

# St. Paul:

## Weekly Devotions

*Devotions on week's readings,  
for 06.21.15 (Pentecost 4b)*

### Day One: Job 38:1-11

*"Where were you when I laid the earth's foundation? Tell me, if you understand. Who marked off its dimensions? Surely you know! Who stretched a measuring line across it? On what were its footings set, or who laid its cornerstone while the morning stars sang together and all the angels shouted for joy?"*

In geometry class we had to measure the height of the trees around the high school. We were able to calculate the answer, but we could not stretch a measuring tape over them with our own hands. We had to measure what we could reach, the distance from the base of the tree on the ground, and then the angle from there to the top of the tree. From that we could use a formula to solve for the missing sides of the triangle.

God is not a man or woman. God is a spirit, and although he does not have hands in the physical sense, he is able to "grasp" the universe that he created and shaped. God comprehends, that is he

understands completely, in a way that we cannot.

More than that, he not only grasps this physical world, but he "has a handle" on many other invisible things that perplex us as well. Our spirits. Our hopes. Our feelings. Our dreams.

With our minds we can measure, or at least estimate the size or value of many things. But the most important things escape us – the value of a person – the depth of love – the meaning of joy or grief.

But God fully understood Job's sadness, and he fully comprehends yours. God knew what would bring Job true joy, and he knows the answer to your life's questions too.

What would it be like to watch God work? We see it every day, and yet it is too large for us to comprehend. But his work makes the stars and angels want to sing! What work of God makes you feel like singing?

**Prayer:** *O Lord, I don't always feel like singing. But when I breathe in the fresh air of your creation, when I awake to the fresh forgiveness of your Spirit, then give me a song to sing! Amen.*

## Day Two: 2 Cor 6:1-13

*We have spoken freely to you, Corinthians, and opened wide our hearts to you. We are not withholding our affection from you, but you are withholding yours from us. As a fair exchange – I speak as to my children – open wide your hearts also.*

The Christian believers in Corinth were unhappy with Paul because he had spoken sternly. He had pointed out their sins.

Do you like it when someone points out your faults? I sure don't! I tend to think it's rude, and I often refuse to listen... at first. But then I realize that maybe this is something I need to hear. In fact, smart people actually pay people to tell them hard truths – accountants, personal trainers, doctors. We need to know the truth about ourselves.

Is it possible to tell people something that they don't want to hear, and yet to be speaking lovingly and openly? It's not easy, but it is possible. Parents have to do it all the time.

Who has opened their heart to you in this way? Who has loved you enough to tell

you that you were wrong, or that you were hurting yourself or others? How should you respond?

In our culture we are often expressive of our feelings, but very private about our failings. We don't want to talk about our sins – to own up to our failure of responsibility. But in a Christian congregation it should be different. Because of Christ's love, we should be able to have this "fair exchange" of love, by which we bring healing to one another after we have failed.

We call it grace. We offer one another more than correction. We offer each other a new start again and again and again. We offer forgiveness, help, healing, and love – because Jesus has given those things to us abundantly.

Thank someone who has been honest with you.

**Prayer:** *Lord Jesus, you have given me brothers and sisters in Christ so that I may have encouragement and correction and guidance. Forgive me for not always welcoming or giving that help. Open my heart to listen and speak in love. Amen. (Pray for those whose hurts are hidden.)*

### **Day Three: Mark 4:35-41**

*A furious squall came up, and the waves broke over the boat, so that it was nearly swamped. Jesus was in the stern, sleeping on a cushion. The disciples woke him and said to him, "Teacher, don't you care if we drown?"*

The disciples jump to a conclusion. "Teacher, don't you care if we drown?" They assume that Jesus doesn't care.

They could have thought that Jesus didn't know about their need. They could have thought that Jesus was not as afraid as they were or that he knew they'd be OK. They could have thought that he had a plan and would soon do something. But no – instead they asked, "don't you care if we drown?" They assumed the worst – not only that they were going to die, but that Jesus didn't even care if they died!

Sometimes storms come up in our lives too, and it seems like Jesus is asleep in our boat. Why doesn't he DO something?

Financial problems drag on and on and we can't see an end in sight. An illness springs up and threatens our life, and we can't see any possibility of

healing. A relationship is shipwrecked and we just know that we're never going to find such a friend again.

In his most famous song, Gordon Lightfoot sings, "Does anyone know where the love of God goes when the waves turn the minutes to hours?" And that's what it's like for us. When things are dark and stormy, the minutes turn to hours and we cannot see God's love.

But Jesus did have a plan for his friends. Jesus was able to rescue them, and though it seemed to them a long time, in fact his rescue was only moments away.

Where in your life are you assuming the worst? Where are you expecting bad things to happen? What might his plan be for you in whatever storm you are experiencing right now?

**Prayer:** *Dearest Jesus, the storm is raging all around me, and sometimes it seems as if you are asleep. Help me remember, even if you seem to slumber, that you are in my boat. I will not be abandoned. Amen.*

## Day Four: Father's Day

Martin Luther, almost 500 years ago, spoke about a plague that destroys a society.

*"It takes place when a child has its own way and the parents give their permission because of natural love... This plague is so common that instances of the first form of dishonoring are seen very seldom, for parents are blinded and neither know nor honor God according to the first three Commandments. Therefore they can see neither what the children lack... They let them go their own way and be burned up by worldly pleasure, love, happiness, possessions, and honor, while the love and honor of God and the desire for eternal blessings are extinguished in them.*

A recent article in the Washington Post echoed Luther. ("How Parents Create Narcissistic Children" March 9) We all understand that it is harmful to children when we fail to give them boundaries, rules, limits, and when we fail to allow them to fail.

In our second lesson, Paul urged us to speak the truth to one another, even when it was painful. In another lesson a few weeks ago, we were reminded that we should not "think of our ourselves more highly than we ought" but

rather see ourselves "with sober judgment."

How can fathers and mothers love their children best? We can see the good in them that God has given, the gifts and talents he has placed in them, and be honest and generous in our praise. And we can see their sins and self centeredness (which all of us have) and correct them, and help them to grow to love others outside of themselves.

Love is honest. Not harshly honest, but tenderly and helpfully truthful.

Perhaps you had a father who could love you this way. Perhaps not. But you can love someone else patiently and honestly because God, your Father, has loved you.

**Prayer:** *Father in heaven, I thank you for my father, for the good in him and even for his weakness. Give me grace that I may speak in truth and love to those who need guidance and encouragement. Amen.*

These devotions help us to think ahead about the Bible verses we will read in worship next week. They are written weekly by Pastor Don Neuendorf. You can learn more about our worship or our church at [stpaulannarbor.org](http://stpaulannarbor.org)