

WEEKLY DEVOTION – Tuesday, November 3, 2020
Pastor Bruce Kischnick, Grace Lutheran Church, New Albany, IN

“We Don’t Want You to be Ignorant”

READING: I Thessalonians 4:13-18 – Brothers, we do not want you to be ignorant about those who fall asleep, or to grieve like the rest of men, who have no hope. We believe that Jesus died and rose again and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him. According to the Lord’s own word, we tell you that we who are still alive, who are left till the coming of the Lord, will certainly not precede those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever. Therefore encourage each other with these words.

So, I went running in the rain this morning. I have a firm rule for myself that unless there is thunder and lightning close by or moving in quickly, I run: rain or sunshine, snow or cold, windy or still. So, I went out there this morning in a steady downpour with gusting winds and all. And, I saw something foolish!

The Church on the Rock sits on the corner of Grant Line and Mel Smith. This summer they did some fresh landscaping in front of their main entrance, and in the course of that they had sprinklers installed to water the plants and flowers they’ve planted. Evidently those sprinklers are on an automatic timer because as I ran through their parking lot this morning in a steady rain, their sprinklers were merrily sprinkling away! In the midst of all that rain they were watering their landscaping. I thought to myself, “How foolish that is! They’re paying for water (and New Albany sewage charges based on their water use) that’s totally unneeded and unnecessary.”

This past Sunday was All Saints Day. We celebrated the victory of the saints who ran their race, kept the Faith, and have already received their crown of life. In Luther’s day it was the second most important and observed holiday in the Church, surpassed only by Easter. It’s a little less celebrated in many churches today, but we observe it because of the witness it makes and the comfort it brings to those who mourn.

St. Paul in our text above didn’t want the people of Thessalonica to be foolish in their grief. The unbelieving world makes a mess of funerals and mourning. St. Paul says it’s because they have no hope. Not so for the Christian! We have God’s word that assures us that when our loved ones die, that’s not the end of them or our life with them. St. Paul (and other New Testament writers) assure us that those who fall asleep in Jesus are not lost, not gone forever. He assures us that the day will come when Jesus in great power and full authority will call the dead out of their graves and will bring them to us for a glorious and joyous reunion.

So, while we certainly grieve, we do not grieve like the rest of men. We miss our loved ones, surely. We sorrow for our loss and are lonely for them. But we don't grieve for THEM. They already are safe with the Lord. No more pain, sickness, sorrow, or death – those things are past for them. And, we are comforted by God's words and promises that falling asleep in Jesus is a sweet homecoming and temporary state. We will rise again to joy and to life.

So, we don't need to weep and wail for thirty days. We don't starve ourselves, wear sack cloth and ashes, and make a big show of our grief. We trust in the name of Jesus. We celebrate the victory of the saints. And we believe God is in charge whatever the polls, pundits, politicians, and the rest of men say. "Therefore, encourage each other with these words." God reigns, Jesus lives, and our loved ones in Christ we'll see and embrace again. This is most certainly true! Amen.

PRAYER:

ANNOUNCEMENT(S):

TURKEY SUPPER is coming! A week from Saturday, NOVEMBER 7, from 4-7:00 PM. Drive-through only! \$10 for adults, \$5.00 for kids ten and under. White meat, dark meat, or ham – WHILE SUPPLIES LAST!

With the Turkey Supper we also need help: Thursday, November 5, from 9:00 on – baking all the turkeys and breasts. Friday, November 6, from 9:30 on – slicing all the meat and making all the broth. And, the Elders can use help on Saturday to pull and fill orders starting about 3:30. Come work! Come eat! But, come!