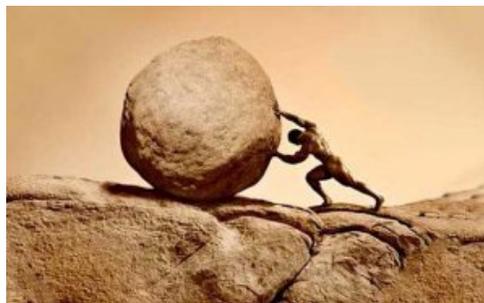


Now - people are losing their jobs!
it's getting serious

How to Pray as the Coronavirus Pandemic Comes Our Way

1. Pray for students whose education has been disrupted.
2. Pray for people losing their jobs that all their needs will be provided.
3. Pray for those who have had the sad duty of laying off their fine employees.
4. Pray for the protection of our community against COVID - 19, especially seniors.
5. Pray for the death toll to take a nose dive.
6. Pray for sufficient ventilators, hospital beds, medical supplies and care.
7. Pray for everyone in the medical field.
8. Pray for the world's stock markets to stabilize.
9. Pray for spiritual good to result from this crisis - God works in mysterious ways.
10. Pray for leaders, officers, rulers, kings - everyone with authority to do the right.
11. Pray for those living on the edge - for housing, food - basic necessities.
12. Pray for yourself, your family, your friends and neighbors.

So much more to pray!



“For I know the plans I have for you,’ declares the Lord, ‘plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.’” Jeremiah 29:11

“Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go.” Joshua 1:9

Connect with Sterry Church Members & Friends

We are posting helpful information and resources at www.sterrymemorial.org
Click on the Menu, in the top right corner of the front page, and at the bottom of the drop down menu, you will find the Facebook logo. Click on it and you will be taken to Sterry Memorial Evangelical Presbyterian Church's Facebook page. “Like” it and become a member. Read what people are posting and post an encouraging and helpful note for the good of others.

Lenten Meditations for Sterry Memorial Presbyterian Church 2020
The Apostle Paul's Letter to the Church at Ephesus
Part Two

Day Four - Read Ephesians 4

(1-6) The Apostle Paul writes this letter and few others in the midst of his personal suffering. He was incarcerated in Rome (in house arrest for 2 years) on political/religious charges of sedition - inciting people to rebel against the government. He was arrested and tried in Jerusalem, where he, as a Roman citizen, appealed to Caesar in Rome. You can read about this part of his story in **Acts 21-28**.

Paul's theme in Ephesians 4 is ironic, for a person charged with sedition! Paul's entire mission was to unite people groups together through the peace of Jesus Christ for the world. And yet he is accused of disturbing the peace! Go figure. It happens all too often.

Paul calls the church in Ephesus, and thus the church globally through these last days, including our day, to do the following:

Live according to God's call of you to be his child.

Live humbly, gently, and patiently.

Lovingly tolerate your fellow sisters and brothers in Christ Jesus.

Work hard toward unity in the church, by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Strengthen the bond of peace in our communities.

Paul offers one of the classic Christian presentations of our unity! Ephesians. 4:4-6

"There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all."

We share the same faith and the same baptism, and these are indelibly connected to our one God - only one Father and only one Holy Spirit. You might be thinking, "What about the Son, Jesus Christ?" Paul mentions the Son, Jesus Christ as he writes, "There is one body," that is, the body of Christ. And so our unity is founded not only in our common faith and baptism, but in our only Triune God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

(7-16) In this section, the Apostle Paul offers fairly dense language to present to us Jesus Christ as the source of all our spiritual gifts, for the good of others and for the fullness of Jesus Christ to be manifested in the church. (That's a mouthful!)

We usually think of our spiritual gifts stemming from the Holy Spirit - and that is true. But it is also true, that Jesus Christ, equal in power and glory with the Holy Spirit, is the source of our spiritual gifts:

The grace we have received is a gift from Jesus (7)

To support this statement, Paul quotes David in Psalm 68:18, claiming that the "Lord" is none other than Jesus Christ! What is astonishing is that David in Psalm 68:18 says that the Lord, who has liberated the captives, leading them to heaven, has received as his reward many gifts.

Paul quotes this text, but says that Jesus, the Liberator, has given his gifts to those he has sprung from captivity! Amazing! (8)

I told you this was dense.

Paul then rehearses the Son of God's descent into our world - the Incarnation of the Son of God, and his ascension into heaven, so that he might fulfill all things, that is the entirety of the heavenly Father's will. (9-10)

Paul says that this Jesus Christ, who has given to us grace, is the one who gives to us gifts through particular offices of the church - apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers. These officers are to use their Christ-given gifts of authority to serve all members of the church, training them to do Jesus' work in this world, especially for the good of the church. (11-12)

The purpose Paul highlights for these offices, gifts and training is unity in our faith and unity in our knowledge of Jesus - the perfect man and the fullness of Messiah! This unity in and knowledge of Christ spells the end to our instability - the end to our being victims of falsity! This unity and knowledge allows us to speak the truth in love and to grow into the fullness of the head of the body - Jesus. All of our viability and growth comes from Jesus! (13-16)

(17-19) Since God has graciously gifted us through Jesus Christ, we should live differently than the world around us. In most New Testament texts, "walk" is a metaphor for lifestyle/behavior. And so, it is interesting that Paul speaks firstly about our minds. If our minds are committed to hopeless and false views and values, then our lifestyles will play out accordingly. Paul then connects our minds to our hearts. What we believe in our minds impacts our hearts, that emotive center. In other words, what we think influences how we feel. What we believe directs how we act. When our hearts are blinded by our minds, we stop feeling correctly and the result is lewd and selfish behavior.

