

GRACEPOINT CHURCH

Weekly Devotional

A Call to Repentance By Paul Verryn

Scripture

Isaiah 9:1-4; Psalm 27:1, 4-9; 1 Corinthians 1:10-18 Matthew 4:12-23

Open your mind and heart as you read the passage of Scripture aloud and then again quietly to yourself. Listen for God's word to you.

Observation

Isaiah 9:1-4

Isaiah has just warned Israel about the invasion from Assyria which will be terrible for the Jewish people, especially those in the northern lands of Zebulun and Naphtali. God promised that these areas would receive a special blessing. They would be the first to suffer under the Assyrian invasion, but they would also be the first to see the light of the Messiah. The Gospel of Matthew describes that much of Jesus' ministry took place in this area around the Sea of Galilee. This was a special blessing. The people would rejoice in the same way they had done when Gideon triumphed over the Midianites (Judges 7).

Psalm 27:1; 4-9

It is difficult to date this psalm in David's life, but he wrote it in a time of trouble. Even so he is able to sing a song of triumph as he has confidence in the Lord that He will see him through the challenging times. God filled David's life with light and was his deliverer, both in the present times of trouble and ultimately... David said he desired one thing from God. He would like to live in the house of the Lord, in the presence and glory of God, forever. He wanted to know more about God and His ways. David knew there was special blessing and protection for the person who sought God even in the midst of trouble. He would be able to lift his head in the hope God gave him and he would sing praise to the Lord, who was continuously rescuing him. Even so, there were times when David felt that God had not heard his prayer. In spite of God instructing David to see Him it seemed sometimes as if He was hiding Himself from David. This made David look even more carefully for the Lord. God had helped him in the past; David expected Him to help him in the future. Their way was the right way and they were the ones who were right with God. But the

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1 Corinthians 1:10-18

The members of the church in Corinth were struggling with issues that were causing division amongst them. Paul wrote to them pleading that such arguments stop for they were ripping one another apart and destroying the unity of the body of Christ. He asked them to be united (Hebrew: knit together) in the way a broken bone heals. Paul mentioned several arguments that were taking place which were dividing the church into factions, each of which with its own leader. He had been told about this by members of Chloe's household who had probably travelled to Ephesus (where Paul was living at the time). Paul was told that one group followed his teachings; another group followed the teachings of Apollos; and yet another Peter's teachings, whilst a fourth followed the teachings of Christ. Each group maintained the problem was not who they were following but that they thought so much of themselves in following this teacher or that. There was a sin of pride involved as they boasted about the group they belonged to. Jesus does not belong to one party. He came and died for everyone. But even the issue of whether someone had been baptised by Paul or another leader became a bone of contention. So, Paul said he was grateful that he had not been called to baptise but to preach the Good News of the message of the cross in such a clear way that it revealed the power of God to those who would believe it.

Matthew 4:12-23

Jesus went to Galilee when he heard John the Baptist had been imprisoned to continue the spread of God's message when John was no longer to deliver it. The region of Galilee had about three million inhabitants many of whom were Gentiles. People had rejected Jesus in His home town of Nazareth and so He took up residence in Capernaum. This move fulfilled the prophecy spoken by Isaiah (above) when he said the Light would come to Galilee. Matthew gave a succinct version of Jesus' message: 'Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.' In this way He carried forward the message John had preached at the Jordan River, taking it further – for He was the coming Messiah John had spoken about. Whilst there He called Peter, Andrew, James and John to follow Him. It was customary for Rabbis to have disciples who would learn from them at this time. They had all been busy working on the lakeshore, but they did not hesitate and left their nets to follow Him. Jesus travelled throughout Galilee sharing the Good News in the synagogues and healing people.

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Icebreaker:

How do you react when people say 'sorry' to you? Does your reaction change depending on whether you consider you are due an apology or whether it is just something people say in an off-hand way when no apology is needed? Do you find it easy to accept a sincere, deserved apology? Why/why not?

Application

- If you feel you need to apologise, how do you handle the conversation? Does it make it easier for you if the person to whom you are offering a genuine apology accepts it or brushes it off? What is your response to both reactions? How do you feel when the apology lies in front of you and you know you need to do it? How do you feel when it is behind you?
- Is it easier to repent to Jesus than to another person? Why do you think this is so?
- Does your relationship with God affect your awareness of the need to repent of a wrong doing in regard to another person? Does it help you to repent, or are you reluctant to do so? Does the person concerned make a difference as to how you react to any prompting from God?
- How does the idea that, as a member of the Gracepoint congregation (or any other congregation), you are an agent of repair, make you feel? Where can you fulfill this assignment in your day-to-day life at this point in time? What would you like to ask God to do to help you? How would you go about carrying out such a task?
- The call to repentance is the call to discipleship. How has this been evident in your life? Do you see repentance as an opportunity to begin again? Why/why not?
- How can the group help you with the struggles you have mentioned during this session?

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Prayer

Pray for one another in regard to the issues that have been raised during your discussion time, and in regard to other needs of the group.

Service

Ask God to show you any instances where you need to repent – to Him – or to apologise to another person. How do you feel once you have followed His lead?

Bibliography

<https://enduringword.com/bible-commentary/isaiah-9/>

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