

WEEKLY DEVOTION – Tuesday, December 5, 2023
Pastor Bruce Kischnick, Grace Lutheran Church, New Albany, IN

“A Cold Son”

READING: Psalm 2:1-6, 10-12 – Why do the nations conspire and the peoples plot in vain? The kings of the earth take their stand and the rulers gather together against the Lord and against his Anointed One. “Let us break their chains,” they say, “and throw off their fetters.” The One enthroned in heaven laughs; the Lord scoffs at them. Then he rebukes them in his anger and terrifies them in his wrath, saying, “I have installed my King on Zion, my holy hill.”

Therefore, you kings, be wise; be warned, you rulers of the earth. Serve the Lord with fear and rejoice with trembling. Kiss the Son, lest he be angry and you be destroyed in your way, for his wrath can flare up in a moment. Blessed are all who take refuge in him.

We are sliding inexorably into winter. The days get shorter. The temperatures get colder. Gone are the vibrant colors of the fall. Long away are the warmth of spring and the bloom of the flowers. For some this is a difficult and lonely time of the year, Christmas notwithstanding. The problem is the sun, right? Every day it comes up later and disappears earlier, at least until the 21st or 22nd. Even then the sun looks small and weak in the sky. It seems to have retreated from the earth. The ancients often feared that the time would come when the sun would simply keep going away and darkness and death would be the result. They made sacrifices to appeal to the sun, and when they realized that the days were once again getting longer, they celebrated and feasted, for disaster had been averted. That was Saturnalia’s origin, the festival that the early church fathers emptied and refilled with Christmas.

And here’s the rub: The ancients thought the sun was retreating away from the earth. We modern scientific folk know the real truth: the earth is actually shying away from the sun. In her annual rotation around the sun, the earth because of her elliptical orbit and the tilt of her axis gets further away, then closer to the sun, thus the four seasons. It’s not the sun that becomes colder, but the earth that tilts away from her source of light and heat.

Guess what? The same thing happens to people – sinful, willful, rebellious people – yes, you and me. There are times in our lives when we feel like God is a long way off. He seems to be silent in the face of our prayers. He seems callous and unfeeling in regard to our hurts and needs. We don’t feel his presence as we would like to, and we find ourselves less interested in attending worship or listening to his Word. We feel like God has absented himself from us. We feel like Jesus has grown cold and uncaring. Where is he when we need him?

Guess what? The same misunderstanding the ancients had with the sun – Jesus has gone away from us. We’ve wandered away from him. It’s true every time! When we feel his absence, when we think he’s forgotten us, when we feel cold and alone, it’s always we who have drifted away from him. Scripture is very clear about the fact that the Lord is the same yesterday, today, and tomorrow. His love for us is faithful, true, and unchanging. His promises are the same to us as they were to our forbearers and the ancient believers in YHWH. He does not change, he is never skittish or unreliable, his love never waivers. Oh, but you and I, we are changeable as the weather. We wax hot and cold. We stand in the light and then slip off into the darkness. We sing his praises one day, and then we give ourselves over into sin the next. It’s never a matter of a cold Son, but rather our lukewarm love for him and his Kingdom.

As we come ever closer to the celebration of Jesus’ Nativity, let us draw near and warm ourselves before God’s wonderful gift and his fulfillment of all the Old Testament prophecies that assured his people that he

would not leave them in their sin and condemnation but would send One who would free his people – past, present, and future – from bondage to death and decay. Christmas is a perfect snapshot of the faithfulness of God. What he said he would do, he has done. What he said he would accomplish, he has begun. What he promised to give us lies in the Manger, Son of God and son of man, “...born of a woman, born under the law, that he might save those born under the law” – you and me and all the fellow redeemed.

You and I know beyond a shadow of doubt that the sun will not continue to drift away from us. Gravity holds us to it and the warmth of spring and the glory of summer will return. You and I also know beyond a shadow of doubt that the Son came with one accord with the Father and the Holy Spirit – to give himself a ransom for our sin. The love of God will never be taken from us because we put our trust in Christ Jesus. Now, sometimes we waver, sometimes we waffle, but he is gracious and righteous, full of compassion and forgiveness. “Lord, we believe! Help Thou our unbelief!” “Jesus, draw us to Thee!” May the Son shine upon you all, now and forever. Amen.

PRAYER:

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

- 1) SENIORS CHRISTMAS PARTY next Thursday, the 14th, noonish. Bring a dish to pass and if you want to take part in the Gift Exchange, a gift worth about \$15.
- 2) CHILDREN’S CHRISTMAS SERVICE: Sunday, December 17, 10:30 service.
- 3) GIFTS FOR KIDS – we will be gifting children in needy families as is our tradition. Planning to serve 35-40 children. This only happens with your donations of cash and toys. You can use “Push/Pay” or an envelope that says, “Gifts for Kids” on it. New toys can be dropped by the office anytime until the 20th. Help us make it a Merry Christmas for kids in congregation and our community.