*DAILY DEVOTIONS*

November 14 - 19

“Showing Hospitality”

**Monday, November 14 Genesis 18:1-8**

*“Abraham waited on them”*

Abraham treats the three men with hospitality. There is nothing in the text at this point to indicate that Abraham recognizes their supernatural nature – that will be revealed later in the conversation between Abraham and the three men. The bowing, foot-washing, and offer of refreshment in the shade and a meal are all standard aspects of gracious hospitality. Protocol required that the meal served to the guest exceed what was first offered. Abraham offers a meal, but what he orders prepared is freshly baked bread, a calf, and a mixture of milk and yogurt.

The three seahs of flour (about fifteen quarts) used to make the bread again reflects Abraham’s kindness to his guests, but what is particularly generous here is the fresh meat, an item not normally found in their daily diet. For no apparent reason, other than to show hospitality to some strangers from whom Abraham would have no reason to believe he would receive anything in return, Abraham reflects the generosity of God.

*As you have been generous with me, Lord, may I show hospitality to others. Amen.*

**Tuesday, November 15 Leviticus 19:9-10**

*“When you reap the harvest of your land . . . ”*

Whenever God blessed them with the harvest, the Israelites were to remember the poor, and also "the stranger," who according to the law could have no legal claim to land in Israel. Apart from the benefit to the poor, one can readily see what an admirable discipline against our natural selfishness, and in loyalty to God, this regulation, faithfully observed, must have been. Behind these commands lies the principle that the land which the Israelite tilled was not his own, but the Lord’s; and it is as the Owner of the land that God charges them that as his tenants they shall not regard themselves as entitled to everything that the land produces, but bear in mind that God intends a portion of every acre to be reserved for the poor.

And so the laborer in the harvest field was continually reminded that in his husbandry he was merely God’s steward, bound to apply the product of the land, the use of which was given him, in such a way as should please the Lord. God is still the God of the poor and needy; and we are still, as truly as the Hebrew in those days, the stewards of God’s gifts to us.

*As a steward of your gifts, Lord, I will share them hospitably with others. Amen.*

**Wednesday, November 16 1 Kings 17:8-24**

*“Would you bring me a bite of bread?”*

God sends his prophet Elijah to the village of Zarephath where a widow provides for him. Usually widows were the poorest of all the citizens, and this particular widow is preparing to die with her son because the drought has exhausted their entire food supply. Her favorable response to the prophet’s request for water prompts him to ask her for bread as well. Choosing to show hospitality to a thirsty man in spite of her own troubles, the widow unknowingly becomes an example of Jesus’ later words: “I was thirsty, and you gave me a drink.”

Learning that she only has enough food for a small last meal for herself and her son, Elijah tests her faith by asking that she first provide a small loaf for him, then another for herself and her son. God will ensure that the flour in the jar and the oil in the jug will be sufficient until the rains again restore the fertility of the ground. The woman trusts the God of the prophet and does as he instructs. Her faith is rewarded, the prophetic word is confirmed, and the God of Israel is shown to be the giver of life.

*May I consider the needs of others, Lord, trusting you will provide my needs. Amen.*

*DAILY DEVOTIONS*

November 14 - 19

“Showing Hospitality”

**Thursday, November 17 Matthew 25:31-46**

*“When you did it for one of the least of these . . . ”*

This passage is one of the most vivid of Jesus’ stories. The intent of the story is to provide a description of the Last Judgment. The Son of Man is shown coming in glory, sitting on the throne of his glory. The judgment is all-inclusive, for all nations are literally “herded” before him. The word-picture was understood in the Middle East, for shepherds tended sheep and goats together. The story uses the sheep as symbolic of the righteous people, and the goats as symbolic of the unrighteous.

Jesus taught that love for God is evidenced by love for our neighbor, that knowing God’s forgiveness will lead us to share mercy, and that experiencing God’s love we will, as a consequence, extend that love. In the pronouncement upon the sheep, it appears that the righteous answer with innocent surprise, as though they had been doing these things out of the inner transformation of grace without being legalistically bound to do so. The goats are pronounced unrighteous as evidenced by their not doing these things.

*May my hospitality, Lord, come from love rather than duty. Amen.*

**Friday, November 18 John 12:1-8**

*“Mary took a jar of expensive perfume”*

Jesus is invited to a dinner in his honor by Mary, Martha and Lazarus, who Jesus has recently raised from the dead. Martha is in her customary place of serving while Lazarus is at the table with Jesus. Even now one can almost hear the joy and soft laughter of their animated conversation as they eat and drink. It is Mary who kneels and anoints Jesus’ feet, generously pouring out costly perfumed oil that was equivalent to the wages of a year’s work, and then wiping his feet with her hair.

The act of love is so extravagant that Judas, who obviously feels it has been a waste, asks piously why this money could not have been given to the poor. He does not ask this because he cares for the poor, but because he is a selfish thief. Jesus affirms Mary’s generosity, not because he is indifferent to the poor, but as a symbol of consecration for that divine work which he was about to do in his death on the cross. While Mary is giving her best in preparing for Jesus’ death, the greed of Judas will cause Jesus’ death.

*Generous acts of kindness done in your name, Lord, bring honor to you. Amen.*

**Saturday, November 19 Hebrews 13:1-3**

*“Don’t forget to show hospitality to strangers”*

The “brotherly love” with which we as Christians are to treat one another in verse one is *philadelphia* in the Greek. The Greek word for “showing hospitality to strangers” in verse two is *philozenias*. Here the writer of Hebrews uses two similar words to speak first of love for brothers and sisters in Christ, and second of love for the stranger. We are not to forget to show hospitality to such persons. The verb translated “forget” comes from a root word that means “to escape notice, to be hidden or forgotten.”

It is so easy for us to fail to love the unknown; we are unsure of ourselves in the presence of unfamiliar behavior, turned away by an unfamiliar face, puzzled by our ignorance of another person’s background. It takes a little something extra to engage in the hospitality of the stranger. The something extra is the love of Christ that reaches out to the outsider and includes him or her. It draws that person into the inner circle, where we will often discover an absolutely delightful and lovable individual.

*Help me to overcome any reserve, Lord, to being hospitable to strangers. Amen.*