UPC Family Devotional

June – Week 2

Memory Verse of the Week:

The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks to be God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. -1 Corinthians 14:56-57

June 6 Monday 1 Corinthians 15: 20-34

Paul lays out the gospel in its most complete and cosmic sense. He starts with the basics that most Christians know: natural humans are dead in sin, and in Jesus Christ, they are made alive. But this is just the beginning. After Christ raises his Saints to life in the final resurrection, he will then defeat all his enemies so that even death itself is put under his feet. Once everything comes under Christ's supreme reign, he will place them under God's authority forever. In short, just as all things came from God, all things will be perfected and return to God. Let us be prepared for the unfathomably great things God has in store for us.

Why would you consider the gospel to be good news for the world? What areas of your life need to come under Christ’s supreme authority?

The natural sciences tell us that everything in this universe is heading toward death and decay; all useful energy will one day dissipate into the void, never to be harnessed again. The Christian promise of resurrection and eternal life in God's presence is, therefore, the only hope for a world destined for destruction. Were it not for the cosmic reversal of nature's course by God's life giving power, there will be absolutely no point in practicing spiritual disciplines or exercising faith of any kind and, ultimately, no logical reason to wake up to see another day. Just as Paul implores the Corinthians to turn away from such futile thinking, we, too, must look beyond the bleak fate that the world offers to God resurrecting power.

June 7 Tuesday 1 Corinthians 15: 35- 49

The Corinthians’ error is one that is common to many of us: assuming that we can only believe in the resurrection if we fully understand how it works. But what we are dealing with are spiritual mysteries that are beyond our understanding. In the meantime, however, we can seek God's truths illustrated with analogies from the natural world, like how an acorn falls to the ground and transforms into an oak tree. Our God is in the business of transformation. First, he converts our souls and then one day, he will gloriously transform our earthly bodies into heavenly ones. Let the reality of our inner transformation and the hope of our outer transformation encourage us to participate in God's work of transforming this world.

How have you seen the Lord transform you? How does the promise of a transformation to a heavenly body encourage you?

We are all too familiar with our frail human nature: we suffer sickness, given to temptation, and wrestle with the limitations of our bodies and time. But when we look to the resurrection of the dead, when all our weaknesses will be a thing of the past, we become filled with fresh hope to endure our current state. This hope empowers us to be faithful here on earth because of the perfect future that has been secured for us. And this hope is all made possible because of Jesus, who has reversed the curse of sin and will one day conform us perfectly into his image. Let us praise him without ceasing, both in this life and the next.

Why is it important for us to regularly meditate on our future hope? How do you express your praise and thanks to God for his promise of full renewal?

June 8 Wednesday 1 Corinthians 15:50-58

One main reason we have trouble grasping our future resurrection is perhaps because of a question we usually ask about any endeavor: “What part do I play in it?” But here, we are reminded that we are truly helpless; there is nothing we can do to inherit the imperishable. Instead, God will do it all- transform us and the heavens and the earth in a flash. We will look down and suddenly find ourselves arrayed in royal splendor. Since we are sure to possess this promise, we ought not to invest too heavily in the things of this world as we eagerly await hearing the trumpet sound that will signal our glorious and eternal triumph. This frees us to invest our time, resources, and energy into what truly matters.

What are you doing to invest in the Kingdom of heaven?

Like a confident athlete or invincible warrior, Paul taunts death as his opponent. He essentially stares our mortal enemy square in the eye and declares, “You've got nothing.” At a time when humanity is so afraid of death, we need to develop the same attitude as the apostle as we reflect on Jesus and his triumph over the grave. Through his cross and resurrection, he redeemed us from our sins and has forever disarmed the powers of darkness. Therefore, we can continually stand firm against the devil assaults. In the strength that Christ provides, we can also labor heartily, certain that everything we do in this life for the Lord will count for eternity.

What do you fear most? How does Jesus’ victory encourage you to persevere despite the evil around you?

