

LOOKING UP - March 2 - "Saints and Priests"

What do you think of when you hear the word "Saint"? You might think of someone notable in Christian history, someone who performed miracles or led an extraordinarily holy life. What would you say if I told you that you are a saint? Truth is, if you have received Christ and have become a child of God you are. This is part of your new identity and the new life you have in Christ. Religious traditions aside, when we look to the bible we see that when the apostles wrote to various churches, like Ephesus or Galatia, they would often start with the saying, "to the saints in..." referring to God's people in that location. Quite simply, a saint is anyone who is in Christ.

What if I told you that you are also a priest within a priesthood? Yes you! Peter writes these words to fellow followers of Jesus who had been exiled...

"But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvellous light. 10 Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy" (1 Peter 2:9,10).

It is a mistake to think that there are men and women far above us who are somehow holier, more qualified, or even worth venerating. In Christ, each of us have been made holy, we each have the same access to the presence of God and are each endowed with spiritual gifting that enables us to minister to others. The Church suffers when we prop up certain individuals and notable names on a pedestal and neglect the equipping of the saints for the ministry (Ephesians 4).

When we see ourselves as God sees us, we recognize that all who have received Christ as saviour and Lord have a great privilege and a high calling. Too often we limit ourselves and the potential God has given us by thinking that others are somehow more special, more called, more qualified than we are.

If you are in Christ, you are a saint and a priest. May you live out that reality today!

Steven Amorin - First Baptist Church Tillsonburg

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#Devotional #Bible #Jesus

LOOKING Up - March 3 - "Be Still"

I wonder what kind of work ethic you were taught growing up. How does that affect who you are today? Are you a person who is constantly busy? Afraid to tell people "no" for fear of letting them down? Feel like you need to explain yourself for resting and taking time off? Annoyed with others who don't move at your pace?

Our culture seems to revere those who build notable careers though their family life may be in shambles. Many of us wear busyness as a badge of honour. We humblebrag to those close to us about how busy our life is so that we will be seen as important or valuable in this world.

There comes a point where we all need to ask if all of this busyness is really necessary or worth the price we pay in our personal wellbeing and relationships. Don't get me wrong, it is vital that in whatever we do, we do it with excellence, passion and dedication. I think I am getting at the motivation behind why so many of us lead unhappily busy lives and how it leads to us neglecting what is truly important.

One of my favourite stories is of a missionary who served in a far off place. One day he needed to get from one village to another and set out early with a group of local men. The missionary was in a great hurry and at one point of the day looked back and saw that the men he was with had stopped to rest under the shade of a tree. He angrily asked the elder of the group, "why are we stopping?" The man replied, "we have been walking so fast that we need to stop and let our souls catch up."

In Psalm 46:10 we read these famous words, "Be still, and know that I am God." It is an invitation to lay aside our frail self-confidence and find our confidence in Almighty God. It is an invitation to let go of anxious toil and put our trust in God's provision as we serve Him. It is an invitation amid all the demands of this world to be yielded to God alone. It is an invitation to let go of our busyness, worry, people-pleasing, self-importance, stress - and take hold of God. It is an invitation to pause in this hurried world and let our souls catch up.

Will you accept His invitation today?

Steven Amarin - First Baptist Church Tillsonburg

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LOOKING UP - March 4 - "All Creatures Here Below"

Yesterday was a bit of a bittersweet day for my family - after almost 15 years, we said goodbye to our little yorkie-poo named Chewie. With all of the kids' questions it has forced us to think a little deeper about the special place and purpose of the animals we care for.

I thought of Genesis and how on the sixth day of creation God created all the creatures that inhabit the land, declaring them "good"; I'm sure this includes cute little dogs. Humans were given the role of caring for God's creation, naming and nurturing these animals.

I thought of Psalm 150:6 where it says, "Let everything that has breath praise the LORD!" - that when any person or creature fulfills their God-given purpose in this world - God is honoured. This idea is echoed in the traditional Doxology where we sing, "praise Him all creatures here below".

I thought of the convicting parable Nathan spoke to David in 2 Samuel 12 - a story of a man who cared for a little lamb as if it were his own daughter and was devastated when it was taken from him.

I thought of Jesus' words as he spoke about the sparrows in Matthew 6 and 10 and how if our Heavenly Father feeds them and is aware when they "fall to the ground" - how much more He cares for us.

After my family shared our memories and buried Chewie on a sunny hill, we walked a few steps over to a barn filled with newborn lambs and freshly hatched chicks. This gave us all a beautiful awareness of the cycles of life and death in this world and how God has given us the special gift of caring for and sharing this world with all the creatures He has made.

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