

The Cross Reminds Us

Lenten Devotionals - Week 1

Ash Wednesday, February 17, 2021

Read Matthew 18:23-35

“To Settle Accounts”

“Therefore the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who wished to settle accounts with his servants.” (Mt. 18:23 RSV)

Today’s reading is the parable of the servant who had been forgiven a great sum of money by his master and then was unwilling to forgive a fellow servant who owed him only a small amount. I have read this parable many times, but I’ve never paid much attention to the introduction. I’ve passed it over as though it merely said, “Once upon a time.”

But Jesus uses even the introduction to tell us something about the Heavenly Father. He is a King who wishes to settle accounts with His servants. However, unlike an earthly king who would mete out reward or punishment based on the subject’s behavior; our King wants only good things for all His servants. He wants to show us mercy. He wants to forgive us. He wants to adopt us as His own children, far dearer to Him than servants or subjects.

Why should He want to do such a thing when we are rebellious, self-centered, stubborn and unforgiving? We can’t really grasp why, except that it is His very nature to love, to seek out, to call back His wayward ones.

As our Lenten journey begins, take a moment to remember that the King wishes to settle accounts with you, and He has! He stamped “paid in full” across the debt of your sin that Jesus paid on Calvary.

Prayer focus:

Thank God for settling accounts with us through the blood Jesus shed on the Cross. Pray for Christians who are troubled by guilt to know that their debt of sin has been fully paid by Christ.

(Written by Janice Brauer, Peace Member - 2021)

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February 18, 2021

Read Genesis 50:15-21

“Joseph’s Love”

“Joseph wept when they spoke to him.” (Gen. 50:17b RSV)

Joseph’s brothers had sold him into slavery many years before, but a famine brought the family together again. The intervening years had not changed Joseph’s brothers much. Their apology to Joseph seems motivated more by fear of Joseph’s possible retribution than by genuine repentance. They call what they did to Joseph “the transgression,” not realizing that the sin went far deeper than the one act – all the way down to the jealous attitudes and evil intent they harbored in their hearts.

All this makes Joseph’s response to his brothers simply amazing. He wept! When Jesus wept at the tomb of Lazarus, the onlookers said, “Behold how He loved him.” The same might be said of Joseph. He loved his brothers. Despite all they had done, he loved them.

The story of Joseph is a picture of Christ. While we were sinners, caring nothing for Him, our Lord loved us and came to our rescue. And just as Joseph’s provision saved his brother’s lives, so Jesus’ death and resurrection saves ours.

Prayer focus:

Ask the Holy Spirit to make you mindful each day of God’s great love and move you to praise Him with your words, your heart, and your life.

(Written by Janice Brauer, Peace Member - 2021)

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Lenten Devotionals - Week 1

February 19, 2021

Read Matthew 11:25-30

"The Father Revealed"

"No one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal Him."
(Mt. 11:27b RSV)

My neighbor is an artist. His ideas and values show on each brightly colored canvas. His paintings reflect who he is. When he shows his work, he is revealing himself and giving viewers of his art an opportunity to get to know him better.

So, the life of Jesus is a canvas upon which He paints the image of His Father. The book of Hebrews tells us that Jesus is the radiance of the Father's glory and the exact representation of His nature. When Jesus ate with tax collectors and sinners, He demonstrated the Father's grace. When Christ calmed the roaring sea, He gave evidence of God's mighty power. When Jesus healed the suffering and afflicted, He mirrored God's heart of compassion.

Our Lord revealed the Father most clearly at the cross, where God's mercy and justice met as Jesus paid the price for our sin. Then, on Easter Sunday, the Father's ultimate victory was revealed when Jesus burst forth, alive forevermore.

There are many things about God's nature and purposes that we cannot fully understand, but during this Lenten season the cross reminds us that God is love.

Prayer focus:

Pray that the cross will keep you grounded in God's love and that you may love and serve others in a way that reveals the Heavenly Father to them.

(Written by Janice Brauer, Peace Member - 2021)