

4/02/18

Jesus Addresses Worry

Good Morning to all,

It is a cloudy 41 here in NJ this morning with a light rain falling. It will be a rainy morning followed by a cloudy afternoon with highs in the mid 40s.

"No one can serve two masters. Either he will hate one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money" (Matt.6:24).

In this week's devotionals from The Sermon On The Mount, Jesus addresses the issue of worry... (Matt.6:25-34). It should not come as a great surprise that much of Jesus' preaching and teaching concerns the way His followers are to deal with material things. With many of the elements that living as a disciple of the Lord are about, I see two matters that certainly compete with one another. First is that Christians ought to be hard-working folks who provide for their families. Parents should provide for them and see that their children are fed, sheltered and clothed. They also ought to provide their mates with encouragement in both material, spiritual and emotional ways... When the apostle Paul addressed the subject of care for widows in the first letter to Timothy, the principle of the teaching was a broader one. He said this; "If anyone does not provide for his relatives, and especially his immediate family, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever" (1 Tim.5:8). Second, Christians have no reason to obsess over health and wealth to the exclusion of spiritual matters. Any responsible person ought to provide for his or her family, but when material things become an "all-absorbing preoccupation," faith and morality run the danger of being relegated as a secondary issue... At some point on one's life as he or she seeks to imitate Jesus, they have to do their very best to trust God for what He alone can do. A "healthy" concern for material things is commendable thing. It becomes unhealthy when it evolves into an obsession. Jesus knew the uncertainties of life, and he didn't discourage hard work, but what He did do was to remind folks that God is sovereign in the affairs of men. We come to a crossroad of life when we decide whether to trust in the rule of God, or in the "other master" spoken about in today's verse....

Have a great start to your week.... Begin it with a RAK or two.... Love  
mark Phil.4:11

4/03/18

Jesus And Worry About Life

Good Morning to all,

It is a cloudy 37 here in NJ this morning. It will be a mostly cloudy day with a slight chance of some rain. The high will be about 50.

Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, or what you will eat or drink; or your body, what you will wear. Is not life more important than food and the body more important than clothes? Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they? Who by worrying can add a single hour to his life?" (Matt.6:25-27).

Jesus was certainly not naive, as He did not tell His followers that labor for food and drink was a waste of time. He also did not say that making provisions in life for clothing and shelter was incompatible with a trust in God. He didn't just fall off the turnip truck, for in His human form He knew the need for all of these things vital to life. The warning that Jesus gives is not about the necessities of life, but rather about worry... His warning was about anxiety and a debilitating concern over things over which folks have no control. Those that have been subject to health issues, aging, warfare, crime or natural disasters do not need a warning that life is tenuous. What they need is a friend that will never, ever fail them. They need a Savior who will forgive their sins and usher them into heaven. I think that the basic teaching here is that a trust in God is an antidote for undue worry. As He has already done, Jesus modeled for His people not only the substance of His preaching, but also its manner. When he talked to His followers about worry, the Lord illustrated in compelling ways why undue worry should not crush anyone. He did this with not only words and abstractions, but with illustrations from the countryside that they could relate to and learn... Can you see Jesus using the birds in today's verse to get His point across? There no "9 to 5" for the birds, and they did not fret or obsess over their next meal as they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet their heavenly Father feeds them... Not only did Jesus preach about the futility of worry, but He did much more. He also taught them that they could, through His example, teach others about it too.... Worries about matters one cannot change, is not only foolish, but it can drain energies that may be given to sensible solutions about things that can be changed....

Have a great day... Do good and give God the credit... Love mark  
Phil.4:11

4/04/18

Jesus And A Worry About Clothing

Good Morning to all,

It is a cloudy and foggy 54 here in NJ as I write this morning. It will be a cloudy and windy (25-35 mph) day with a high in the low 60s. There's a 60% chance of some showers, and the wind might gust to over 40...

"And why do you worry about clothes? See how the lilies of the field grow. They do not labor or spin. Yet I tell you that even Solomon in all his splendor was not dressed like one of these. If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fires, will He not much more clothe you, O you of little faith?" (Matt.6:28-30).

Christians do well when they plan for the next day, as planning and concern are necessities in providing for one's family and being a contributor to the world. To worry, as opposed to planning is to cloud your mind with matters about which one cannot control. With crowds of people listening, Jesus turned from food to clothing. Both are necessary for folks to live, but Jesus already knew that people worried too much about those things... Still, he reiterated that to obsess over things that one cannot change is both futile and hopeless. To get His point across, as the Master preacher/teacher, He drew upon things around all of them to make His point. Jesus looked at the beauty of the fields and directed His audience's attention to it. Illustrations are vivid and their impression is long-lasting when applied correctly. The lesson that Jesus drew from the lilies of the field is similar to the one He taught about food drawn from the birds... Lilies, roses or tulips have no concern for how beautiful they are, but God provides for them. I found it interesting that Jesus referenced Solomon when He spoke of someone who had experienced great physical splendor. The Lord taught, and He taught teachers how to teach at the same time, thus this devotional... The flowers and grass will wilt in time and become a part of the soil or burned for heat. Though their end seems inglorious, for a moment, God brightens the world with them, and He does the same for us... Jesus again argued from the lesser to the greater. If God cares for the birds, flowers and grass and adorns them with such beauty, surely he will provide for His own children.

Have a great day.... Make your little part of the world better.... Love mark  
Phil.4:11

4/05/18

Jesus And Worry About Tomorrow

Good Morning to all,

It is a clear 35 here in NJ this morning. It will be a mostly sunny and breezy day with highs in the mid to upper 40s.

"Do not worry then, saying, 'What will we eat?' or 'What will we wear for clothing?' For the Gentiles eagerly seek all these things; for your heavenly Father knows that you need all these

things. But seek first the kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you. So do not worry about tomorrow; for tomorrow has enough trouble of its own."  
(Matt.6:31-34).

