

ThanksLiving

IN EVERYTHING, GIVE THANKS

A Pattern for Daily Prayer

Becoming Aware of God's Presence

Come to me, all you who are struggling hard and carrying heavy loads, and I will give you rest.

- Matthew 11:28

Giving thanks to God

Whatever you do, whether in speech or action, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus and give thanks to God the Father through him.

-Colossians 3:17

Listening for God's Voice

(see daily guides at right and inside)

Silence / Reflection

***Prayers for our world, the church,
those near to us, and ourselves.***

Offering of Self to God

God, what do you want to do through me today?

Blessing

Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me.

- Psalm 23:4

DAILY REFLECTIONS

Day 1: Colossians 1:15-16

*The Son is the image of the invisible God,
the one who is first over all creation,
¹⁶ Because all things were created by him:
both in the heavens and on the earth,
the things that are visible and the things that
are invisible.
Whether they are thrones or powers,
or rulers or authorities,
all things were created through him and for
him.*

Paul often writes to people who think they need "Jesus and." In Colossae, some argue to follow Jesus and obey laws from the Torah. Others suggest the need for Jesus and secret wisdom, visions, harsh self-denial, or angel worship.

But today's reading promises that Jesus is enough. Jesus alone is enough for salvation. Jesus alone is enough to deliver us from fear, slavery to sin, and even death.

I DON'T NEED TO FEAR when I believe that Jesus is the creator who holds together the universe (verse 17). I may still need to see it, but there is enough. I don't need to fear the loss of loved ones, as I know that Jesus has conquered death. I don't need to worry about loneliness; God is with me.

When you realize that Jesus is enough, you realize fear and worry are worthless. And give thanks.

Pastor Cyndi

Day 2: Colossians 1:17-20

*¹⁷ He existed before all things,
and all things are held together in him.
¹⁸ He is the head of the body, the church,
who is the beginning,*

*the one who is firstborn from among the
dead
so that he might occupy the first place in
everything.
¹⁹ Because all the fullness of God was pleased to
live in him,
²⁰ and he reconciled all things to himself
through him—
whether things on earth or in the heavens.
He brought peace through the blood of his
cross.*

How often would you say you offer praise to God for all his benefits, for Who He is and What He does? God's unmerited kindness (Grace) has brought salvation to you through His Son, Jesus Christ, who is Supreme and fully God. The fullness of the deity dwells bodily in Him. He is above ALL, exalted, seated at the right hand of the Father, and clothed with Majesty.

Christ is the Only-begotten Son of God. He is the Redeemer. He is the Messiah. He is the Creator of all things, who already existed when the universe had its beginning. Christ is the Heir of all things and holds all things together. He is the firstborn from the dead, never to die again. He alone has preeminence over all creation.

How often would you offer praise to God who, it pleased, for Christ, His Son, to be sufficient for our salvation and for His (God's) redeeming grace? Through Christ's death you are reconciled to God; and have been restored into a right relationship with God, His Father.

How often would you offer praise to Christ, who is the Head of The Church; and gives Life to The Church through His sacrificial death and resurrection? Give praise for the God of our salvation. Give praise to God for all our spiritual blessings. Give praise for the Christ of our

salvation; for through His resurrection, He leads us into our resurrection and into eternal life.

Serina Trueh

Day 3: Colossians 1:21-22

²¹ Once you were alienated from God and you were enemies with him in your minds, which was shown by your evil actions. ²² But now he has reconciled you by his physical body through death, to present you before God as a people who are holy, faultless, and without blame.

We all have a story of faith. Some grew up in a church setting, perhaps even a UMC family. I did not; however, there was a brief period in my mid-teens. Perhaps the first evidence of prevenient grace in my life began during that time at Columbia Drive UMC in Decatur. I was baptized during that period, without a lot of fanfare. Yet, it was, and remains meaningful to me. And like many others, I then had a “time away” from an active faith life.

I joined McKendree on December 7, 1990. And yes, it is a day which will live in infamy for me. I became involved fairly quickly: SS Class; DBS Classes; leadership positions & committees. Thirty+ years hence, many of the details are fuzzy, but I recall some faces and names: Lockridge; Peeples; Dykes, Mitchell; Nichols; Hamby. These were the “old guys” of the church, who made an impression on me with their faithful, usually quiet service. And today, I find myself assured they are serving an annual heavenly Chicken-Q meal! But I also recently wondered “who are some of the old guys in the church now?” Looking in the mirror, I got my answer!

I don’t have an altar call moment. Or certainly not a Damascus Road experience. But through the years of serving, studying, listening, worshiping, following or leading as called, and just being present, I have come to recognize the truth of Col 1:21-22. Even though I don’t

necessarily see a blameless man when I look in that prior mentioned mirror, I know, that-I-know, that-I-KNOW, I am blameless in God’s sight, thanks to the wonderful saving grace of his Son, Jesus Christ.

