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SA Lenten Devotions 2018 "The Beloved of God" Week 7

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LENJEN
DEVOTIONS

THE
Fool
THE
Beloved

A CONCORDIA SEMINARY
STUDENT COLLABORATION
LENT 2018

The Beloved of God

Week 7

As we approach the end of Lent, we see the cross very near now. The world around us looks forward and sees only a man hanging in shame, perhaps killed for being a revolutionary, or a misguided prophet, or a social justice advocate who couldn't quite accomplish his mission. Something like that, but certainly not a savior. A few days later many of them will deem that man a fool, and us also fools for being his followers. But we already saw what a fool looks like. The fool's trust is in things other than the God who saves. Knowledge, riches, pleasure—these things can give temporary comfort, but cannot save us.

The way God saves us is quite different than we would choose or expect ourselves. Indeed, the way itself seems foolish to the world. The cross seems foolish. God Himself seems foolish. But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise, and what is weak to shame the strong. And God's foolishness is wiser than men. So we look backward not to what is truly foolish—the way of the world, but forward to what is wise—the way of the cross.

The way of the cross is trodden by none other than the Beloved of God Himself, Jesus Christ. On that cross we see Him broken, afflicted with our sins, truly dying in obedience to the Father's perfect will, all so that we might be made His own. The love of God is poured out for us, despite our past, our sins, and our foolishness.

Let us focus our eyes on that cross, and as we see the Beloved hanging there in our place satisfying justice, let us take comfort in knowing that in this action He makes us His beloved children, gives us a new identity, and provides us with rest. And certain of the Resurrection to come, may we go forward in confidence and trust to carry this message of "foolishness" to the world in compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, just as our Lord came to use.

The Beloved of God

Monday

Deaconess Bekah Karolus, 1st Year

March 26, 2018

Based on Isaiah 42:1

Justice. This may be one of the most sought after things in our society right now. We see plenty of injustice. Innocent lives taken. ‘Normal’ routine disrupted forever. Debates among all ages question whether enough action is being taken and if the right people are being punished. Do **they** care about justice?

God cares about justice. His beautiful, perfect world was corrupted by sin. His children were separated from Him, ruined by evil and enslaved to sin. So what is God’s answer to the injustice that blights the world He created perfect? “My beloved servant, whom I uphold, my chosen, in whom my soul delights” – God sent His own Son to bring justice to the nations, to bring justice to the corrupt, broken, sinful world that despises God, mocks God, runs from God. God is just, and He cares about justice. We ought to expect that His justice would be brought upon all sinners, including us.

But God also cares about us. He brought justice not by subjecting us to the penalty of damnation that justice would demand for our sin; instead, He sent His Beloved to bear in His body the penalty for our sins. He sent His Beloved to dispel the injustice by way of the cross and to bring restoration to His creation and His children, to you and to me. And He did so not breaking the bruised reed or quenching the faintly burning wick, and not turning a blind eye to injustice, but opening the eyes of the blind and bringing those who sit in darkness out from their prison of sin and unbelief.

Let’s pray: Heavenly Father, what a gift it is to be able to call You our Father! Thank You for redeeming us through the blood of Your own Son, Jesus Christ. Thank You for the promise of new and eternal life. Remind us of the price You paid to bring justice, and help us to rejoice in thanksgiving for the gift You gave us through Your Son. Keep us mindful of His sacrifice even after this Lenten season. In His name we pray, Amen.

The Beloved of God

Tuesday

Seminarian Andrew Coop, 4th Year

March 27, 2018

Based on 1 John 3:2

Beloved, we are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is. (1 John 3:2)

Now: it's a simple adverb that indicates something being done at the present time. It's a word that we can easily skip over when reading 1 John 3:2, yet it's the word that I would like us to meditate on in this devotion. In this his first letter, John outlines the past actions of Christ Jesus, and the future reality of that which we will receive through faith in Him. Yet, he also focuses on the present reality of those whom he is writing to: the Beloved, God's children. That's who we are, as well: God's beloved children: right here, right now. Our identity is secure, it is not based on anything that we have accomplished, or anything that we might do in the future, but rather is secure in the work of Jesus Christ.

Now, how does this affect us? Does this present reality which we are experiencing lead us to desire to do anything? Does our identity in Christ confront any parts of our lives?

Now, what change are you going to make in your life, based on your present identity as a beloved child of God?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, the world calls me many things: weird, old fashioned, intolerant, and unloving. I call others around me hurtful and wrongful things. Yet, you call us your beloved children; we are each a child of your gracious eternal family. Grant that may I remember who I am to you today. Lead me to care for the needs of those whom you call your children, and also for those who have rejected your invitation to be a part of your family. By the power of your Holy Spirit, working in and through Your Word, change my thoughts, motivations, and actions: now. Amen.