We complete this section of the Sermon on the Mount this morning. When considered in a negative fashion, Jesus taught His disciples that they should not worry over matters of life they could not control. Considered positively, the God who provides for the birds of the air and grass of the field is likely to provide what His people need... A farmer can prepare the soil properly and plant the seed in the correct way, but cannot determine the coming of rain or sunshine. A Christian, in the same way, does well to plan and prepare; he does poorly when he obsesses over matters he can do nothing about. After Jesus has pressed home some indelible points, He tells His disciples and the people in the crowd to trust in the goodness of God... The injection of the Gentiles in today's verses is interesting. Among people who know God, it ought not to be as it is among those don't... God wants His people to set priorities in order. Matthew 6:33 is one of the most famous verses in the New Testament. Does it mean that when we seek first the kingdom and His righteousness we get the Porsche, the six bedroom mansion and win the Powerball? Hmmmmmm... Lets think about that one.... When we seek God and the righteous life He commends, He will not fail to give His people what they need. There are enough things to worry about where actions actually matter... The good preacher/teacher is to tell the flock that God overwhelms the darkness of the world. Our job is to trust God and put ourselves in His care....

Have a wonderful day.... Let His light shine through us... Love mark  
Phil.4:11

4/06/18  
Being Apers

Good Morning to all,

It is a cloudy 42 here in NJ this morning. It will be a mostly cloudy and breezy day with a high nearing 60.

"Therefore be imitators of God as beloved children" (Eph.5;1).

For those of you who do crossword puzzles, you know that the common three letter answer for a clue involving imitation is to ape... Perhaps its an extension of that "monkey see, monkey do" thing, but it is the answer. In today's short verse, the apostle Paul tells us to use that answer.... Be imitators of God.... In the 4th and 5th chapters of the Book of Ephesians, we may have the most comprehensive depiction of what life in Christ ought to be anywhere in the Bible. Unity, important as it is, isn't enough. Unity must have its foundation in the confession that God is one and all it implies. In His oneness, God has made a decree that His people unite in a common

way of life. Owning Jesus as our Lord means removing old values and habits just like we would remove our sweaty clothes after an intense workout. It also means this; "And put on your new self, which in the likeness of God has been created in the righteousness and holiness of the truth" (Eph.4:24). God facilitates the new way of life a Christian is supposed to live by means of examples. Since no one has seen God, Jesus has become our ultimate example, as He modeled the life Christians are to live. As a perk to this, mature Christians through imitating Christ, will model that behavior for those younger in the faith... "You also became imitators of us and the Lord...." (I Thess.1:6). Those folks in Thessalonica imitated Paul, his companions and the Lord... If I have it right, only here in Eph.5:1 did Paul explicitly urge readers to imitate God. Morality therefore is possible only because God is a moral being, and that morality, right and wrong, are to be built into the fiber of our existence. Because God is good, goodness on our part becomes more than just a preference. In the ways that Paul urges us to live, God's ways serve as a model for Christians to follow... Being apers...

Have a great day... T G I F Today God Is First Love mark  
Phil.4:11

4/07/18  
The Agony Of De-Feet

Good Morning to all,

It is a mostly cloudy 47 here in NJ this morning. It will be a cloudy day with a 50% chance of some morning rain. The high has already been achieved and the temps should fall through the mid 40s.

This morning's quiz is about feet, an important means of transportation in biblical days. Today you are to fill in the blanks with the person associated with the feet... Come on'..... Get steppin'.....

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. Wiped Jesus feet with her hair.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. She laid down at the feet of Boaz
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. She wanted to be a servant to wash the feet of King David's servants.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. He had not cared for his feet from when David left for war until he returned.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. This king had diseased feet.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. He fell at Jesus' feet and begged for a child's healing.

\_\_\_\_\_ 7. He said this to Thomas. "See my hands and my feet."

\_\_\_\_\_ 8. She sat at Jesus' feet, listening to His word.

\_\_\_\_\_ 9. He seized the lame man's hand, lifted him up, and his feet were strengthened.

\_\_\_\_\_ 10. He said this; "One is coming after me, the sandals of whose feet I am unworthy to untie."

\_\_\_\_\_ 11. He took Paul's belt, bound his own hands and feet, and predicted what would happen to him.

Answers.... (a) Asa, (b) Mary, (c) Jesus, (d) Jarius, (e) Mephibosheth, (f) Agabus, (g) Ruth, (h) Mary, (i) Abigail, (j) Peter, (k) John the Baptist

Have a great weekend and an uplifting and glorifying day of worship on His day... Love  
mark Phil.4:11

4/09/18

The Right Way

Good Morning to all,

It is a cloudy 29 here in NJ this morning. We will get a few peeks of sunshine this afternoon with highs in the mid 40s.

"Enter through the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the way is broad that leads to destruction, and there are many who enter through it. For the gate is small and the way is narrow that leads to life, and there are few who find it" (Matt.7:13-14)

If one ponders as to why there is so much evil in the world, they only have to look at the unfair advantage it has... As simple as it sounds, evil often triumphs because it is not in a hurry... It must only open the door a tiny crack. Have you ever seen an animal trail through the woods. More than likely, it did not come from one large animal trampling down the brush in one passing. Rather, the path is a result of many small animals walking that same trail over a period of time. If we are not careful, fleshly inclinations will begin as a trickle, and form a rut until it becomes a flood. Law enforcement people will point out that terrorists only need to win once, while public protection must win all the time. With all of this said, Jesus trusted His people a great deal. He left it in their hands, as he does today, to be those folks that make the confession that leads to life. Jesus always kept it real. He knew fully well that the path to life was narrow and the path to death was broad and easy. He knew that more people would choose the easy way rather than

the harder one. Jesus warned His followers that their task would be much like swimming upstream. Though He sent the Holy Spirit to be an enabling power in the struggle against evil, He never did lift the burden from believers. Here's the crux of it all; Believers must choose Christ as Lord, and they must choose Him again and again... When Christians find themselves fitting in with the world, affirming what it affirms, and being comfortable with its ways, it is time for reflection. It is time to reflect on Jesus' warning that the way to life is a small gate and a narrow way... The comforting part is that we can travel that narrow path...