(20-24) The Apostle Paul here and elsewhere uses his "put off...put on" language. We must "put off" sin and "put on" virtue. This language is based on the imagery of dressing and undressing - putting on our clothes in the morning and taking off our clothes in the evening. This is really fine coaching toward a holy lifestyle. It is not enough for us to stop sinning. The Holy Scriptures say so much more than, "Stop!" One of the most strategic methods of reducing sinful behavior is for us to do more good. The more time and energy you invest in doing good, the less time and energy you have to invest in evil. And so, the "put on" is as important as the "put off."

The old man and the new man are also metaphors. The old man is all of us living according to the futile ideologies of this world and thus embracing lifestyles that are destructive. The new man is all of us living according to the gospel and thus embracing a holy lifestyle free of despair, lewdness, lust and selfishness.

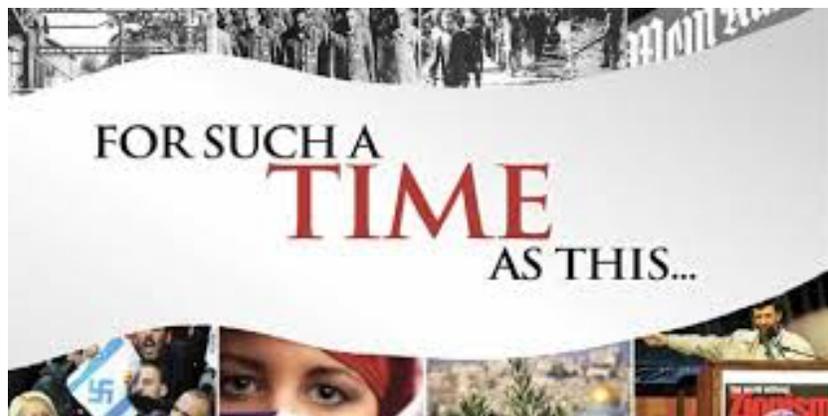
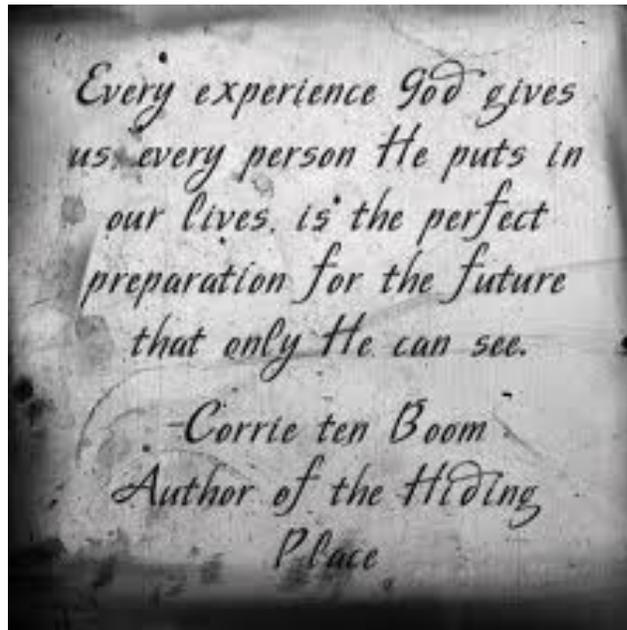
(25-32) Notes on these verses will arrive in the next installment!

On the next page, I've printed the 2020 Reading Schedule again so that you can be reading the Holy Scriptures daily. The strategy is to read these texts several times through out the year so that you can retain them and meditate upon them. Whatever day you begin is "day 1," and so you can start now!

Daily Bible Readings 2020

Read one text per day, then start over reading through the list again and again until year-end.

- Day 1 Ephesians 1
- Day 2 Ephesians 2
- Day 3 Ephesians 3
- Day 4 Ephesians 4
- Day 5 Ephesians 5
- Day 6 Ephesians 6
- Day 7 Psalm 1
- Day 8 Psalm 8
- Day 9 Psalm 13
- Day 10 Psalm 15
- Day 11 Esther 1-2
- Day 12 Esther 3-4
- Day 13 Esther 5-6
- Day 14 Esther 7-8
- Day 15 Esther 9-10



Gotta love Esther's story! For us today!

With pending genocide of the Jews, Esther's uncle says to her, *"Do not think that because you are in the king's house you alone of all the Jews will escape. For if you remain silent at this time, relief and deliverance for the Jews will arise from another place, but you and your father's family will perish. And who knows but that you have come to your royal position for such a time as this?"*

The Bible Project

Overviews/summaries of the books of the Bible are most helpful.

www.bibleproject.com

or, for easier access

go to Youtube or the Sterry Church website

www.sterrymemorial.org

Esther



Ephesians



Psalms



Are you surfing the web more than usual?
Pastor Nathan recommends these sites:



www.thegospelcoalition.org

CALVIN INSTITUTE OF
CHRISTIAN WORSHIP
for the study and renewal of worship

www.worship.calvin.edu



www.timothykeller.com