

WEEKLY DEVOTION – Tuesday, November 30, 2021
Pastor Bruce Kischnick, Grace Lutheran Church, New Albany, IN

“Turn It Over”

READING: II Corinthians 2:5-11 – If anyone has caused grief, he has not so much grieved me as he has grieved all of you, to some extent – not to put it too severely. The punishment inflicted on him by the majority is sufficient for him. Now instead, you ought to forgive and comfort him, so that he will not be overwhelmed by excessive sorrow. I urge you, therefore, to reaffirm your love for him. The reason I wrote you was to see if you would stand the test and be obedient in everything. If you forgive anyone, I also forgive him. And what I have forgiven – if there was anything to forgive – I have forgiven in the sight of Christ for your sake, in order that Satan might not outwit us. For we are not unaware of his schemes.

When I was a boy back home on the farm in Michigan, my father was very scientific about “fall plowed” and “spring plowed” fields. Certain fields were plowed in the fall and others in the spring. Don’t ask me which ones they were for I was never cut out to be a farmer and paid no attention to the details. But, having been raised on that farm, I still have vestiges of the agricultural heritage in my make-up. So recently I went to work and turned over my whole garden with a shovel. That was a lot of work!

My garden is about 24 feet by 8 feet, and it took me parts of three days to get the job down. I turn over the soil so that the green, leafy weeds that had sprouted in the absence of my vegetables went into the ground as “green manure.” The stalks and dry leaves of the vegetables went with them. I turned it over so that next spring I can start fresh and clean with the work of tilling and sowing. It also allows the soil to be aerated, and it relieves the soil compaction that happened through a spring and summer of weeding and harvesting with my big feet. All in all, the garden will now be healthier and more productive because I did the work of turning it over.

St. Paul in our text is encouraging the church at Corinth to do the very same thing. It was a troubled congregation. His first letter to the church is full of his exasperation over the very public and distressing sinfulness of various members and factions in the congregation. He took them to task and encouraged them to clean up their act for the sake of the Gospel. It seems that they had taken him seriously and had ostracized some of the offenders as punishment and correction for the griefs they had caused. They had turned away from the sinfulness of these folks to avoid becoming involved in these things themselves. Evidently their actions had been pretty effective. But now Paul has a new concern.

Since some of the offenders had obviously repented and were carrying the burden of their offenses outside the circle of the church, Paul has a concern that they may be crushed under the punishment. He encourages the Corinthians to “turn over” the griefs by forgiving those who repented and taking special care to “comfort” them with the assurance of their love. He says that anyone they forgive, he will forgive also, and even more, that person will be forgiven in Christ Jesus. Paul is teaching us something important.

As Christians, we are to be ever vigilant in regard to sin and its corrupting influence. Someone who sins against us or publicly sins against the whole church has to be shown that sin. Sometimes that means limiting how we interact with that person. Sometimes it means turning away from that one as a sign of how serious this business of sin is. But when that person has a change of heart, when that person repents and seeks out the company of the saints, forgiveness is the most potent form of love there is.

As Advent gets underway, you and I are reminded that there was one overriding and most important reason that God sent his one and only Son into the world in the flesh, just one: to be the sacrifice for our sin that

by repenting and coming to him through Jesus, we could be forgiven. So when someone who has grieved us by their sinful living turns away from that sin and seeks the fellowship of the saints, we have to “turn over” that sin like my garden refuse so a fresh new start and a renewed relationship can be nurtured and grow. Jesus came so that our sin might be “turned over”, and we might be made producers of rich and abundant fruit. Being able to forgive, comfort, and welcome the offender back into our love brings joy to God’s heart for that’s just what he has done for us!

PRAYER:

ANNOUNCEMENT(S):

1) The first Sunday of Advent was this past Sunday, so that means our first Advent service will take place tomorrow, Wednesday, December 1, to be followed by two more on the 8th and the 15th. All of them start at 7:00 P.M. Come and prepare your heart for the King is coming!

The theme for this year is “King, Kingdom, and Throne: Not of This World”. Join us.

2) GIFTS FOR KIDS is accepting donations of money to buy gifts for children within the congregation and in our community at large. Every dollar you give will be used to bring Christmas joy to kids in homes that otherwise might not be able to provide things that the kids want and also need, like clothes and shoes. You can donate online, by check or cash in an envelope marked “Gifts for Kids.” On their behalf, thank you!