Have a great start to your week.... Begin it with a RAK or two.... Love  
mark Phil.4:11

4/10/18

The Right Fruit

Good Morning to all,

It is a cloudy 39 here in NJ as I write this morning. It will be a mostly cloudy day with patches of sun this afternoon. The high will be around 50.

"Beware of the false prophets who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly are ravenous wolves. You will know them by their fruits. Grapes are not gathered from thorn bushes nor figs from thistles, are they? So every good tree bears good fruit, but the bad tree bears bad fruit... So you will know them by their fruit" (Matt.7:15-17; 20).

From the Sermon On The Mount, we saw yesterday that Jesus warned His disciples about choosing the life that required entering by a narrow gate and following a straight path. Next on Jesus' agenda was some teaching about false prophets. Way back then, Jesus placed the responsibility of teaching and preaching the good news into human hands. Since then, many preachers, teachers and evangelists have served God in a faithful manner. Christians do well when they listen to godly men and women who are an encouragement to them in righteous living. These folks urge both believers and non-believers to hold to the truth and live godly lives. Then comes the warning from our Lord. "You will know them by their fruits..." Christians are to be wary because not all those who speak with pious words and cite the Bible are actually pursuing righteousness. A false prophet is a messenger of death. For centuries after Jesus, Bibles were in short supply and many were unable to read the Word. Without the Bible, listeners found it difficult to distinguish between the godly teacher and the false one. For this reason, God knew that in many cases, Christians would have to learn from and be encouraged by their teachers and preachers. In Matt.7:15-20, Jesus details how to distinguish between godly teaching and bad teaching, and we would do well to read and meditate on those verses. Christians are to demand that their teachers and preachers not only speak the truth, but live it. The poignant language Jesus uses in these verses explains this. Even those who may not be in a good position to compare the message of the teacher/preacher to the teaching in the Bible are

able to see the fruit they produce, and thus make the distinction. So every good tree bears good fruit, but the bad tree bears bad fruit... So you will know them by their fruit...

Have a great day.... Do good and give God the credit.... Love mark  
Phil.4:11

4/11/18  
The Right Actions

Good Morning to all,

It is a mostly clear 27 here in NJ this morning. It will be a mostly to partly sunny day with highs in the low 50s.

"Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven will enter. Many will say on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in your name perform many miracles?' And I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; DEPART FROM ME, YOU WHO PRACTICE LAWLESSNESS;' " (Matt.7:21-23).

There are responsibilities that come along with being Christians. A true Christian is responsible for knowing what Jesus taught and for living as He directed. "Let not many of you become teachers, my brethren, knowing that as such we will incur a stricter judgement" (Jas.3:1). Those who take on the mantle of teaching/preaching have an extra measure of responsibility. Jesus pointed toward a demand for consistency between words and the fruits of one's life, and He actually spoke of those "who devour widow's houses, and for appearance's sake offer long prayers; these will receive greater condemnation" (Mk.12:40). As a continuation from yesterday's devotional, false prophets continue to be Jesus' subject when he says, "Lord, Lord," but had no godly lives to back up their words. On the day of judgement, it will be useless to make claims when there is no tangible fruit to confirm what one says... Jesus, then and now, confronts His followers with the need for a reasonable consistency between words and deeds... Here is the nub of it all for the Christian; It is for God to ascertain what a reasonable consistency entails. Jesus never taught that sinless perfection is required for all those who hope to enter into a heavenly life. If that were true, God would have no need to extend His grace and mercy by means of the death of His Son... Jesus was very clear that He wants and expects those who own His name to live by a standard of moral excellence unknown to those who do not follow Him... Christ expects His children to worship Him in the ways revealed, and to live that way too. I'm not sure who to attribute this adage to, but I find it to be meaningful; "Trust like everything depends on God's grace; work like it all depends on you."

Have a great day... Make your little part of the world better.... Love mark  
Phil.4:11



4/12/18

Meeting The Challenges Presented

Good Morning to all,

It is a mostly cloudy 45 here in NJ as I write this morning. It will be a partly sunny and breezy day with highs in the mid 60s.

"You are the salt of the earth... You are the light of the world...Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them... Simply let your 'Yes' be 'Yes,' and your 'No,' No...' If a person strikes you on the right cheek turn to him the other also...." (Verses from Matthew 5).

As the Sermon On The Mount unfolds, Jesus demonstrates for His followers not only how they should teach but what they should teach also... Are you familiar with the term microcosm? The

Sermon On The Mount in Matt.5-7 is a microcosm of the life and teachings of Jesus that he wanted His followers to adhere to then and now. Its opening words that we call the Beatitudes declare that that being Christlike in life means that blessings follow... Though Jesus lived by the Law of Moses, by His own authority He redefined it, and went beyond it. To me, here is what makes the teachings of Jesus so special. He taught those that believed in Him to love radically by embracing enemies, turning the other cheek, going the extra mile, loving the unlovely and giving to the needy. Although the term Christianity was not in use yet, Jesus declared that His followers were to be God-focused and heart-focused... He reminded folks who wore His name that God cares for His people. He knows that people tend to worry over stuff they cannot control so He taught us how to alleviate that worry. He assured His followers that the God who reigns over the universe is a loving Father who knows what His children need before they even ask.

