



ST. MARK
LUTHERAN CHURCH

Daily Devotional

Tuesday, March 9, 2021

Pastor Eric Jay

Prayer: Gracious God and Father, You are so long-suffering and patient and forgiving with us. It is impossible to count the ways that we have sinned against You, and impossible to measure the extent of Your love and desire for mercy. By Your Spirit and power Lord, give us Your heart and Your eyes with which to see those who have sinned against us. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Scripture: Ephesians 4:31-32

³¹ Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. ³² Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.

Devotional – “Bitter is not Better”

Nelson Mandela was an anti-apartheid revolutionary, politician, and philanthropist who served 27 years in prison for his activism, and later became the President of South Africa from 1994 to 1999. In one interview following his release from his quarter-century long prison sentence, Mandela said, “As I walked out the door toward the gate that would lead to my freedom, I knew if I didn’t leave my bitterness and hatred behind, I’d still be in prison.”

Holding onto resentment or bitterness is altogether a self-destructive and self-defeating activity. I think we so often find ourselves clinging to resentment and bitterness because we think that letting go somehow implies that we have lost and the person we hold ill feelings toward obtains the victory. However, the opposite is true, especially for the Christian who worships the Lord Jesus who emptied Himself of all pride and position, allowing Himself to be despised, mocked, spit upon and nailed to a cross. He did all this for the forgiveness and salvation of the sinners that put Him on the cross; for you and for me.

All sin, both our own sin and the sin of others against us, is first and foremost a sin against God. He is the only one who is truly good, He ultimately decides right and wrong, and He is the only one that has the power and to set things right. As those who have faith in Christ and who desire to follow Him, Jesus calls us not to harbor hatred or resentment, but instead to pray for our enemies just as Christ prayed for the Roman soldiers who tortured Him.

One day all wrongs will be answered for. All evil will meet God’s justice. None of us are any less sinful than anyone else, and knowing the grace of God should remind us it is not our place to resent or be bitter, because Christ tasted the bitterness of our sin. We trust His wisdom and His holiness to be our defense and our justification.

Romans 12:19 - "Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, 'Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord'."

Proverbs 20:22 - "Do not say, 'I will repay evil;' wait for the Lord, and he will deliver you."

God's Word also makes clear that resentment and anger, when not surrendered to Christ, can have detrimental effects on our own spiritual health and well-being.

1 Peter 3:9 - "Do not repay evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary, bless, for to this you were called, that you may obtain a blessing."

Hebrews 12:15 - "Look after each other so that none of you fails to receive the grace of God. Watch out that no poisonous root of bitterness grows up to trouble you, corrupting many."

Friends, it only takes a few moments of prayer and honest self-evaluation to remember that just in the past 24 hours we have proven with our thoughts, words and actions that we are no less in need of God's mercy and pardon than those we view as our enemies. Receive the gift of freedom and peace that Christ died to give you. Hold tightly to His faithful love for you and let Him burden any feelings of bitterness and resentment you may have. He alone can handle it.

Thanks for joining me for another daily devotion in God's Word, and remember, that God has forgiven yesterday, is with you today and has already taken care of tomorrow. Amen.