU WANTED EVERYONE "TO KNOW" ... YOU WOULD PICK PASSOVER WEEK ---

One last note --- since PASSOVER was a religious feast --- THIS WAS THE TIME THAT THE RELIGIOUS ESTABLISHMENT WANTED TO LOOK GOOD ... no mistakes ... everything 'looking good' ... NO MAJOR INCIDENTS....

The Gospel writer Luke begins his account of Holy week in Luke 19:28 - with Jesus' entry in Jerusalem – we call this day PALM SUNDAY. We're going to use our devotional time for the balance of this week and all of next to reflect upon HOLY WEEK leading up to and including Easter.

TODAY ... I'd like to start our JOURNEY TO EASTER AND BEYOND in LUKE 18. Jesus is in the area of Galilee with his disciples --- about 65 miles northeast of Jerusalem.

We read in Luke 18:31-34: "We are going up to Jerusalem, and everything that is written by the prophets about the Son of Man will be fulfilled. ³²He will be delivered over to the Gentiles. They will mock him, insult him and spit on him; ³³they will flog him and kill him. On the third day he will rise again." ³⁴The disciples did not understand any of this. Its meaning was hidden from them, and they did not know what he was talking about."

These verses mark Jesus' declaration to the disciples that they will begin their 65-mile journey to Jerusalem ... it's time for PASSOVER!

Jesus begins to prepare the disciples for what Jesus knew would be a VERY SIGNIFICANT WEEK --- Jesus tells his disciples that the prophecies about the coming Messiah that have been foretold for over 1000 years will be fulfilled **right before their eyes!!!!!!**

LIFE WILL NEVER BE THE SAME!!! (sound familiar?)

Obviously --- they did not understand all that Jesus said and did during this week leading up to what we've come to know as Good Friday. Jesus knew that he had to work to prepare his disciples for a new world ---

I believe that every word, story and action was significant and with purpose.

Twenty-five to thirty percent of the Gospels focus on the teaching and life of Jesus during Holy Week.

So, with Jesus' declaration --- the disciples begin their JOURNEY TO EASTER AND BEYOND.

I look forward to our devotional journey between now and Easter --- with prayers and care, Keith.

Just one more text for today --- as an encouragement to us --- just a few verses before Jesus' announcement that it was time to travel to Jerusalem to celebrate PASSOVER, we read a special little story that most of us are familiar with:

Luke 18:15-17: People were also bringing babies to Jesus for him to place his hands on them. When the disciples saw this, they rebuked them. ¹⁶**But Jesus called the children to him and said, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. ¹⁷Truly I tell you, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it."**

As a preface to their journey to Jerusalem --- Jesus instructs the disciples that CHILDREN ARE IMPORTANT and THAT CHILDREN GIVE US AN EXAMPLE OF "HOW WE OUGHT TO TRUST AND ENJOY JESUS" - **NOT OVERLY WORRIED ABOUT ANYTHING ... JUST HAPPY AND COMFORTED BY THE PRESENCE OF JESUS.**

Not a bad word for us today!

Dear God ... please help us to have the trusting faith of a child as we come to Jesus. Help us to set aside the worries of adulthood and take time to be welcomed and embraced by the presence of Jesus in our lives. We claim the indwelling presence of God in the form of the Holy Spirit in our lives ... and we pray that as we allow the Spirit of God to be revealed and seen in our lives that those near us might recognize that a part of the Kingdom of God is near ... we pray that our hearts may be right before you dear God ... and we pray that this Easter Season may a new revelation, understanding and experience of the YOU IN US AND THROUGH US. In Jesus' Name we pray, AMEN.

DEVOTIONS FRIDAY, APRIL 3, 2020 – FRIDAY BEFORE PALM SUNDAY

LUKE 18:35-42 (ALSO MATTHEW 20:29-34 & MARK 10:46-52)

We started our journey to Easter and Beyond yesterday when we reflected on Luke 18:31-34 when Jesus tells his disciples that it is time for them to travel to Jerusalem to celebrate the Jewish Feasts of PASSOVER, UNLEAVENED BREAD, and FIRST FRUITS.