Jesus looked ahead to a time when people would gather together as a church and actually established to guidelines of true worship... "God is spirit and His worshipers must worship Him in spirit and in truth" (Jn.4:24). Christians need to work to define themselves in biblical terms.

What the church confesses and how Christians live mark the boundaries of that church over which He is the Lord... The church will hold its integrity to the degree that it worships and lives as God has directed.

Have a great day.... Let His light shine through you.... Love  
Phil.4:11

mark

4/13/18

Walking In Love

Good Morning to all,

It is a mostly cloudy 61 here in NJ this morning. It will be a partly sunny day with highs in the mid 70s.

"Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children; and walk in love, just as Christ also loved you and gave Himself up for us, as an offering and a sacrifice to God as a fragrant aroma" (Eph.5:1-2).

As we look at today's verses, we see that the apostle Paul wanted his readers to know what God had made them to be, as beloved children... In stating be imitators of God, he was saying for them and us to act like God had made us to act. We then come to this wonderful admonition that rings through the corridors of time to us... That statement says walk in love. When the term walk is used, it says that this love thing is not like a faucet that gets turned on and off at one's will. Walking in love means to give of one's time, talents and energy for others, even for enemies. The Christian message is that one cannot hope to please God without love for his fellow man, and in turn, love does not exist without the goodness to help those in need... (see Jas.2:15-17 & 1 Jn.3:17-18) The Law described sacrifices as a fragrant aroma in Ex.29:18 & Lev.1:9, and Christians can be similarly pleasing to God. What is strongly implied here, however, is that neither animal sacrifices nor sacrifices of praise (2 Cor.2:15) makes abuse of a helpless person acceptable. In the next few verses, Paul focused on sexual immorality and greed as common to the 1st century world along with lewd and suggestive speech. Does this sound familiar in our world today? Lets make it clear that neither sexual desire nor owning possessions is wrong within itself. Only when folks yield to the temptation of gratifying one's self at the expense of others do such things become evil... Sometimes people who rave against sexual immorality become caught up in love for things, while capitalistic economics often tends to exonerate greed. The overriding message from the inspired writing of the apostle Paul is this.... It is an affront to God and our faith in His Son when we get so entangled in worldly things that we forget that we are to be walking in love....

Have a great day.... T G I F Today God Is First Love  
mark Phil.4:11

4/14/18

Saturday Morning Quiz... Houses

Good Morning to all,

It is a mostly clear 60 here in NJ this morning. It will be a partly to mostly sunny day with highs in the upper 70s.

The place where we live is important to us, as it was in Biblical times. This morning, you are to identify the occupant of the house... If you get them all right, you can ring the bell...

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. She received Jesus into her house.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. This tanner housed Peter.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. The mother of John held a prayer meeting in her house.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. This person had a house next door to a synagogue.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. This person had a house which the Jews assaulted while looking for Paul and Silas.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. He and his company were housed by Philip on their way to Jerusalem.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. The church met in their house in Corinth.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. He went to the house of Bethuel to find a wife.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. This person housed the ark of the Lord for 3 months.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. He built a house overlaid with gold.

Answers; (a) Aquilla and Priscilla, (b) Solomon, (c) Martha, (d) Obed-edom, (e) Justus, (f) Simon, (g) Jacob, (h) Mary, (i) Jason, (j) Paul.

Have a great weekend and an uplifting and glorifying day of worship on His day.... Love  
mark Phil.4:11

4/16/18

The True Shepherd

Good Morning to all,

It is a cloudy and windy 62 here in NJ this morning. It will be a rainy (80%) morning followed by a very windy afternoon with the temps falling through the mid 50s.

"I tell you the truth, the man who does not enter the sheep pen by the gate, but climbs in some other way, is a thief and a robber. The man who enters by the gate is the shepherd of his sheep.... Jesus used this figure of speech, but they did not understand what he was telling them..." (Jn.10:1-2; 6).

The 1st eighteen (18) verses of John 10 are Jesus' teachings using the shepherd/sheep analogy. The likeness of the spiritual leaders to shepherds has deep roots in the Old Testament.

Ezekiel indicted the "shepherds" of Israel this way; "Woe to the shepherds of Israel who only take care of themselves! Should not shepherds take care of the flock? You eat the curds, clothe yourselves with the wool and slaughter the choice animals, but you do not take care of the flock" (34:2-3). The lore of Israel about the shepherd looking after the interests of the flock, was much like that of the American cowboys of western fame.... They were independent, rugged and brave as they took care of the cattle. David, the shepherd boy, when getting ready to confront Goliath, said this about his shepherding days; "The Lord who delivered me from the paw of the lion and the paw of the bear will deliver me from the hand of this Philistine..." (1 Sam.17:37). The

Pharisees of Jesus' day were poor imitations of shepherds, as they continually neglected the flock and sought credit for only themselves. They wanted the praise of their contemporaries, but were unwilling to pay the price to earn it. When Jesus saw the blind man begging for alms, the Lord stopped to be a shepherd. He gave sight to the blind man. (Jn.9:7). In a figurative way, Jesus had entered the sheep pen by the gate... Here is the lesson for the day... The blind man was representative of the spiritually needy and poor. He had heard the voice of Jesus, recognized His benevolent intent, and obeyed Him. While Peter was writing to the elders and the shepherding of the flock in 1 Peter 5, he said this; "Cast all your anxiety on Him because He cares for you..." (5:7). Lets let the Lord be our loving, caring and benevolent Savior by being the sheep while He is the trustworthy Shepherd... Lets hear His voice and obey...

Have a great start to your week.... Begin it with a RAK or two.... Love mark  
Phil.4:11

4/17/18

Jesus... The Door Of The Sheep

Good morning to all,

It is a mostly clear 42 here in NJ as I write this morning. It will be a breezy day with the mixture of sun and clouds as the high temperature will be about 50.