June 9 Thursday 1 Corinthians 16: 1- 12

Paul concludes his letter by giving final instructions and sharing some personal remarks. He first addresses the importance of generosity, instructing the Corinthians to set aside their weekly contributions to be given to the suffering believers in Jerusalem. Our financial giving to build God's Kingdom should not be sporadic or motivated by urgent pleas alone. Rather, it should be deeply intentional and executed regularly. In sharing his travel plans, Paul also demonstrates the heart of a pastor as he hopes to spend quality time with the Corinthians instead of just passing through. His heart serves to remind us how we should treat others, looking to build deep, genuine relationships rather than merely fulfilling our daily agendas.

How would you evaluate the state of your financial contributions to ministry? Whom is the Lord calling you to spend more quality time with?

Sharing about his current situation in Ephesus, Paul remarks that a wonderful opportunity for ministry has arisen in the midst of great opposition against him. Rather than assume that ministry is always full of joy and tranquility, we should embrace the paradox that God can and may bring about great blessing to his people even while his servants are suffering mistreatment and rejection. When facing hostility from unbelievers, the church is called to represent Christ well and to provide support to gospel workers, as Paul commands the Corinthians to do with regard to Timothy. The light of the churches witness shines brightest when God's people are united and express their care and concern for one another.

What opposition are you facing and how can you utilize it as an opportunity to represent Christ? How can you better serve and care for gospel workers around you?

June 10 Friday 1 Corinthians 16: 13-24

Paul ends his long letter by listening some people who embody his teachings. He recognizes these believers who, by their faithfulness to the Lord and love for his people, show that following Christ is not just a lofty ideal. Paul's letter would have been of no use to the Corinthians or to us had it remained merely theological teaching, not lived out through works. Paul also remarks that meeting these believers refreshed his spirit. When we see other Christians living a life of faithful love and service, our spirits are refreshed and encouraged in our faith journey. Let us take joy in seeing faithful service among fellow believers and refresh them in turn through our devotion to Christ.

Who around you is a good example of faithfulness to God and a devotion to the church? When have you been encouraged by seeing others serve Christ and his people?

As Christianity spread, it became crucial to maintain unity in the church. Paul uses his letters to forward greetings from other communities to the church in Corinth. Despite the Corinthians’ many failures, other churches and church leaders like Aquila and Priscilla continue to show them affection. This in no way means ignoring or tolerating sin. In fact, Paul has strong, unapologetic words for those who do not love the Lord. But even as we spur one another on to live holy lives, let us not neglect showing godly affection to others. Let us not treat our brothers and sisters with indifference nor demand that they first “clean up their act”, but let us walk alongside them as we all follow Christ.

How would you describe your relationship with other believers? What would godly affection look like in your church community?

June 11 Saturday Esther 1:1-12

King Xerxes wants the world to marvel at his glory and wealth, displaying the size of his military and rewarding loyal subjects at lavish garden parties. The guests are welcomed into the luxury of his citadel and Susa and are provided with as much wine as they want. Every age has its own citadel of Susa, a symbol of indulgence, ambition, and prestige. People flaunt their wealth and achievements - sometimes acquired at the expense of others - before both friends and adversaries, as proof of their worth. Such pursuits divert our attention from the one glory that is worth obtaining: the glory that comes from God. Let us remain vigilant, remembering that God's opinion of us is the only one that counts.

What evidences of self- indulgence and vanity do you see in your culture? As Christians how should we respond to these attitudes?

Having dazzled his guests with the riches of his palace and let them have their fill of his abundance, King Xerxes now wants to show off his wife. Vashti may be queen, but to her husband, she's another asset, a beautiful possession to be displayed for his boasting. The desire to prove ourselves in the eyes of the world is never satisfied. Having used our material possessions and achievements, we will sooner or later make use of other people to get the recognition we crave, then get upset when we refuse to do as we wish. The wrong pursuits will give us the wrong perspective on things and people. It is when we pursue God that we can also treat others rightly.

How does our society objectify people? How do you honor God in your daily relationships?