The gospel writer, Luke shares 3 accounts to help set the stage for Jesus' entry into Jerusalem on the day that will become known as 'PALM SUNDAY.'

I am sure that there were many stories, much visiting, and most likely a few miracles & healings along the 5-7 day journey to Jerusalem.

I wonder "what" and "why" Luke picked these three to share...These 3 to set the stage for all that happened from Palm Sunday to Easter & Beyond These 3 stories share some of the disciples' most memorable moments on their way to Jerusalem ... These 3 stories prepare the reader for 'the rest of the story...'

The three stories that preface Jesus' entering Jerusalem on a donkey are:

1. Healing the blind man – (Luke 18:35-43)
2. The remarkable salvation of Zacchaeus the Tax Collector – (Luke 19:1-16)
3. The Parable of the 10 Bags of Gold – (Luke 19:11-27)

Again, I ask “WHY” did Luke include only these 3? What point did Luke want us to see in his methodical telling of these 3 stories?

Today, we’ll consider **LUKE 18:35-43 --- Jesus Healing the Blind Man**

- Matthew, Mark and Luke each include this miracle in their respective accounts leading up to PALM SUNDAY --- it must have been a significant moment for all 3 gospel writers to include ---
- AGAIN, WHAT DID THEY WANT US TO SEE & UNDERSTAND? WHAT MIGHT WE LEARN? And HOW MIGHT WE APPLY THE EXPERIENCE TO OUR LIVES?

Luke 18:35-43 As Jesus approached Jericho, a blind man was sitting by the roadside begging. ³⁶When he heard the crowd going by, he asked what was happening. ³⁷They told him, “Jesus of Nazareth is passing by.”

³⁸He called out, “**Jesus, Son of David**, have mercy on me!”

³⁹Those who led the way rebuked him and told him to be quiet, but he shouted all the more, “**Son of David, have mercy on me!**”

⁴⁰Jesus stopped and ordered the man to be brought to him. When he came near, Jesus asked him, ⁴¹“What do you want me to do for you?”

“Lord, I want to see,” he replied.

⁴²Jesus said to him, “Receive your sight; your faith has healed you.” ⁴³Immediately he received his sight and **followed Jesus, praising God. When all the people saw it, they also praised God.**

1. I think that it is significant the Matthew, Mark and Luke all record this miraculous healing that occurred on the way to Jerusalem for Passover --- and we now know--- the beginning of JESUS LAYING CLAIM TO HIS MESSIAHSHIP and ALL THAT ACCOMPANIED THAT WORLD-CHANGING MOMENT DURING THE WEEK THAT WE NOW LOOK BACK AND CALL “HOLY WEEK.”
2. THE BLIND MAN hears the commotion along the roadway ... the blind man was on the side of the road, on the outskirts of Jericho --- of course, people with infirmaries of any kind were generally pushed to living on the outskirts of town ...
3. Of the gospel writers that share this story (Matthew, Mark and Luke) only Mark gives us the blind man’s name. It is Bartimaeus, which means, “the son of Timaeus.” Why is this important? Can we speculate or imagine whether there may be some significance to his name?

Well, it is just a clue and a thought but think about this: “Timaeus” means man of honor, man of nobility, a man of royalty--- hmmm ... I wonder whether the focal character of today’s account, Bartimaeus, may have been a don of nobility or royalty?

4. Let’s think and imagine for a moment... if the blind man had been born into a place of privilege and position --- BUT THEN, because of his blindness --- and the passage of time (perhaps his father had passed?) --- HE WAS RELEGATED FROM PROMINENCE and NOBILITY TO THE OUTSKIRTS OF TOWN --- sadly, this was ‘normal’ during this time in history --- a person with any infirmity was pushed down and pushed out ... it is interesting to imagine ... perhaps the blind man was of nobility but was then ignored, pushed out and denied his true position and standing.
5. Could this be a bit of a parallel to the story of Jesus to be ignored and denied his rightful place of nobility and position? Hmmm ...
6. Note the blind man recognized “Jesus of Nazareth” --- and called out to him --- not as rabbi or any of the other names that people called Jesus --- BUT --- “Jesus, SON OF DAVID” – SON OF THE KING ---
7. The blind man’s references to Jesus --- referred to Jesus’ nobility.... Bartimaeus relates to Jesus by calling upon his Messiahship --- his divine KINGSHIP & CLAIM TO THE THRONE OF MESSIAH.