"So Jesus said to them again, "truly, truly, I say to you, I am the door to the sheep. All who came before me were thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not hear them. I am the door; if anyone enters through Me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture' "  
(Jn.10:7-9).

In John's gospel, Jesus spoke of His relationship to His disciples in very personal terms. Yesterday we saw the contrast between Him and the thieves and robbers in that He entered the sheep pen through the door, and didn't try to sneak in... It would be an absurdity, knowing His relationship to the sheep, to find Him climbing over the fence or breaking in. In a very open manner, he led His sheep to pasture, but in Jn.10:7, something new is introduced, as

the illustration takes on another twist. Shepherding and sheep are still the subject at hand, but while He was the Good Shepherd who entered by the door, He claimed He was something else too.... "I am the door to the sheep..." Jesus said that He was actually the Doorway through which the sheep came in and went out in search of good pasture.... WOW! Jesus is proclaiming Himself to be the way the sheep enter into life. Isn't this picture painted beautifully? The only way to true life is through Jesus, the Shepherd. If you have a bit of time today, you might want to look at these characteristics of Jesus found here in the gospel of John; "I am the bread of life," (6:35) "I am the light of the world," (8:12; 9:5) "I am the door," (10:7 & 9) "I am the good shepherd," (10:11) "I am the resurrection and the life," (11:25) "I am the way, the truth, and the life," (14:6) and lastly, "I am the true vine," (15:1)... We see here the emphasis on the oneness between Christ and His people. Jesus said He was unlike the hired hand who worked for a wage and was not going to risk much. If the wolves threatened, they would flee and the sheep would be on their own. Our lesson? The Good Shepherd was ready to lay down His life for the sake of the sheep... He loved (s) and cared (s) for His own....

Have a great day.... Do good and give God the credit.... Love mark  
Phil.4:11

4/18/18  
Jesus Knows His Sheep

Good Morning to all,

It is a clear 39 here in NJ this morning. It will be a mostly sunny day with highs in the mid to upper 50s.

"I am the good shepherd, and I know My own and My own know Me, even as the Father knows me and I know the Father; and I lay down My life for the sheep" (Jn.10:14-15).

Two times, Jesus repeated the phrase, "I am the good shepherd." In doing this, He distinguished Himself from the hired hand(s) as His journey would lead Him to lay down His life on the cross. If we follow this metaphor of being the good shepherd, He would give up Himself for the life of the sheep. Knowing this, lets not confuse His death for the sins of the world as some kind of business arrangement between God and Satan. I know My sheep, and My own know Me states unequivocally that Jesus knew His sheep by name and they followed Him. To be in Christ (a sheep) is to share an intimacy with Him. Here in 2018, I think it is to partake of the fellowship and encouragement of the church. It is to be unshackled by the burden of sin and to share in the hope of an eternally pure and redeemed fellowship with God in the next world.

The sheep who belonged in the fold when Jesus began His ministry were the Jews. Jesus' express purpose was to reveal to the Jews who worshiped God that He was in fact the Creator and God of all humankind. But when Jesus spoke of the sheep not of this fold in His shepherd/sheep analogy, He was referencing the Gentiles. The kingdom of God would be

comprised of all of those of every nation who would put on Christ in obedient faith and be baptized into Him. The apostle Paul would eloquently express this same concern for the unity of His people years after Jesus died and was resurrected. "Therefore remember that formerly you, the Gentiles in the flesh who are called "Uncircumcision" by the so-called "Circumcision," which is performed in the flesh by human hands----- remember that you at the time were separated from Christ, excluded from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world" (Eph.2:11-12) "There is one body and one Spirit, just as also you were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all who is over all and through all and in all" (Eph.4:3-6). There is to be "one flock and one Shepherd..." (Jn.10:16). By His own free will, Jesus laid down His life for His sheep... Praise the Lord....

Have a great day... Make your little part of the world better.... Love mark  
Phil.4:11

4/19/18

Jesus And The Change

Good Morning to all,

It is a mostly cloudy 49 here in NJ this morning. It will be a mostly cloudy day with a 60-70% chance of some rainfall. The highs will be in the mid 50s.

"For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourself with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male or female; for all of you are one in Christ" (Gal.3:27-28).

As we complete these devotionals that have been wrapped around the analogy of the shepherd/sheep relationship, lets go to what I think is its ultimate destination. While chapter and verse divisions are helpful for us to refer to passages in the Bible, they may artificially separate accounts that illuminate or modify one another. For example, the healing of the blind man in John 9 is an important backdrop for understanding Jesus, as the Good Shepherd who cares for His sheep in chapter 10... Neither story by itself impacts the reader as strongly as the two read together. The Pharisees who confronted Jesus after the healing, ( 9:13-15 & 40-41) were like the thief or robber who climbed over the wall of the sheep pen, (10:1) who came to steal, to kill and to destroy. (10:10) The Pharisees therefore, were like hired hands who used the sheep for their own purpose. Jesus was the Good Shepherd who saw a blind man (a sheep) in need. He restored sight and cared for the blind man as His own. The blind man and the Pharisees were specific examples of the sheep and the hired hands illustrated in the analogy of the Good Shepherd, and the chapter division (9 to 10) makes readers less inclined to see how the two are

related. Lets finish the analogy this way; Few matters are expressed more clearly in the New Testament than the changed relationship between the Jews and Gentiles brought about by Jesus Christ. Because of Jesus, the Jewish people were changed from being a small parochial segment of the human family, into sharing in the wholeness of a family consisting of every nation, language, and culture. Jews who want to be a part of this kingdom of God are to hear the same message that was and is declared to the Gentiles. As we see from today's verses, God looks at people as neither Jew/Gentile, slave/free, male/female... We could include race in this too... Thus, those who would argue that God still has some special plans or some separate path to salvation for the Jews that He does not have for all mankind, have misunderstood the message of Jesus and the apostles.... Jesus made the change....

