



THE SHEPHERD'S VOICE

*Daily Devotion at Zion + Feb. 21, 2021 AD + **The Season of Lent***

This Week: Self-Examination

“It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives within me.”

So says St. Paul in Galatians 2:20, reminding us that Christian “self-examination” differs from other traditions. Rather than work for the mere improvement of the self, the Christian faith seeks to abandon the self. As the rest of the verse reads: “The life I now live in the flesh, I live by faith in the Son of God, who gave Himself for me.” Or as St. Paul says in Philippians 3:8-11:

I consider everything a loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them garbage, that I may gain Christ and be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ—the righteousness that comes from God on the basis of faith. I want to know Christ—yes, to know the power of his resurrection and participation in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, and so, somehow, attaining to the resurrection from the dead.

Devotion necessarily includes periods of time in which we pause, look at ourselves, and ask: “How am I?” Yet in Christ-centered devotion, the goal is to consider that question in such a way that we are led out of ourselves and into the presence and mercy of God.

About the Cover Art

“Prodigal Son” by Kristi Valiant illustrates the dynamics of Christ’s parable in Luke 15:11-32 and preaches the Father’s love in Jesus Christ. At first glance, it shows merely the feet of a wealthy father and his impoverished, sinful son as the father yanks the young man off his feet and into a bear hug. Yet in the pair’s shadow cast on the ground, we see them not as they are but as their love conceives them: a young father delighting in his infant boy, unsullied by sin and failure. Here we have a picture of the Father’s love in Jesus Christ towards us sinners, ever ready to sweep us into His eternal favor and joy.

Examining the Self and Finding Sin

“The very foundation and principle of a holy life is godly sorrow for sin. For where there is true penitence there is forgiveness of sin; where there is forgiveness of sin there is the grace of God; where the grace of God is there is Christ; where Christ is there is Christ’s merit; where Christ’s merit is there is satisfaction for sin; where there is satisfaction there is justification; where there is justification there is a glad and quiet conscience; where there is peace of conscience there is the Holy Spirit; where the Holy Spirit is present there is the ever blessed Trinity; and where the Holy Trinity is there is life eternal . . . Why therefore do we delay repentance? Why put it off until tomorrow? Neither tomorrow nor true repentance is in our own power . . . Let us make haste, then, let us make haste to employ this sovereign remedy for our sinful malady . . . Christ does not enter the heart of man unless a John the Baptist first prepare the way for Him by repentance.”

~ Johann Gerhard, *Sacred Mediations*, 1606 A.D.

Daily Readings for the Week of February 28 (Lent 2)

S	Jeremiah 1:1-10 1 Corinthians 3:11-23 Mark 3:31-4:9	Romans 2:12-24 John 5:19-29
M	Jeremiah 1:11-19 Romans 1:1-15 John 4:27-42	F Jeremiah 5:1-9 Romans 2:25-3:18 John 5:30-47
T	Jeremiah 2:1-13, 29-32 Romans 1:16-25 John 4:43-54	Sa Jeremiah 5:20-31 Romans 3:19-31 John 7:1-13
W	Jeremiah 3:6-18 Romans 1:26-2:11 John 5:1-18	
Th	Jeremiah 4:9-10, 19-28	

These readings correspond to pages 816-849 in Volume I of For All the Saints. To acquire For All the Saints or other devotionals, please contact the church office.

An Approach to Self-Examination

1. Ponder these verses and let them sink into your heart:

“Whoever wishes save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.” (Matt. 16:25)

“I have been crucified with Christ, and it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives within me.” (Gal. 2:20)

“You have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God” (Colossians 3:3)

2. Read the following passages:

The Ten Commandments (Exodus 20:1-17)

The Fruits of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23)

The Humiliation of Christ (Philippians 2:1-11).

Review your life in light of those verses.

3. Hold an image of Christ crucified before your eyes and in your hands. Recall His words: “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” (Matthew 27:46). Ponder the weight of your sin that Jesus willingly carried and suffered.

4. Re-read the verses from the first step. Let each one speak *forgiveness* and *redemption* to you: Jesus not only willingly carried your sin, which meant His death, but even now He gives you His life in its place, a perfect gift!

5. Re-read the verses from the second step. Let each one speak *promise* to you: this is the life of Christ that the Spirit has promised to work in you. Pray for the Holy Spirit to make it so and to keep the image of Christ ever before your eyes and in your heart.