UPC Family Devotional

November – Thanksgiving Week

Memory Verse of the Week:

“The LORD loves righteousness and justice; the earth is full of his unfailing love.”

Psalm 33:5

Nov 21 Monday Genesis 49:22-23

As Jacob blesses Joseph, he reminds his son of his past hardships and how God helped him overcome and prosper. Ultimately, it was God who allowed Joseph to rise to the position of power he is now in. When you look back at your life, do not simply hurry past painful memories. Rather, look for God's hand in them! In the midst of hardships, it is difficult to see how God is working in our lives, but with hindsight, we can see His fingerprints all over both the good and the bad times. Take some time today to reflect on your life, even just this past year, and see how God has been working.

Why is it hard to see God working in the present? Looking back, how have you noticed God at work amid your trials?

Jacob is a central character in the Bible. His life was far from perfect when God met him and was still profoundly flawed afterward. He often lived deceptively, acted selfishly, repeated his parents’ mistakes, and played favorites with his family. Yet, in the end, he dies full of faith. Hebrews 11:21 even tells us that he died as a true worshipper of God, not resting upon his own good deeds for his salvation but trusting in God alone as the source of all blessing. No matter how bad a person's past is, God will not withhold salvation from them if they come to Him in sincere worship. As Jacob’s story shows us, our only hope in life and death is in God alone.

Why is God the only one we can trust for our salvation? How would you answer someone who argues that it is unfair for God to grant salvation to someone who has sinned grievously?

Nov 22 Tuesday Genesis 50: 1-14

After Jacob’s death, Joseph fulfills his father's final wish to be buried in Canaan. The Egyptians mourn seventy days for Jacob, and Joseph weeps over his father, showing no restraint in expressing his grief. It is good for us to take the time we need to grieve the death of a loved one. While we know that for believers, death will give way to resurrection and eternal life, we also acknowledge that death is a painful reminder of sin and was never part of God's original design. Just as Jesus wept over Lazarus before raising him from the dead, we should also grieve with those who grieve. But even as we mourn, we have hope in God and receive his comfort through His Word and His people.

When have you found it difficult to let yourself grieve? How has God comforted you in times of mourning?

The lament for Jacob is so loud and the bitter that the Canaanites take notice. This reminds us of the importance of pouring out our hearts when we lament. We may try to hold it in or “keep it all together,” but when we look at our God's servants lamented in the Bible, we see a different picture. The psalmists, for instance, often vented to God with very honest and expressive emotions. When we pour our hearts out to God, we allow His comfort and presence to fill us. Lamenting also helps us to “mourn with those who mourn” (Rom. 12:15). God has placed us within a church community so that we need not to suffer alone.

How openly do you share your emotions with God in prayer? Who usually walks alongside you in dark seasons?

Nov 23 Wednesday Genesis 50:15-26

When Joseph's brothers throw themselves at his feet, declaring themselves his slaves, they are acting from a rational assumption. After all, it would be logical for Joseph to hold a grudge against them on the account of how they treated him in the past. But Joseph's response deconstructs their logic and demonstrates how counterintuitive grace is. Because he sees God's hand even in his worst circumstances, Joseph is able to act graciously toward those who have gravely wronged him. He does not merely forgive his brothers but all first to provide for them and their children. Such an overflow of grace can only come from God's loving-kindness. The better we understand our place as recipients of grace, the better we become at giving grace to others.

What is the current situation in which you are tempted to act out in vengeance instead of forgiveness? When was the last time God responded to your faults with kindness?

Hebrews 11: 22 describes Joseph's wish to be buried with his forefathers as a request made by faith. Despite spending most of his life in Egypt, marrying an Egyptian woman, and serving as an Egyptian ruler, Joseph knows that Egypt is not his true home. Therefore, he wishes to be buried in Canaan when the Israelites eventually take possession of the land. Joseph is intimately familiar with God's promises, and he looks forward to their fulfillment even as he's about to die. It is crucial that we, too, become well-versed in God's promises to us. Joseph's example also reminds us that this world is not our home. Rather, we eagerly long for our true home in heaven.