Have a great day.... Let His light shine through you.... Love mark  
Phil.4:11

4/20/18

To Walk In The Light

Good Morning to all,

It is a clear 35 here in NJ as I write this morning. It will be a mostly sunny day with highs in the mid to upper 50s.

"Therefore do not be partakers with them, for you were formerly darkness, but now you are Light in the Lord; Walk as children of Light" (Eph.5:7-8).

Back in the 1980's, the army came up with a catchy slogan... Do you remember it? It stated this; "Be all you can be.." John C. Maxwell, a noted speaker and writer recently wrote a book by the same name. I believe that this saying was an mantra of the apostle Paul also. Maybe his slogan might be stated this way; "Be all that God intended you to be..." After speaking about immorality, impurity and greed, in the 1st few verse of Ephesians 5, Paul made this unequivocal statement; "But now you are the Light in the Lord... Walk as children of Light." The torch of goodness has been passed on from Jesus and the apostles to Christians with this bold declaration. The need for Paul to write this probably stemmed from the fact that those who were light sometimes acted less than children of light... We might also note that Paul used walk as a metaphor for Christian living. For you number crunchers out there, he used this term eight (8) times in the book of Ephesians alone. We are expected to live holy lives, so we are reminded that our former lives were in darkness. After listing a number of sins to the Corinthian church, Paul stated this; "Such were some of you..." (1 Cor.5:11). They had put the dark life behind them, as we are to do. 1 Jn. 1:5 states that God is Light... Later on (vs 7) he says, but if we walk in the Light as He Himself is in the Light, we have fellowship with one another..." His people, cleansed from sin, are light. Light suggests honesty and openness to the world. Jesus, in Matt.5:14-16 pointed out that it would be ridiculous to hide a light. Light suggests truth, and it

also suggests guidance for those who would grope about in the darkness of sin... Light identifies the noble and good, and exposes the cheap and tawdry. In addition to all of this, light also warns. Lets all make sure that we can stand the scrutiny of walking and living in the light...

Have a great day... T G I F Thank God I'm Forgiven Love mark  
Phil.4:11

4/21/18

Saturday Morning Quiz... Rocks

Good Morning to all,

It is a partly clear 35 here in NJ this morning. it will be a partly sunny day with a high of about 60.

Rocks provide stability to the soil, and sometimes they also provide enjoyment to folks who collect them. In today's quiz, you are to answer these questions about rocks... You will get no help from Dwayne Johnson on this quiz....

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. When he died, rocks were split.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. Who sought David and his men upon the rocks of the wild goats?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. What fell among the rocks in one of Jesus' parables?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. Who was told to speak to a rock?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. Who was told by an angel to lay unleavened cakes on a rock and pour broth over it?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. Who found himself between two sharp rocks (craggs or cliffs)?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. Who was told to hide his girdle (belt) in the hole of a rock?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. Whose word is like a hammer that breaks rocks in pieces?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. To whom did Jesus say, "Upon this rock I will build my church?"
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. Who owned the sepulcher hewn out of a rock in which Jesus was buried?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 11. Who carried 10,000 people to the top of a rock and pushed them down?



Answers; (a) Moses, (b) some seed, (c) Peter, (d) Amaziah, (e) the Lord's, (f) Gideon, (g) Jesus, (h) Joseph, (i) Jeremiah, (j) Jonathan, (k) Saul

Have a wonderful weekend, and an uplifting and glorifying day of worship on His day.... Love  
mark Phil.4:11

4/23/18

Peter On Pentecost...God's Testimony

Good Morning to all,

It is a clear 41 here in NJ as I write this morning. It will be a mostly to partly sunny day with highs in the upper 60s.

"When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. And suddenly there came from heaven a noise like a violent rushing wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. And there appeared to them tongues as of fire distributing themselves, and they rested on each one of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit was giving them utterance" (Acts 22:1-4).

This week we will trace the beginnings of the church, starting with those miraculous things that happened on that day of Pentecost. Pentecost was one of the three great festivals when all Israel was to gather in Jerusalem. (Deut.16) Passover was celebrated in mid-March and commemorated God's leading Israel from bondage in Egypt. Pentecost occurred 50 days later, and the 3rd feast, Tabernacles, was observed in mid-September. All three of them celebrated the Israelites 40 year trek across the wilderness to claim Canaan, but they all had associations with the phases of the agricultural cycle. After Israel took possession of Canaan, the trips to Jerusalem for the feasts were an integral part of their remembrance of what God did for them. The feast days were Israel's community worship, and together they offered sacrifices, feasted, and remembered their past. It is against this backdrop that this very special day of Pentecost would take place. As we see from today's verses, the Holy Spirit had descended upon the apostles with a special power. Peter began his historic sermon by assuring the crowds that the apostles spoke in many languages, because the Holy Spirit had sent forth His power. He reminded them that they were seeing the fulfillment of the prophecy of Joel. (Joel 2:28-32) This day marked the new era for not only Israel, but for the rest of the world. The gospel, (The Good News) was that God had sent the Christ in the person of Jesus of Nazareth, and His ministry had been attested to by God. Miracles, wonders and signs had accompanied and proclaimed His authenticity. Peter's testimony rings through the ages from that day to us today... They had heard of Jesus and knew that Peter was telling them the truth. Jesus had been crucified 50 days earlier in Jerusalem, but His death was according to the determined foreknowledge and purpose of God. Jesus had died on the cross, but the grave was unable to hold Him. It is against these

facts, that the new kingdom would be established, as God had shown Him to be the Christ by raising him from the dead. We now serve that God and risen Savior... Praise the Lord....

