

ness go at the foot of the cross. An African proverb says, “He who forgives ends the quarrel.” Another saying goes like this, “Do not wrong or hate your neighbour; for it is not he that you wrong; you wrong yourself.”

PRAY: “Forgive us our sins, for we also forgive everyone who sins against us.” *“Father, only through Christ’s blood shed on the cross can we find forgiveness. Please have mercy. Do not hold against us, poor sinners that we are, any of the sins we commit, or the evil that constantly clings to us. Forgive us we pray. And with your grace flowing through us, help us fully determine to forgive those who sin against us.”*

FRIDAY FEBRUARY 11

Read: Ephesians 6: 10-18

All people struggle with temptation. Perhaps especially followers of Jesus. They know the truth, have received the Light, and know the power of lies and darkness that tempt us. We’re tempted towards certain behaviours: addiction, lying, pornography, gambling, spending. We’re tempted towards ways of thinking: selfishness, more wealth equals less worry, beauty brings contentment, possessions purchase happiness. We can even be tempted to think that our Christian walk is fine, when in reality its fractured; that our marriage is secure, when in reality its fraying; or that our prayer life is sufficient, when in reality its lifeless. Temptation lurks around every corner. That’s why we must pray for God’s grace and Holy Spirit to empower us to resist temptation.

PRAY: “And lead us not into temptation.” *“Father, by ourselves we are too weak to hold our own even for a moment. And our sworn enemies—the devil, the world, and the flesh—never stop attacking us. And so Lord, uphold us and make us strong with the strength of your Holy Spirit. Do not let us go down to defeat in this spiritual struggle but empower us to firmly resist these enemies until we finally win the complete victory.”*

SATURDAY FEBRUARY 12

Read: Ephesians 2:11-22. Tomorrow in our worship we celebrate the diverse nature of the global church. In Christ we are one.

Consider coming to morning prayer today in the sanctuary at 6:00AM.

WEEKLY DEVOTIONS GUIDE

FEBRUARY 6-12, 2011

BY: PASTOR ANDREW BEUNK

NEW WEST CRC

SERIES: A 'TANGIBLE DISPLAY' PEOPLE: JOURNEYING WITH JESUS IN LUKE

SERMON NOTES: “THE BASICS OF DISCIPLESHIP: PRAYER”

LUKE 11: 1-13

PASTOR ANDREW BEUNK

SUNDAY FEBRUARY 6

KEY THEME OR TAKE-AWAY:

MONDAY FEBRUARY 7

Read: Psalm 116: 12-19

“Why do Christians need to pray?” Sage words penned centuries ago respond like this: “Because prayer is the most important part of the thankfulness God requires of us. And also because God gives his grace and Holy Spirit only to those who pray continually and groan inwardly, asking God for these gifts and thanking him for them.” (Heidelberg Catechism Q&A 116).

These seem like extreme words don't they? Only? Continually? They are extreme because the Scriptures teach us that prayer for the follower of Jesus is essential. We often see it as necessary, but not essential. I appreciate what Pastor Jim Cymbala once shared in an interview: “Unless hunger is stirred in people; unless people and pastors see the spiritual bankruptcy of their churches; unless we see the world the way God sees it all around us; unless God supercharges the atmosphere somehow so that we're not just merely preaching the Word and having nice sterile, very predictable meetings, we're not going to accomplish what we're put here by God to do. We've got to see God come. Now the way God comes is when people pray.”

That, it seems to me, captures the essence of what the Catechism teaches us. The grace of God and the presence and power of the Spirit in our lives comes to us through prayer. As breathing is to the body, so prayer is to the spirit. Let us together “call upon the name of the Lord” for more of His grace and Spirit.

PRAY: Turn these words of the Catechism into a prayer. Sing “Spirit of the Living God, fall afresh on me. Repeat. Mold me, melt me, fill me, use me. Spirit of the Living God, fall afresh on me.”

TUESDAY FEBRUARY 8

Read: Hosea 11: 1-3

For the remaining days I invite you to pray through the Lord's Prayer as found in Luke 11. We will expand on each petition by using the words written in the *Heidelberg Catechism* for each petition.

PRAY: “Father, hallowed by your name, your kingdom come.”

“Thank you for being our Father. Please kindle in us a childlike awe and trust in you. Because of Jesus we can call you Abba, Father. Just as Fathers do not refuse us the things of this life, you will even less refuse to give us what we ask in faith. Help us to really know you, to bless you, to worship you and praise you for all your works and for all that shines forth from them: your almighty power, wisdom, kindness, justice, mercy, and truth. And Father, help us to

direct all our living—what we think, say, and do—so that your name will never be blasphemed because of us but always honoured and praised. Rule in us by your Word and Spirit in such a way that more and more we submit to you. Keep your church strong, and add to it. Destroy the devil's work. Destroy every force which revolts against you and every conspiracy against your Word. Do this O Lord, until your kingdom is so complete and perfect that you are all in all.” Sing, “Father, We Love You”

WEDNESDAY FEBRUARY 9

Read: Psalm 104: 10-18, 27-30

When we pray for “us” and “our” bread, we also pray with those who lack the daily provision we enjoy, and so this petition calls us to share our bread with others. Consider these dated, yet humbling statistics, taken from the newspaper *USA Today*, May 17, 2001. “More people die each year from unsafe drinking water than from all forms of violence, including war. More than a billion people—one in every five on earth—do not have access to safe drinking water. Percentage of the population with access to safe water: Ethiopia: 18%; Sudan: 45%; Pakistan: 56%; Mexico: 72%; USA: 99%.” These statistics are part of the “us” and the “our” in the Lord's Prayer.

PRAY: “Give us each day our daily bread.” *“Father, please do take care of all our physical needs so that we will increasingly know you are the only source of everything good. Neither our work nor worry, nor any of your gifts, can do us any good without your blessing. Help us Lord, to give up our trust in ourselves, or others, or material things. Help us to put our trust in you alone.”* Continue on prayer, thanking God for food, provision, health, work, etc., and pray that in our abundance we will freely share with others.

THURSDAY FEBRUARY 10

Read: Matthew 6: 14-15

Huston Smith, a scholar on world religions, in a setting where people were sharing what they felt were the distinctive characteristics of each religion, shared this about Christianity: the distinctive teaching of Jesus to forgive ones enemies, to love one's enemies, that is the unique mark of the Christian religion (my paraphrase).

Forgiveness is hard. Often we easily receive Christ's forgiveness towards us, but withhold forgiveness towards others. Matthew and Luke share strong words about this. Who in our life must we forgive? A parent, a child, a neighbour, an employer, a friend? Do not wait for them to make the first move. Forgive. Let the anger, the pride, the hurt and the bitter-