How can you better familiarize yourself with God's promises? How is your longing for heaven reflected in your day-to-day life?

Nov 24 Thursday Psalm 32:1-11

The word “blessed” in this psalm can also be translated as “happy” or “fortunate.” It is like someone saying, “you must be so happy that you have been forgiven by the Lord!” All believers can share in the psalmist’s joy because Christ has completely lifted the heavy burden of our guilt from our shoulders, setting us free and giving us a deep sense of relief. Yet despite these incredible blessings, we are sometimes tempted to cover up our sins or sweep them under the rug, weather out of shame or fear of punishment. Let us remember that it is always better to confess our sin before God so that he can restore to us the joy and blessing of being saved and forgiven.

When are you tempted to cover up your sin before God? How have you experienced a wonderful joy that comes from being forgiven?

Knowing we have been forgiven much, we are encouraged to express our faithfulness to God through prayer. Scripture urges us never to pass up an opportunity to pray. Prayer is how we take refuge in God and receive His comfort. God also instructs and leads us as we rely on Him. And since we are assured of God's loving guidance, Scripture warns us not to respond with stubbornness, like beasts that must be dragged around because they neither trust nor understand the goodness of their master’s care. Instead, we come to God like children who want to be with their father. And as we willingly and faithfully come to God, we will further discover the depths of His unfailing love.

What practices help you pray regularly? What are some areas of your life in which you find it difficult to trust in God's guidance?

Nov 25 Friday Psalm 33: 1-22

Our words have a lasting impact, but they are not powerful enough to run the world. For God, however, His Words and His works act together in creation. It was by the Word of the Lord that all things were made, and by His Word He sustains them. This is a truth we know well but have gotten so used to that we forget how to respond to it. Scripture invites us to use our words to praise the Lord: we are commanded to shout, give thanks, and sing. Our words of reverence are a fitting response to God's Word as they testify to His righteousness, justice, and unfailing love. As we remain attentive to God's Word, may our lives always be filled with His praise.

How do you adore and praise the Lord in your prayers? How can we prevent ourselves from growing indifferent to the power of God's Word?

The word “all” is repeated in this passage to emphasize that nothing can be hidden from the eyes of God. This does not mean that God has physical eyes like humans do, but it shows that all things are plainly exposed to God. His gaze, however, is not only one of discernment but also one of care. God sees those whose hope is in his unfailing love. Our Lord sees us in our need and suffering, and He looks upon us with the goal of delivering us. His gaze upon those who are in Christ is one of tenderness, patience, and grace. Let our hearts indeed rejoice as we trust in His holy name.

How do you respond to the truth that God sees all things? How should this truth encourage us?

Nov 26 Saturday Psalm 34:1-10

In these first few verses, the psalmist invites the listener to join him in praising the Lord. He testifies of how he has tasted God's goodness through His deliverance. What he recounts is not merely an emotional experience but a real and tangible moment of divine rescue from a dangerous situation. Our personal experiences of God's work have a lasting impact on our lives because they produce humility in us and teach us that praising God is not based on how good we feel but on how good He is. Our testimony of faith is the story of how God delivered us, but we must also remember that the main character of our story is God Himself.

In addition to your salvation, how has God delivered you from difficulties? How readily do you share your stories of God's deliverance with others?

There is one question people often raise in objection to God’s goodness: how can an all-powerful God be truly good and loving yet allow evil? This is a difficult question to answer, and the psalmist does not deny that he has had his share of troubles. But it is out of his experience of suffering and of God meeting him in his trials that he is able to testify to God’s goodness. God does not guarantee an abundance of material wealth or the absence of painful circumstances. Rather, we taste His goodness through His care and presence. Amid our difficulties, God satisfies our souls and becomes our refuge. And when we have tasted His presence, we will realize that He is, indeed, infinitely good.

What comes to your mind when you think of God’s goodness? How has your experience of God’s goodness helped you through times of difficulty?