Have a great start to your week.... Begin it with a RAK or two..... Love  
mark Phil.4:11

4/24/18

Peter On Pentecost... David's Testimony

Good Morning to all,

It is a partly cloudy 48 here in NJ this morning. It will be a mostly cloudy day with highs in the low to mid 60s.

"For David says of Him, 'I saw the Lord always in my presence; For He is at my right hand, so that I will not be shaken. Therefore my heart was glad and my tongue exulted; moreover my flesh will live in hope; Because You will not abandon my soul to Hades, nor allow Your Holy One to decay. You have made known to me the ways of life; You will make me full of gladness with Your presence' " (Acts 2:25-28).

Peter in his famous sermon on that special day of Pentecost now moved from the signs and wonders that certified the authority of Jesus and the truth of His claims to the testimony given to Him in Scripture... Yesterday we saw the fulfillment of the prophet Joel's words, but wait, because there is much more. For many ages, men of God had longed for the coming of a Messiah, and in Jesus of Nazareth, a crucified man, the wait was over and the promise was fulfilled... The crucifixion, unlikely as many thought it to be, was according to the purposes of God, but it was certainly not the end of the story. God had raised Him from the dead, and by this raising declared Him to be the Christ. (Rom.1:4) An examination of the prophet's writings made it clear that Jesus had fulfilled what inspired men had testified about the Christ. In today's verses, Peter turns to Psalm 16:8-11. These verses were widely considered by Jewish teachers as a prophecy of the Christ. Anyway you cut it, the Psalm points toward the Messiah. As we go through the Psalm, we find that the whereabouts of David's tomb was known, and his bones resided there. The body he talks of in today's verses are not his own, but those of the Messiah.

Peter wasn't finished as He let them know of the many witnesses that saw the resurrected Jesus. To crown it off, he said this; "Therefore having been exalted to the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He has poured forth this, which you both see and hear" (Vs.33). His arguments were persuasive then, and are equally persuasive today... The cross did not end the impact of of Jesus on the human family, they just started it.... We still serve a risen Savior.... Praise the Lord...

Have a great day.... Do good and give God the credit.... Love mark  
Phil.4:11

4/25/18

Peter On Pentecost... His Own Testimony

Good Morning to all,

It is a cloudy 55 here in NJ this morning with a light rain falling. It will be a cloudy and rainy morning with a partially clearing afternoon... The highs will be in the low to mid 60s.

"Therefore let all the house of Israel know for certain that God has made Him both Lord and Christ ----- the Jesus whom you crucified. Now when they heard this they were pierced to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, 'Brethren, what shall we do?' Peter said to them, 'Repent, and each one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off, as many as the Lord our God will call to Himself " (Acts 2:36-39).

As we continue on with Peter's speech on that special day of Pentecost, after God's testimony, and David's also, we now have Peter's... Peter sums up his case by declaring that God had exalted Jesus to His right hand. The same man who had been crucified by the instigation of the Jewish leaders ruled and reigned at God's right hand. Can you imagine the crowd of at least 3,000 people that were listening intently to this speech? They were absolutely crushed by the gravity of the words that have been spoken, and with the stark realization of what had happened 50 days earlier, it says that they were pierced to the heart... The only words that they were able to utter were in the form of this question; "Brethren, what shall we do?" Without actually using the word, Peter spoke to the crowd about grace. Jesus had been crucified according to God's plan. At the cross on that fateful day, God was extending the arm of grace to all who would come to Christ in faith... Peter's words were clear, precise and succinct... "Repent, and each one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of you sins." The testimony of Peter is neither inference nor implication, but crystal clear instructions. Each believer as a result of his or her obedience would receive the remission of their former sins, but there was more. After his command for repentance and baptism, Peter says if they do these things, "you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." These words are over 2,000 years old, but they ring as true to us today as they did to that crowd. We serve a glorious God and His loving Son and Savior. To become one of His children, we must obey as they did 2,000 years ago....  
Praise the Lord....

Have a wonderful day.... Make your little part of the world better.... Love mark  
Phil.4:11

4/26/18

## Peter On Pentecost... A New Era

Good Morning to all,

It is a partly sunny 55 here in NJ this morning. It will be a partly to mostly sunny day with a high of about 70.

"Men of Israel, listen to this: 'Jesus of Nazareth was a man accredited by God to you by miracles, wonders and signs, which God did among you through Him, as you yourselves know. This man was handed over to you by God's set purpose and foreknowledge; and you, with the help of wicked men, put Him to death by nailing Him to the cross' " (Acts 2:22-23).

Peter's sermon to the Jews gathered in Jerusalem on the Pentecost day, and recorded in the 2nd chapter of Acts, marked an important transition for followers of Christ in the New Testament. Jesus died on the cross during the Passover season; after three (3) days God raised Him from the dead, and Peter delivered this sermon to the Jews of the Roman world gathered there 50 days afterward on the next feast day, Pentecost. Over the next 40 days after His resurrection, (Acts 1:3) Jesus showed Himself to be alive, and then, in the sight of His disciples, He ascended to be with God. (Vs. 9) Peter's sermon was the foundational event for the church. It marked the ushering in of a new era.... The message is memorable not only because of the truths it testified to, but for the manner of its presentation. Isn't it fascinating, that Peter, who had cowered away from Jesus in the high priest's courtyard on the night before His crucifixion and denied Him three times, was the one to deliver this sermon. Through the power of the Holy Spirit, Peter had turned into a spectacular preacher. After Jesus had stirred Jewish lands with His teachings, and punctuated them with miracles, wonders and signs, Peter declared God's design was completed when Jesus went to the cross. The Father then testified to His being the Christ by raising Him from the dead. This "carpenter's son" from Nazareth had redeemed a people to wear His name for ages to come. The gospel call was now for people to confess Him as the Son of God, repent, and be baptized into Christ for the remission of their sins. The "last days" were officially upon the earth, and a new era had come in the relationship between God and man. The cross, the resurrection and the explanation all lead us to where we are today.... Praise the Lord....

