

Morning Devotions
Saturday, September 5, 2020
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Psalm 119:33-40

- ³³ Teach me, Lord, the way of your decrees,
that I may follow it to the end.
- ³⁴ Give me understanding, so that I may keep your law
and obey it with all my heart.
- ³⁵ Direct me in the path of your commands,
for there I find delight.
- ³⁶ Turn my heart toward your statutes
and not toward selfish gain.
- ³⁷ Turn my eyes away from worthless things;
preserve my life according to your word.
- ³⁸ Fulfill your promise to your servant,
so that you may be feared.
- ³⁹ Take away the disgrace I dread,
for your laws are good.
- ⁴⁰ How I long for your precepts!
In your righteousness preserve my life.

Dear friends in Christ,

This weekend in the United States we mark the observance of Labor Day. Many of us think of this as the "official, unofficial" end of the summer season. Usually at this time of year schools start back up. In our churches, we often begin again our program year traditions with Sunday school, adult formation programs, confirmation classes, choirs and other music programs kick back in to place.

However, things aren't looking quite like they usually have in previous years. Some of the children in our communities aren't going into the classrooms; others are going into school but wearing masks and not able to play with their friends like they used to; many, if they're going in person school, they're only going every other day. Others are studying from home while getting to know their new teachers and classmates through computer screens....

Our churches are scrambling to figure out how to meet the needs of our communities and how continue to adjust and learn new skills so that our faith lives can be nourished... Needless to say this return to the fall season and all that it brings is like nothing we've experienced before.

With all of this going on around us and life picking back up in strange and new ways, Psalm 119:33-40 offers a word about what I think our lives are really all about -- desiring God, God's ways, and God's Word.

These few verses from Psalm 119 are just a small portion of the longer acrostic poem. This type of literature in ancient Israel was a form of wisdom writings and was the work of highly skilled artists, writers and musicians. These works of art were used for communities and individuals to help people be able to remember and recite and retell important things.

The particular verses that we have for today contain a series of requests of God. These appeals come through as deep longings of the psalmists heart out of what seems to me to be a response from a deep knowledge of and relationship with God.

This psalm is at its core a poem to highlight the torah or the instructions to follow in order to be in right relationship with God. The torah here isn't understood as a strict set of rules to follow – it really seems to be way to bring one to closer life with God.

Friends, as we find our way now into the ninth month of this year and meander through all of the uncertainties and the challenges that this current season may bring, I offer this psalm as a prayer for us. May we use this as an opportunity to reflect upon the path ahead of us and all the still new rules for how to live properly as a means for prayer. May these rules which keep ourselves and those around us safe from a virus – be a form of prayer. These ways of living can be transformed into a poem, a prayer of sorts with an invitation to dive deeper into trust in our God the Creator and giver of Life.

May all the steps we take in the days, weeks, and months ahead to maintain safety, to mitigate the spread of the COVID-19 virus and getting things like our annual flu shots in preparation for the usual flu season, may all these “rules” truly be means to draw us closer and deeper into relationship with God and one another. I pray that each of us lives out our days as an act of love for God and the Christ we see in those around us.

Jesus' command for us to Love God and Love our Neighbors as Ourselves has never quite looked like it does today. The rules, the rituals, the traditions of our everyday lives are so very different than they were just a few months ago. May each new way of relating with the world around us be a form of prayer callings us deeper and deeper into relationship with our God.

Yours in prayer,

Pastor Angela

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RKPAKRWg9GA> Psalm 119 by The Corner Room