Lord, in response help me continue to grow in a faith rooted in agape love and generosity. Amen!

Bobby Butler

Day 4: Colossians 1:25-27

²⁵ I became a servant of the church by God’s commission, which was given to me for you, in order to complete God’s word. ²⁶ I’m completing it with a secret plan that has been hidden for ages and generations but which has now been revealed to his holy people. ²⁷ God wanted to make the glorious riches of this secret plan known among the Gentiles, which is Christ living in you, the hope of glory.

I have been a member of McKendree for over 40 years and have seen a lot of people come and go. It has been fun to watch how a lot of people have changed over the years, to see them “find what was hidden what was a mystery”. For some it has been a long journey. I don’t know if a lot of them had an “aha!!” moment or if through Emmaus, Sunday school, private study, or maybe even a message from the pulpit brought them to a point of understanding that through a profession of faith they had discovered the “riches of His glory”.

So many I have seen grow and watched them serve; to name a few of whom I am proud to know is Terry Lemm who has taught a lot of kids in Sunday school and leads the congregation in many ways, Bobby Butler, oh how he has changed and grown in the Lord and has served and is serving accordingly, Andy Phucas who feeds the masses with his devotion and commitment (along with others), Andy Dunn who does so much through the prayer team and

her bright smile, Linda Kent who serves children of McKendree Elementary and all of us who know her, she warms our spirits. Of course, there are so many others who we all love and get to serve alongside, I can't name them all, this is supposed to be short.

I pray for McKendree, its leadership and the faithful saints who are examples of how Jesus works in our lives. Many of us are amazed to see how we have changed. So often it is only by looking back that we see how Christ has brought us along. It's easier to see in others sometimes than ourselves, but His spirit is alive in us who know Him.

Tom Johnston

Day 5: Colossians 2:1-3

I want you to know how much I struggle for you, for those in Laodicea, and for all who haven't known me personally. ² My goal is that their hearts would be encouraged and united together in love so that they might have all the riches of assurance that come with understanding, so that they might have the knowledge of the secret plan of God, namely Christ. ³ All the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are hidden in him.

In the heart of the New Testament, the book of Colossians serves as a powerful reminder of the immeasurable treasures that we have in Christ. In these verses, the Apostle Paul expresses deep concern for the spiritual well-being of the Colossian believers. He desired that their hearts may be encouraged and that they would be knit together in love. This sense of unity and encouragement, as believers coming together, is a crucial aspect of our faith journey. Paul's ultimate goal for the Colossians and for all believers, including us, was that "they may have the full riches of complete understanding, in order that they may know the mystery of

God, namely, Christ." In these words, we find a profound truth: the key to understanding and the knowledge of God is found in Christ. All the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are hidden in Him.

As a volunteer in the Children's Ministry here at McKendree, I have had the very real privilege of watching these words, and these ideas come to life right before my eyes. I have seen amazingly capable leaders and hard working volunteers, such as Alison Price, Sarah How, Crystal Cox, Terry Lemm, and so many more that I could fill a page with their names, who I have been lucky enough to work alongside for many years, bring groups of children together in love and set them on a path of lifelong discipleship. These are church members who truly bring Paul's words to life for the youngest among us and offer those younglings the most fertile of ground into which they put down roots and grow in the wisdom of Christ for years to come. It is in their work that I see these words lived out, every day – or at least every Sunday and Wednesday!

Prayer: Dear Heavenly Father, we thank You for the treasure of wisdom and knowledge found in Christ. Help us to seek Him with open hearts and minds, so that we may continually grow in our understanding of Your ways. Knit us together in love with fellow believers and grant us the encouragement we need to stay steadfast in our faith. And lead us like children into your presence. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.

Chris Hamilton

Day 6: Colossians 2:8-10

⁸ See to it that nobody enslaves you with philosophy and foolish deception, which conform to human traditions and the way the world thinks and acts rather than Christ. ⁹ All the fullness of deity lives in Christ's body. ¹⁰ And

you have been filled by him, who is the head of every ruler and authority.

Paul tells the people in Colossae that some traditions are made by humans rather than Christ. Philosophy, the love of wisdom, is not evil. It becomes corrupt when people seek wisdom apart from Jesus Christ. He warns against a subversive teaching that crept in, that Christ is insufficient.

God's fullness lives in Christ, and everything we need for our salvation is in Christ. Suppose you are looking for other things besides Jesus. In that case, you want to make God into something less divine, and relationships with these things are not what God intends. If you think Christ is less than fully God, you won't believe Christ can forgive or trust in what Christ has done.

Christ cares deeply about our understanding of who Christ is and our relationship to Him. Colossians speaks of a union "in Christ" throughout the book. We are connected to Christ when our sins are placed on him, and a deposit of His nature is given to us. There is a union there that can change how we relate to him if we really believe in Christ. When I started to understand this union, I realized it is more personal and has more depth than I ever imagined.

Tim Tallent