Have a great day... Let His light shine through you.... Love

mark

Phil.4:11

4/27/18

We're Supposed To Walk In Wisdom

Good Morning to all,

It is a cloudy 50 here in NJ as I write this morning, with a light rain falling. It will be a rainy morning (75-100%) and a cloudy afternoon. The high will be in the low 60s.

"Therefore be careful how you walk, not as unwise men but as wise, making the most of your time, because the days are evil. So then, do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is" (Eph.5:15-17).

In the the book of Ephesians, a lot of the apostle Paul's writing has been concerned with sin as being a offense against God, and as having destructive effects on others. He also asserts that sin is sheer folly. To either live in sin, or with no awareness of the allurements of it is to walk like a fool... There are few paradoxes any more evident than the misery people bring on themselves and others in the name of freedom and apparent good times. Rather than being doleful, Christians are to be thoughtful. It is against this backdrop that we find today's verses, and the next few also in the 5th chapter. Paul urges his readers to be wise and attempt to reclaim the time wasted in foolish living. Since literally everything comes with a price tag, maybe the purchase price for the time they are to "buy back" was their faith in Christ and their zeal for righteousness. Though costly, it is certainly attainable. I almost giggle when I read verse 17. The wording is rendered, "so then, do not be foolish..." I can imagine Paul using a more colorful and colloquial term by saying, "Don't be dumb..." If you are like me, you don't like to be called dumb... When we realize how the foolish actions of sin affect us and others, we can readily see how dumb we're being. There's nothing like a strong dose of harsh reality and simple observation of the way people live that should steer us back into the arms of Jesus. I also find the metaphor of drunkenness Paul uses to drive his point across in verse 18... His teaching is strong and powerful. Rather than altering your words and actions by being filled with alcohol, he says this; "But be filled with the Spirit." He is actually saying its better to be filled with the Spirit than with spirits. Whether its telling folks that live in sin that they are dumb, or advising them to be filled with the Spirit rather than spirits, Paul is trying to get his readers to walk down the path of wisdom... His words are both colorful, informative, but above all they are Spirit inspired....

Have a great day T G I F Today God Is First Love mark  
Phil.4:11

4/28/18

Saturday Morning Quiz... Ownership

Good Morning to all,

It is a clear but foggy 50 here in NJ this morning. It will be a mostly sunny day with a high near 70.

Many of us enjoy owning things, as possessions may often seem to bring a security of sorts. In today's quiz, you will fill in the blank with the thing possessed. You don't get to keep any of this stuff, and as always, have fun....

1. Omri bought and owned the \_\_\_\_\_ of Samaria.
2. Esau was given ownership of Mount \_\_\_\_\_.
3. Ahab possessed the \_\_\_\_\_ of Naboth because Jezebel had the owner killed.
4. Isaac owned \_\_\_\_\_ and herds.
5. The Israelites were promised ownership of \_\_\_\_\_ by God.
6. Lot's children owned \_\_\_\_\_.
7. Paul owned a \_\_\_\_\_ which he left in Troas and asked Timothy to bring it to him.
8. A widow woman owned two \_\_\_\_\_ which she put into the Temple treasury.
9. A widow woman and her son owned only a handful of \_\_\_\_\_ and a little oil in a jar.
10. Paul warned the owners of a \_\_\_\_\_ of damage to their possessions.
11. Jesus told the disciples to untie a \_\_\_\_\_ for him to ride, and the owner would give consent.
12. Hadad owned a \_\_\_\_\_ which Pharaoh gave to him.

Answers (a) flocks, (b) Seir, (c) mites, (d) house, (e) colt, (f) hill, (g) ship, (h) vineyard, (i) meal, (j) Canaan, (k) cloak, (l) Ar.

Have a great weekend and an uplifting and glorifying day of worship on His day.... Love  
mark Phil.4:11

4/30/18  
Stephen's Historical Sermon

Good Morning to all,

It is a partly cloudy 44 here in NJ this morning. It will be a partly sunny and breezy day with highs in the mid 60s.

"Then the high priest asked him, 'Are these charges true?' " (Acts 7:1).

This week's devotionals will come from the 7th chapter of the book of Acts, and will concern the speech (sermon) Stephen gave before the Sanhedrin. The Sanhedrin was the ruling body of the Jewish priesthood, and charges of blasphemy had been brought against Stephen, a Christian believer. The sermon was his defense... No simple formula presents itself in the New Testament regarding what an ideal sermon is to be. The Sermon On The Mount (Matt.5-7) is different in form than the presentation Jesus gave about Himself as the Good Shepherd. (Jn. 10) There are many sermons in the book of Acts, and they come on different occasions and for different audiences. As Paul explained to Timothy, sermons can be to teach, admonish, build up, rebuke or proclaim the grace of God. There is a thread, however, that runs through all sermons despite the audiences, and this is it; Common to all good preaching is that the speaker depends on authoritative revelation that God has supplied. The preacher is to proclaim what God has revealed through His inspired Word. On this basis of what he has learned from God, a preacher first submits to the way of life that God has commanded, and then commends it to the world. Although the Word is an earthen vessel, (2 Cor.4:7) a preacher is to speak from it with assurance and power. The world needs a bold affirmation, not a whimper. We have looked thus far at sermons from Jesus and Peter, and now Stephen joins the list. Their sermons are alike in that they are all stamped with the indelible mark of God. With an age of repentance in the air, lives were to be changed. Jesus came and had inaugurated His kingdom. The Messiah reigned and people needed to obey Him... The church, a community of God's people, was to be the guiding light of the world. How well are your church and preacher doing? Feedback is welcome...

Have a great start to your week.... Begin it with a RAK or two.... Love  
mark Phil.4:11