8. As a break --- I WANT YOU TO KNOW THAT YOU ARE THE SON & DAUGHTER OF THE KING --- MADE IN GOD'S IMAGE --- CHILDREN OF GOD!!!!
9. AND --- I BELIEVE THAT NATURALLY, ALL OF US ARE BLIND --- AREN'T WE? WE ALL HAVE THINGS THAT SOMETIMES MARK US AS OUTCASTS AND LIMIT OUR ABILITY TO BE ALL THAT WE WERE MEANT TO BE --- CUT OFF, IGNORED and CRIPPLED RATHER THAN RECOGNIZED AS THE DIVINE HEIRS OF CHRIST?
10. WE ALL NEED HELP—as the blind man needed HELP --- WE TOO NEED JESUS TO HEAL US & HELP US.
11. ALL OF US ARE BLIND TO THE PRESENCE OF GOD IN OUR MIDST ---
12. When I read this account --- I think of 2 sons of nobility --- JESUS, the SON OF GOD and the blind man, the SON OF ROYALTY. AND HOW JESUS WANTS TO RESTORE US TO THE PLACE OF GOD'S INTENDED DESIGN FOR EACH OF US --- TO BE CHILDREN OF THE KING.
13. What does Jesus do ---- Jesus asks the man, "WHAT DO YOU WANT ME TO DO FOR YOU?" --- of course, it was obvious --- the blind man wanted to see --- BUT, **JESUS WANTED TO HEAR THE MAN SPEAK THE WORDS** ... SPEAKING WHAT AILS US AND HOLDS US DOWN IS VERY IMPORTANT ...
14. AS JESUS ASKED THE BLIND MAN—"WHAT DO YOU WANT? JESUS ASKS US --- "**WHAT DO WE WANT?**"
15. It is important that we admit that we are POWERLESS and that WE NEED THE HELP OF JESUS – NOT JUST FOR OUR PHYSICAL NEEDS BUT FOR THE NEEDS OF SPIRIT --- OUR INNER NEEDS --- WE NEED STRENGTH--- WE NEED DISCERNMENT --- WE NEED ENERGY TO PARENT AND TO LEAD --- WE NEED HELP!
16. The blind man was the PASSIVE RECIPIENT and JESUS WAS THE ACTIVE RESPONDER --- the blind man DEPENDED ON JESUS as HIS 1ST RESPONDER.

IN SUMMARY: WHY WOULD THE GOSPEL WRITERS WANT THIS ENCOUNTER WITH THE BLIND MAN TO BE RECORDED FOR ALL OF HISTORY TO KNOW ABOUT AND TO READ AS THEY PREPARE FOR HOLY WEEK?

And WHAT WAS IT THAT MADE THIS PARTICULAR HEALING SUCH A MEMORABLE 'HEALING' IN THE DISCIPLES' MEMORIES?

WHAT ARE YOUR THOUGHTS?

I believe that Jesus wanted the disciples (and us) to see that WE NEED JESUS' HELP to SEE & UNDERSTAND ALL THAT IS SWIRLING AROUND US ---

I believe that Jesus wanted to emphasize to the disciples that FAITH is critical --- we must embrace and believe in JESUS FOR WITHOUT JESUS --- WE ARE LIKE THE BLIND SITTING ALONG SIDE THE ROAD ...

