

WEEKLY DEVOTION – Tuesday, September 1, 2020
Pastor Bruce Kischnick, Grace Lutheran Church, New Albany, IN

“TOPPLE-GANGERS”

READING: Psalm 1:1-4 – Blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked or stand in the way of sinners or sit in the seat of mockers. But his delight is in the law of the Lord, and on his law, he meditates day and night. He is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither. Whatever he does prospers. Not so the wicked! They are like chaff that the wind blows away.

Do you know what I mean by a “stand-alone” basketball goal? You see them in numerous driveways where young Hoosiers shoot hoops and dream of glory in Bloomington. They are basketball backboards mounted on an adjustable pole and attached to a large, plastic tank as its base. The tank is supposed to be filled with water or covered with sandbags to give the goal a solid base and to keep it from toppling over. Notice, I said, “Supposed to...”

My grandson Uri and I took a walk around our neighborhood yesterday. As we went, both of us noticed a number of such basketball goals that were in bad shape. We saw three that had large holes broken out of the backboard. We saw two more that had the rims bent backwards at a steep angle. In fact, we only saw one of those things that wasn’t beat up, and that’s a brand new one that our neighbors downhill from us just bought and set up. I’ll make a prediction right now that that one, too, will be in sad shape before next spring rolls around.

See, the problem with those “stand alone” baskets is their foundation. A good goal is anchored in the ground with about 600 pounds of concrete poured around its base. That kind of goal can withstand the wind and 220 pound, 6-foot-4 young men who like to show off their “hops”. The stand-alone types just don’t have solid footing. A windstorm comes along, catches the backboard like a sail, and over it goes. One of those big young men hangs a moment too long on the rim, and down it comes. Before you know it, the backboard shatters or the rim is bent at a crazy angle, and the thing becomes useless.

So it is with the human being who tries to “stand alone” in this wilderness called “life”. Scripture again and again uses picture language and outright pleas to call people to stand in God’s strength and under his wings. To be grounded in his Word and to set their hopes on his Gospel in Jesus Christ. So many people race through life chasing after their dreams only to find that on their deathbeds, those dreams are just so much dust. Others slouch through life with little joy and with large resentments, always sure that “somebody” has kept them from the “good life”.

The Psalmist in his very first Psalm lays the groundwork for real joy and genuine hope and a life that truly is meaningful when he urges the reader to “delight in the law of the Lord.” He says that such a person “is like a tree planted by streams of water.” Their roots go deep into the wisdom of the Lord. They are sustained in times of trouble, in times of sorrow, in times

of danger by their dependence and assurance in God's unending love and his eternal promises. Their life choices are dictated not just by their own sinful judgments but by an obedience and an informed conscience that comes from a personal relationship with their Savior.

St. Paul in his letter to the Ephesians talks about the foundation that holds us upright and firm against the storms and onslaughts of life when he says, "Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God's people and members of God's household, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone." Like those "stand-alone" goals, people who stand in their own strength and achievements will, sooner or later, be toppled and broken. But the ones who stand upon God's word, rooted in Christ Jesus, and trusting in his promises, will stand against the storm in this life, and stand before the Throne in the next.

You don't have to take my word for it. See for yourself! Delight in his Word and be grounded in his Gospel. Don't be a "Topple-ganger", but the tree that bears fruit in its season and "whose leaf does not wither." Amen.

PRAYER:

ANNOUNCEMENT(S):

Saturday, September 19, 5:00 – we are planning a drive-in worship service in place of the usual Saturday night service. You'll be able to park in the lot, see the pastors from your car, and tune in to the service on your FM dial. At the end of the service, Holy Communion will be celebrated and distributed as you drive out the exit past the gym. In this way we hope to give those who have stayed out of the building for five months for fear of COVID the opportunity to safely and meaningfully worship AND RECEIVE COMMUNION. More info will be coming, so stay tuned!

A reminder to parents and their seventh and eighth graders! We have our initial meeting tomorrow evening from 6-7:00. Important for you to be there in the Sanctuary.