The Beloved of God

Wednesday

Seminarian Joshua Otterman, 3rd Year

March 28, 2018

Based on Romans 9:25

As indeed he says in Hosea, “Those who were not my people I will call ‘my people,’ and her who was not beloved I will call ‘beloved.’”
(Romans 9:25)

Devotion: In our culture we expect that love is justifiable, meaning that we love people because they are worth giving our love. There are all kinds of reasons why we love one person but not another. Something about them pleases us: their personality, intellect, or wit. Even if we have family members we do not particularly like, we still love them because they are family.

God, on the other hand, loves us even though we are unlovable, even though we have no inner quality that qualifies us to be God’s beloved. As the people of the first century Israel thought, the other nations were supposed to be unlovable, but God makes outsiders into His people. He doesn’t operate within the categories created by human beings. He chooses the people who no one would choose. He picked Israel before the incarnation, He picked the gentiles after the resurrection, and He picks you through your baptism today. Through a gift of His love in the form of His Beloved Son, Jesus, God transforms you into His beloved child, as the Apostle Paul wrote, “once you were not my people, but now you are.

Prayer: Dear Father in Heaven, thank you choosing me at my baptism and for making me your beloved child even though I am a sinner. Help me to see people with your eyes, and to share the love with them that you already shared with me. Amen.

The Beloved of God

Thursday

Concluding Seminarian

March 29, 2018

Based on Psalm 127:2

Solomon had the Lord's blessing when he set about the task of building the Temple in Jerusalem as God's more permanent place to be among His people, and he reminds us that without God leading and blessing in all that we do, we do it in vain as fools.

Each of us is to work to complete our tasks to the best of our abilities. As we go about doing our duties, though, we are to rely on God alone and trust in Him only to make the work beneficial. One of the ways the Lord does this is by restoring our strength through daily rest for our bodies. Through the words of Solomon God tells us that He wants us to be diligent when it comes to receiving this rest. This rest includes trusting in the Lord to provide, and being confident in what the Lord has provided.

We are confident that this rest indeed belongs to us. We know this because of our Lord and Savior's labor on the cross, by which He won salvation for us and made us His own. He gave His Beloved Son to make us His beloved children; Jesus labored so that we could rest. Ultimately, all His beloved children will enjoy eternal rest in His presence. So, while we gladly embrace getting the physical rest we need, we look forward to the eternal rest provided for all God's beloved children.

Dear God, as we wake up from the restful sleep You have given us, please bless us and our work. We commit our labor into Your hands as Your beloved people, through Beloved Your Son, in whose name we pray. Amen.

The Beloved of God

Friday

Seminarian Anthony Diliberto, 4th Year

March 30, 2018

Based on Colossians 3:12

To be baptized is to be chosen, to be holy, to be loved. For, to be baptized is to be united to Christ, who is Himself all of these things: Jesus is the Chosen One, in whom the Father's soul delights (Isaiah 42:1). He is the Holy One of God (John 6:68). He is the Beloved Son, in whom the Father is well pleased (Luke 3:22).

To be baptized is to be all of these things, because to be baptized is to be "in Christ" (Col 1:2). It is to be clothed in His righteousness and receive a new identity, which stems from Jesus' own identity as the chosen, holy, and Beloved Son of God.

"Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience," (Colossians 3:12)

As the chosen, holy and Beloved Son of God, Jesus was compassionate with the crowds, showing mercy to the harassed and the helpless (Matt 9:36). Jesus was kind to His enemies, praying even for those who mocked Him, ridiculed Him, and spit in His face (Luke 23:33-38). He was humble, becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross (Phil 2:8-9). He was meek, riding to His throne on the back of a donkey (Matt 21:5). Jesus was patient, bearing the guilt and shame of sinners, staying on the cross until he breathed His last, accomplishing the redemption of the world.

To be baptized is to be compassionate, kind, humble, meek, and patient. For, to be baptized is to be united to Christ, who is all these things.

And when we fail to be who we are, remember that Christ was and still is today all of these things....for you!

In Baptism we now put on Christ – our shame is fully covered. With all that He once sacrificed and freely for us suffered. For here the flood of His own blood now makes us holy, right, and good before our Heavenly Father.

The Beloved of God

So use it well! You are made new – in Christ a new creation! As faithful Christians, live and do within your own vocation, until the day when you possess His glorious robe of righteousness bestowed on you forever! (LSB 596 4,6)

Thank you for joining us this Lent. May God bless your celebration of His Son this week!