And I believe that Jesus wanted the disciples to see that we all need help to be RESTORED TO OUR PROPER POSITION --- THAT WHICH WE ARE MEANT TO INHERIT AND LIVE ... AS CHILDREN OF GOD--- AND WE CAN ONLY DO THAT AS WE RECOGNIZE THE DIVINE AUTHORITY OF JESUS AS THE KING OF OUR LIVES AND WORLD-- - JESUS AS THE PROMISED MESSIAH.

AND LOOK WHAT HAPPENS in VERSE 43:

1. The man RECEIVES HIS REQUEST --- HIS NEED IS MET, his sight is restored
2. The man FOLLOWS Jesus
3. The man PRAISES GOD
4. And others are drawn to God

Dear God, I pray for our church and our world. In too many ways we are like the blind man --- we've been pushed to the edges of life and we fail to live into the full meaning of being a CHILD OF GOD, A CHILD OF THE KING ... Jesus, we need your help to see ... HELP US JESUS ... GIVE US FAITH ... and then, as we realize your healing touch --- may we rise up and FOLLOW and PRAISE YOU ... leading and encouraging others to do the

same ... EVEN WHEN WE DON'T SEE and DON'T UNDERSTAND --- MAY WE have the FAITH TO FOLLOW YOU and TO ENCOURAGE OTHERS. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

DEVOTIONS SATURDAY, APRIL 4, 2020 – LEADING INTO PALM SUNDAY

LUKE 10:1-27

Today, we'll cover two stories which many people may recognize and recall. Luke places these two stories immediately before his account of Palm Sunday. ... I believe that Jesus was helping to prepare the disciples for the events that Jesus knew would unfold (perhaps explode) during the course of the next several days.

As you read both, ask yourselves:

1. "WHY" is this important to include JUST BEFORE THE BEGINNING OF HOLY WEEK?
2. And "WHAT MESSAGE" MIGHT THERE BE FOR ME IN TODAY'S READING?

1st LUKE 19:1-10 – ZACCHAEUS THE TAX COLLECTOR

As Jesus and his disciples spend 5-6 days or more walking the 65 miles from the Sea of Galilee to Jerusalem (following along the Jordan River), they came to the town of Jericho.

As Jesus passes through town an unscrupulous and much maligned tax collector, Zacchaeus climbs a tree to try to see over the crowds to catch a glimpse of Jesus.

I can only imagine what Zacchaeus might have been thinking. WAS HE TRULY INTERESTED AND CONSIDERING THE TEACHINGS & LIFE OF JESUS? Or was HE MERELY A CURIOSITY SEEKER TRYING TO SEE A POPULAR NAME OF THE TIME?

Regardless, the Spirit of God touched Zacchaeus and HE WAS FOREVER CHANGED!

Jesus recognized Zacchaeus in the tree and calls him down ... even more, Jesus invites himself to Zacchaeus' house for dinner!!!!

This bold move violated about every Jewish rule about associating with sinners ... and the religious establishment (heavily steeped in tradition and appearances) WERE THERE --- AND THEY WERE QUICK TO CRITICIZE AND CONDEMN JESUS.

ZACCHAEUS was touched by the life and message of Jesus ... he was convicted of sins accumulated over a life-time and he stands up and declares to Jesus "the Lord" ... that he wants to make things right and make amends for his sins that have separated him from God, himself and others.

ZACCHAEUS was not concerned about appearances nor was he concerned about decorum ... HE RECOGNIZED THE AUTHORITY AND LORDSHIP OF JESUS ... HE WAS CONVICTED, and HE IMMEDIATELY PROMISED TO MAKE THINGS RIGHT!!!

And Jesus declares, "TODAY SALVATION HAS COME TO THIS HOUSE, because he too is a **son of Abraham (a son of faith)**).

WOW --- another miracle on the way to Jerusalem --- not a healing of blindness --- but a healing of the HEART!

PART 2 --- THE STORY OF 10 BAGS OF GOLD (LUKE 19:11-27)

There is not enough room to list the entire passage here today --- so I encourage you to read this important story from your Bible or Bible app.

In summary ... a nobleman is summoned to be coronated "KING" ... while he is gone, the nobleman entrusts 3 servants or managers with a portion of his wealth. The nobleman gives the 3 managers, each a bag of gold --- let's imagine each is worth about 1 million dollars.

