*DAILY DEVOTIONS*

November 1 - 6

“The Spirit Richly Provides”

**Monday, November 1 1 Corinthians 12:18-21**

*“God has put each part just where he wants it”*

Body parts are *interdependent*, not *independent* of each other. The New Testament does not affirm individual or “lone-ranger” Christians who are not attached to some local Christian fellowship. That is not to say it is impossible to be saved and uninvolved, merely that it is unhealthy. In societies where individualism is valued above corporate responsibility, the importance of the metaphor of Christ’s church as a body is all the more important. Paul’s emphasis on all of us needing every other believer speaks against any hierarchy of status, rank, or privilege that we might otherwise try to establish.

As Paul states in this passage, it is God who is the master organizer of the church, determining who has what gifts and how those gifts are to be used for the work of the church. All the parts serve an important function according to God’s design, regardless of any human claims to the contrary. Without the diversity that comes from specialization of function, one no longer has a body able to do an amazing diversity of ministry, merely one giant organ, unable to do anything.

*We ask you, Lord, to show each of us our function in your church. Amen.*

**Tuesday, November 2 Luke 12:22-32**

*“He will provide all you need”*

The one who trusts God and builds up treasure for his use has nothing to fear. The illustrations Jesus uses here to make that point draw on creation. Ravens, lilies, and grass have much to teach us. Jesus begins with a call not to worry. We are subject to God’s care, so we should rest in his hands. The issue in this passage concerns the basics of life: food, health, and clothing. We should not be excessively distracted about our physical circumstances, for they are but the wrapping paper around which true life revolves.

Worry casts doubt on God’s care. So Jesus addresses them as people “of little faith.” The essence of trust is to recognize that God will take care of what is in his hands. This approach to life is different from that of those who go through life without awareness of God’s presence. They scurry after physical concerns, but the Father knows what his disciples need. Jesus’ shift to mentioning the Father adds an image of family to his words. Every good father watches over his children.

*I will seek your Kingdom, Lord, and you will care for the rest. Amen.*

**Wednesday, November 3 2 Corinthians 9:6-10**

*“God will generously provide all you need”*

Paul reminds his readers that there is a spiritual law at work in giving: “He who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully.” That familiar farm illustration states both the positive and the negative of the same idea. The negative point emphasizes the truth that when a person makes it a habit to give only a little, he or she can expect very little in the way of blessings. On the other hand, the personal rewards are great for those who habitually give generously.

Paul goes on to affirm that it is God who gives us our resources, and it is God who creates the grace of giving in us. In giving us a reassuring word about the future, he must have anticipated that someone might argue, “If I give to help the poor, all it’s going to do is create one more poor person: me!” Paul’s answer is simply that the God who gave you what you have right now is the same God who will give you what you will need in the future. Trusting that God will care for us tomorrow as much as he is caring for us today, we can give with cheerful hearts.

*You, Lord, love a cheerful giver. May that be me! Amen.*

*DAILY DEVOTIONS*

November 1 - 6

“The Spirit Richly Provides”

**Thursday, November 4 2 Kings 4:1-7**

*“Soon every container was filled to the brim”*

A member of the guild of prophets, probably one of Elisha’s followers, has died. This has left his widow liable for debts that he had incurred. According to the law, if a man’s debt is unpaid at his death, the creditor may seize the debtor’s property and children. The widow is clearly in desperate straits. Elisha cannot legally prevent the creditor from seizing the children, so if he is to help the widow, it will have to be through some other means. The God whom both he and the deceased prophet served will provide!

The widow has nothing in her house save one flask of oil. So Elisha instructs her to borrow containers from her neighbors, and miraculously an abundant amount of oil is provided as every container is filled to the brim. Elisha instructs her to sell the oil to pay off her debt, and she and her children may live on what is left over. The event in this woman’s life has moved from the problem death has caused to the reality of new life through the miracle of God. Once again we are reminded that we serve a God whose resources are unlimited.

*Help me to never forget, Lord, that you are able to provide abundantly. Amen.*

**Friday, November 5 Philippians 4:15-20**

*“This same God who takes care of me will supply all your needs”*

As Paul prepares to close his letter to the Christians in Philippi, he gives witness to the support of God’s people for each other. Paul’s words are personal, flowing out of the deep well of his love and appreciation for the Philippians, and the trust and confidence he has in the all-sufficiency of Christ. In this letter, he has already referred twice to the financial gift he received from them. But he waits until the end to express himself fully. Here is a wonderful picture of the people of God caring for one another, materially as well as through prayers.

The church in Philippi was poor and through the years, with other Macedonian churches, had given beyond their resources to Paul’s ministry. How can Paul be a gracious receiver when his material needs and wants are so few? Paul does the best anyone could do – expressing gratitude in a low key, enough to prevent his friends from thinking he needs more; then in a high key, enough to cause them to realize that he remembers all their past generosity and rejoices in their continuing affection for him.

*You care for me, Lord, even as I reach out to care for others. Amen.*

**Saturday, November 6 Malachi 3:10-12**

*“Try it! Let me prove it to you!”*

The leaders of the people of Israel, including Nehemiah and, here, Malachi, have been warning the Israelites of the consequences of neglecting to bring a tithe (one-tenth) of the produce of their fields into God’s Temple as God requires. Malachi characterizes this neglect as “robbing God.” One of the excuses that the people have made for withholding their tithes is that “the wicked,” who not only withhold their tithes but commit many other wrongs against God and against their fellow human beings, seem to be getting away with their disregard of God.

Instead of delivering a word of judgment against the people for their neglect of God’s Temple, Malachi presents the word of God promising fertility and prosperity upon giving of the tithe. Those who keep covenant with God will receive all that God has promised. While the image here is of abundant crops and delicious grapes, the principle extends to God’s promise of salvation for those who repent of their sins. Take God at his word, and you will be blessed! And, don’t worry about those who do evil. God will deal with them in his time.

*You are faithful to me, Lord, and I will be faithful to you. Amen.*