

(For Monday, December 5, 2016) **Do we actually have to fear The Lord to be His?**

The friendship of the LORD is for those who fear him, and he makes his covenant known to them.
(Ps. 25:14 – NRSV)

In Narnia, when Susan asks if Aslan is safe, Mr. Beaver replies, "Course he isn't safe. But he's good. He's the King." We want our universe warm and fuzzy, as comfortable as well-worn slippers. But a tame God could never redeem us. "Fear of the Lord" is encouraged endlessly in Scripture. But through the centuries folks have put a different spin on this concept, substituting "fear" with words like "respect," "obedience," or even "love." But that really isn't what the Psalmist is saying here. Healthy reverence for the awesome power of God is a vital component in our relationship to Him. To paraphrase C.S. Lewis again, we don't want a "Father in heaven" so much as a "granddaddy in heaven" who doesn't mind what we do as long as we're happy. But Christ came to save us, not to give us milk and cookies.

Does part of your relationship with God include recognizing his immense power and majesty?

(For Tuesday, December 6, 2016) **Do you realize you are descended from royalty?**

The LORD is the strength of his people; he is the saving refuge of his anointed. (Ps. 28:8 – NRSV)

Where I live in southeast Georgia there is a saying: "Don't mess with the Barbers!" The Barber family are known here as hard workers, strong willed, and intensely loyal to each other. These family traits have proven to be true to people who have crossed the Barbers from time to time. In the psalm for today, David calls the Children of God "his anointed." The title conveys a characteristic of nobility. David had been anointed as King by Samuel, and now David conveys that same pedigree on the people of God. It's interesting to observe how people drop names in conversations to try and establish how well connected they are. But the thing is, how much do the actions of these same people reflect the characteristics of those with whom they want to be associated? And for Christians, it is critical that our actions display the family traits that would mark us as God's people.

Do you live up to your title as "Child of the King"?

(For Wednesday, December 7, 2016) What is your "Reverse Barometer"?

...He straightened up and said to them, "Let anyone among you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her."
(Jn.8:7 – NRSV)

In the film *Little Big Man*, General Custer hires Jack Crabtree because of the affinity the scout feels for the Indians. By doing exactly the opposite of what Crabtree advises, Custer believes he will defeat the Sioux and Cheyenne. Custer considers Crabtree the perfect "Reverse Barometer." The first 11 verses of John 8 didn't actually make it into the original Gospels. Hmm...Could this passage's unpopularity have to do with the fact that we would all gladly ignore our own faults in order to showcase the flaws of others? Yet, the things that we would protest the loudest about often relate to the most critical aspects of our life that need to be altered, if we want to grow into true Christian maturity. And so, God places a special conviction in our hearts, in order to drive us to growth and change.

What are the Reverse Barometers that point to areas in your life that need special attention?

(For Thursday, December 8, 2016) **How will you change human history today?**

"Listen," he said to them, "when you have entered the city, a man carrying a jar of water will meet you; follow him into the house he enters..." (Lk. 22:10)

From time to time, Jesus issues instructions involving mundane things which make little sense. There is the fish Peter is to catch to find the coin for the Temple Tax. (See Mt.17:27) There is the donkey belonging to a complete stranger the Disciples are to "liberate" so Jesus can ride into Jerusalem. (Mt.21:3; Mk.11:3; Lk.19:31) And here there is the water carrier who is to be followed to find the Upper Room. It would have been understandable if the Disciples' response to these absurd requests had been to refuse. But thank Heaven they didn't! These seemingly absurd requests involving mundane duties permitted Jesus to complete his ministry among us. So, the faithfulness of God's people even in those small things in life – sometimes things which don't make human sense – these tiny acts of faithfulness can actually change the course of someone's (or many someone's) life.

What will you today that will change the world for somebody?

(For Friday, December 9, 2016) **What chance do we have on our own?**

"A dispute also arose among them as to which one of them was to be regarded as the greatest." (Lk.22:24 – NRSV)

In Luke, this dispute occurs at the Last Supper. Jesus has just informed his closest friends that he is going to be betrayed and murdered in the coming days. But the only thing they can talk about is themselves. If the 12 Apostles were that inept at keeping the focus on Jesus, what chance does somebody like me have of walking the straight and narrow with only myself to sustain me? Obviously, not much! But the fact is, even when faced with this kind of selfishness from his twelve closest friends, Jesus still went to the Cross for them – and for you and me. He loves us **that** much. So, we needn't worry about our own paltry human natures to get us through this vale of tears - as long as we keep relying on Him rather than ourselves.

What can you do today to decrease your dependence on your own devices, and increase your trust and reliance on the grace and mercy of God?