

WEEKLY DEVOTION – Tuesday, July 20, 2021
Pastor Bruce Kischnick, Grace Lutheran Church, New Albany, IN

“I HATE CHIGGERS”

READING: Psalm 51: 1-12 – Have mercy on me, O God, according to your unfailing love; according to your great compassion blot out my transgressions. Wash away all my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin. For I know my transgressions, and my sin is always before me. Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight, so that you are proved right when you speak and justified when you judge. Surely, I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me. Surely you desire truth in the inner parts; you teach me wisdom in the inmost place. Cleanse me with hyssop and I will be clean; wash me, and I will be whiter than snow. Let me hear joy and gladness; let the bones you have crushed rejoice. Hide your face from my sins and blot out all my iniquity. Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me. Do not cast me from your presence or take your Holy spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of your salvation and grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me.

As you might have guessed from the title for today’s devotion, I HATE CHIGGERS! I guess some people call them “No See’ums” and that’s a pretty good description. They seem to love the taste of me. As I do lawn work and tend to my garden the chiggers target me again and again. They can’t be seen or felt until too late. They do their damage and escape, leaving behind an itching, irritating little sore that mocks me because they’ve done their damage and are gone.

I find that people mistakenly believe that when the itching starts, the chigger is still embedded in the wound. Not so! Adult chiggers only suck plant juices. But to achieve adulthood, their larval form needs protein to make the transition. So the larval form jumps or falls on a host (me!) and crawls along unnoticed until it comes to a handy crease or wrinkle in the skin. They have weak mouth parts, so they tend to find those creases at your ankles and at your beltline. Then they clamp on, inject an enzyme into a cell that causes it to liquify, and then they suck up your essence! When they are full, they drop off and go their merry way. In the meantime your body reacts to the liquification and assault by sending antibodies to the site. Thus the itch and the scabs and the irritation!

Oh, the horror! Just think about it for a moment! They *inject* an enzyme that *liquifies* your cells, then they *suck up your essence*, leaving a *wound* behind without ever being seen or felt by you! If these things were the size of cats, we’d all be doomed! At least if a mosquito bites you, you can have the satisfaction of crushing it with a good swat! But the chigger is long gone before you realize what he’s done to you!

Isn’t that just like our sins? They creep into our lives, often disguised as something “fun” or “harmless” or “deserved”. They hang around, wounding us, weakening us, harming us or others in ways we could not or did not foresee. After they have landed and done their worst, we only then become aware of their effects. Too late! The damage has been done; the hurt and the trouble they have caused only then begin to show. Oh, what a mess we leave behind!

Think of King David’s mess that led him to pen Psalm 51. He saw Bathsheba in her bath. He liked what he saw and began to lust for what was not his. He seduced her, committed adultery with her, and sent her away thinking no one would be the wiser. But then comes word of her pregnancy! Now he has to cover up the evidence, so he sends for Uriah, her husband, thinking that if he spends time with her everyone will think the baby is his and just a little premature. But Uriah is a good officer and will not allow himself a pleasure his soldiers cannot enjoy. So, frustrated, he sends Uriah back to the front with his own death warrant in his hand. David has ordered a maneuver that is sure to lead to Uriah’s death on that battlefield.

When that happens, David looks like a “good guy” by taking the poor widow into his own house. But he’s not a good guy and God knows it. A number of consequences follow that leave wounds, irritations, and an itch that cannot be scratched in David’s family for generations to come.

Like David, you and I must confess that we have sinned against God, “...against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight...” Like David, we have wounds and irritations of our own making that only God can sooth and remove. Like David, we realize that only God can “cleanse us with hyssop,” wash us and make us “whiter than snow.” Only he can restore us to joy and grant us a willing spirit. That itch we have in our hearts, in the back of our minds, in the regrets and the rubble left in the wake of our sinfulness – all of that can only be healed, helped, and restored through the forgiveness available to us in Christ Jesus.

I hate chiggers! They irritate me. I must hate sins all the more because they can lead to my eternal death and condemnation. Thanks be to God that he has seen to our salvation by the death and resurrection of his Son! We confess, we repent, and he heals us for Jesus’ sake. Amen.

PRAYER:

ANNOUNCEMENT(S):

- 1) Our celebration of Pastor Woods’ 25th Anniversary of his Ordination is planned for August 22 in late service and in the dinner to follow the service. Watch for details coming to you on a postcard this week. Be sure to respond to it. What a blessing he has been to us!
- 2) Pastor Woods and Trish will make a trip to Alaska the last week of this month and the first week of August. Keep them in your prayers.