One manager invests and manages the entrusted amount and it increases 10 fold!!!

Another manager invests and manages his portion and it increases 5 fold!!!

And another --- rather than investing and managing the money --- he BURIES the treasure and returns what he was given to the nobleman. The nobleman was infuriated ...

REFLECTION:

Here's a thought that was first shared to me by Rev. Magrey deVega: PERHAPS --- SPECULATING --- "WHY" did the 3rd manager NOT INVEST THE MONEY and WORK IT?

PERHAPS --- this negligent manager DID NOT BELIEVE THAT THE JOB HE WAS GIVEN MATTERED...

PERHAPS this negligent manager DID NOT BELIEVE THAT HIS PERFORMANCE WAS IMPORTANT TO THE NOBLEMAN OR THAT HIS PERFORMANCE MATTERED IN THE BIG SCHEME OF THINGS....

Perhaps he said to himself, "Who am I to make a difference?" ...

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

HAVE YOU EVER SAID TO YOURSELF --- HOW COULD GOD EVER NEED ME? WHY WOULD GOD EVER GIVE ME ANY RESPONSIBILITY THAT TRULY MATTERED?

This parable --- to me --- is a wake-up call to TAKE MY GOD-GIVEN RESPONSIBILITIES MORE SERIOUSLY – WHAT ABOUT YOU?

NOW --- back to the 'lead-in' to PALM SUNDAY ... 3 stories:

1. The blind nobleman; being healed when he acknowledged that he has a need that Jesus the KING could help --- not only was his sight restored, his place as a Child of God was affirmed and he followed Jesus!

POSSIBLE POINT: We are like the blind man --- born into nobility but we need to be restored to our original God-given potential and place --- JESUS CAN DO THIS!

2. Zacchaeus was moved by the presence and care of Jesus so much so that the Spirit of God moved him to make amends and to follow Jesus --- and Jesus declared him a CHILD OF ABRAHAM, A CHILD OF FAITH!

POSSIBLE POINT: We are all like Zacchaeus --- we've done things wrong and we're far from perfect --- but when we realize that Jesus calls us by name --- and we respond with a desire to make amends with God, ourselves and others --- Jesus DECLARES US TO BE CHILDREN OF ABRAHAM – CHILDREN OF FAITH WHICH JESUS CLEARLY VALUED MORE THAN THE CONDEMNATION OF THE PHARISEES THAT ONLY LOOKED AT 'the APPEARANCE' of people rather than the power of their actions as an expression of faith.

3. The managers that considered their given RESPONSIBILITY to care for the treasures given to them by the nobleman as being vital and important were acknowledged and rewarded while the manager that did not value the responsibility as being important as being condemned.

POSSIBLE POINT: We are all like the managers that have been given precious treasure by the nobleman, who is to be declared KING. WE HAVE BEEN GIVEN PRIZED TREASURES IN ALL THAT GOD HAS ENTRUSTED TO US --- SO, YOU as DISCIPLES --- WILL BE JUDGES BASED UPON HOW YOU HANDLE THE TREASURE AND THE RESPONSIBILITY THAT I BESTOW TO YOU.

Three important stories to be reminded of and to keep in mind as we approach PALM SUNDAY 2020.

1. GOD WANTS TO RESTORE OUR RIGHTFUL POSITION AS CHILDREN OF GOD
2. GOD RESPONDS TO US, NOT BASED UPON APPEARANCE BUT BASED UPON HOW OUR ACTIONS SUBSTANTIATE OUR FAITH AND TRUST IN JESUS.
3. GOD HAS GIVEN US (along with the disciples) A RESPONSIBILITY TO CARE FOR AND BUILD THE CHURCH --- THE KINGDOM OF GOD as HE HAS GIVEN TO EACH OF US.

Dear God --- help me to embrace these 3 stories as I prepare to worship and celebrate you as KING OF MY LIFE during Holy Week 2020. In Jesus' Name, AMEN.