

PRAYER OF CONFESSION

People: Heavenly Father, we know in our hearts that you are in control of all things. Yet we wrestle constantly with you, trying to take control of our lives and our destiny. And what a mess we make of it! How childish we are when we think we're in charge. Forgive us. Align our will to yours. Reveal your will to us in such a way that our hearts long to walk in your ways. Forgive our sins; cleanse us -- and strengthen us for the days to come. Amen.

Scripture Readings

December 7, 2008

Malachi 3:1-7a

"See, I will send my messenger, who will prepare the way before me. Then suddenly the Lord you are seeking will come to his temple; the messenger of the covenant, whom you desire, will come," says the LORD Almighty. But who can endure the day of his coming? Who can stand when he appears? For he will be like a refiner's fire or a launderer's soap. He will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver; he will purify the Levites and refine them like gold and silver. Then the LORD will have men who will bring offerings in righteousness, and the offerings of Judah and Jerusalem will be acceptable to the LORD, as in days gone by, as in former years. "So I will come near to you for judgment. I will be quick to testify against sorcerers, adulterers and perjurers, against those who defraud laborers of their wages, who oppress the widows and the fatherless, and deprive aliens of justice, but do not fear me," says the LORD Almighty. "I the LORD do not change. So you, O descendants of Jacob, are not destroyed. Ever since the time of your forefathers you have turned away from my decrees and have not kept them. Return to me, and I will return to you," says the LORD Almighty.

Leader: This is the Word of the Lord

People: Thanks be to God!

Philippians 1:2-11

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. I thank my God every time I remember you. In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now, being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus. It is right for me to feel this way about all of you, since I have you in my heart; for whether I am in chains or defending and confirming the gospel, all of you share in God's grace with me. God can testify how I long for all of you with the affection of Christ Jesus. And this is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight, so that you may be able to discern what is best and may be pure and blameless until the day of Christ, filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ—to the glory and praise of God.

Leader: This is the Word of the Lord

People: Thanks be to God!

Luke 2:1-7

In those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world. (This was the first census that took place while Quirinius was governor of Syria.) And everyone went to his own town to register. So Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem the town of David, because he belonged to the house and line of David. He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child. While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.

Leader: This is the Gospel of the Lord

People: Thanks be to God!

Sermon Outline - December 7, 2008
"Room at the Inn" • Holiday Inn
Luke 2:1-7

Introduction: The need for a holiday...

"In those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world..." Luke 2:1

• What happens when we grip too tightly?

• The tighter we grip...

• ...the more we _____.

• ...the more we _____.

• ...the more _____.

• ...the more _____.

• ...the less _____.

• Ultimately, it isn't about _____ as much as...

"Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife... When Joseph woke up, he did what the angel of the Lord had commanded him..." Matthew 1:20, 24

"My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me. Yet not as I will, but as you will."
Matthew 26:39

"Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord..." "Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her..." Ephesians 5:22, 25

• It's about _____.

• Ready to loosen your grip?

Answers to Sermon Outline: we lose control, we squeeze the life out of things we love, exhausted we get, we limit others, we trust God, giving up control, aligning our will to His.

BENEDICTION

Leader: The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make His face to shine upon you and be gracious unto you. The Lord lift up His countenance upon you and give you peace.

People: And the people took the blessing and held it in their hearts.

Leader: Go in peace, serve the Lord.

People: Thanks be to God!