

DEVOTION FOR THE FOURTH THURSDAY AFTER PENTECOST

PSALM 123

To you I lift up my eyes, O you who are enthroned in the heavens!

Behold, as the eyes of servants look to the hand of their master,

And as the eyes of a maidservant to the hand of her mistress,

So our eyes look to the Lord our God, till He has mercy on us.

Have mercy upon us, O Lord, have mercy upon us.

For we have had more than enough of contempt.

Our soul has had more than enough of the scorn of those who are at ease,

Of the contempt of the proud.

Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit;

As it was in the beginning, is now and will be forever. Amen

Old Testament Reading: Deuteronomy 8:1-20 *The Lord is your life*

New Testament Reading: Acts 21:17-26 *Paul shows his respect for the law*

“FREE TO SERVE”

In 1 Corinthians Paul said, “*For though I am free from all, I have made myself a servant to all that I might win more of them. To the Jews I became as a Jew, in order to win Jews. To those under the law I became as one under the law (though not being myself under the law) that I might win those under the law.*” Under the new covenant in Christ, believers are free from the obligation to the ceremonial law of the old covenant. The church understood this and instructed evangelists, not to compel Gentile converts to be circumcised and observe the dietary regulations and feasts of the Old Testament.

Freedom from the law did not mean believers were forbidden to observe the ceremonial law, as an expression of their piety. Jews and even Gentiles were free to receive circumcision, abstain from pork and keep the Sabbath, if they chose. They could not make this a requirement for others and should not see their observance of the law, as playing any part in effecting their salvation. This truth remains: “*For we hold that one is justified by faith apart from works of the law.*” Salvation is by grace and is received through faith in Jesus.

Paul expressed his respect for his fellow Jews, by making himself visibly observant of the law while in Jerusalem. He obligated himself to a vow, not out of necessity for himself, but for the sake of the sensitivity of his fellow Jews, both Christians and non-Christians. His purpose was that an avenue of witness would be opened that He might proclaim Jesus, as the one who fulfilled the law and who saves us from everything the law could not. We seek to be respectful of the customs of others, so we may also have an avenue to witness to the salvation of Jesus that is for all people. In all things we remember: “*For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God.*” Thanks be to God for His grace in Christ Jesus.

“THIS IS MY COMMANDMENT” (Public Domain)

This is my commandment that you love one another that your joy may be full.

That your joy may be full. That your joy may be full.

This is my commandment that you love one another that your joy may be full.

This is my commandment that you trust one another that your joy may be full.

That your joy may be full. That your joy may be full.

This is my commandment that you trust one another that your joy may be full.

This is my commandment that you serve one another that your joy may be full.

That your joy may be full. That your joy may be full.

This is my commandment that you serve one another that your joy may be full.

This is my commandment that you love one another that your joy may be full.

That your joy may be full. That your joy may be full.

This is my commandment that you love one another that your joy may be full.

PRAYER

Lord Jesus, we thank you that in our place and for our sake, you fulfilled law; both moral and ceremonial. In you, we have forgiveness. In you, we have a relationship of peace with the heavenly Father. Through you, we have access to the Father in prayer. For your sake, the Holy Spirit dwells within us. Bless us to express our faith in love, according to the revelation of your word and in respect of your law. Keep us from seeing the expression of our faith as earning your favour, or deserving your grace. Bless us with opportunities to serve that we may express our faith in thanksgiving to you, by sharing your love with others. In your name we pray. Amen

THE LORD'S PRAYER

Our Father who art in heaven.

Hallowed be Thy name.

Thy Kingdom come.

Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread

And forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us.

And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

For Thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory,

Forever and ever. Amen

THE CREED

I believe in God, the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth. And in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died and was buried. He descended into hell. The third day He rose again from the dead. He ascended into heaven and sits at the right hand of God the Father Almighty. From thence He will come to judge the living and the dead. I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy Christian Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen

BENEDICTION

1 Corinthians 9:23

“To the weak I became weak that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all people that by all means I might save some. I do it all for the sake of the gospel that I may share with them in its blessings.”