



Sermon Series Devotional

September 24 - October 7

Hinckley First United Methodist Church

Introduction

We celebrate the sacraments of baptism and communion often in our congregation. But do we really understand what these practices are all about? Or how they shape us in our life and faith? During this short sermon series we'll discover how the simple and mundane elements of water, bread, and juice are transformed into visible signs of God's grace and how that grace in turn transforms our life.

Why a Devotional?

A vibrant and authentic faith is not grown merely in one hour on Sunday morning. This devotional will give you the opportunity to engage with God's word on a regular basis as you seek to become more like Christ each day. There is a daily Bible reading plan, as well as reflection questions that are linked with each week of the sermon series. You can use this devotional individually or in a formal or informal small group.

Daily Bible Reading Plan

September 24- Worship

September 25- Luke 3:1-22

September 26 - Acts 2:1-41

September 27- Acts 8:26-40

September 28 - 1 Cor. 1:10-31

September 29 - 1 Cor. 12:1-31

September 30 - Eph. 4:1-16

October 1 - Worship

October 2 - Mark 14:12-26

October 3 - John 6:25-59

October 4 - John 15:1-17

October 5 - Acts 2:42-47

October 6 - 1 Cor. 11:17-34

October 7 - Revelation 19:1-10

- Begin your time with prayer. Ask God to speak to you, for Jesus to be revealed to you, and for the Holy Spirit to fill you as you read these words of Scripture.

- Slowly, thoughtfully, read God's Word. Pay particular attention to words or phrases that stand out to you. Write them down or take time to memorize them.

- Consider how this Scripture connects with your life today. What may God be inviting you to do, challenging you to learn, or calling you to change?

Week 1

Baptism

"A covenant involves promises and responsibilities of both parties; it is instituted through a special ceremony and expressed by a distinguishing sign... In baptism the Church declares that it is bound in covenant to God... The covenant connects God, the community of faith, and the person being baptized... The faithful grace of God initiates the covenant relationship and enables the community and the person to respond with faith."

- Gayle Carlton Felton, *By Water and the Spirit*

- As the quotation above states, baptism is a covenant that involves promises and responsibilities of both parties. What promises and responsibilities does God make to us in baptism, and what promises and responsibilities do we covenant with God?

- Baptism is not a "one-off event" in the life of the Christian, it is an identity. In baptism we are claimed and called: Claimed as a beloved child, and called to a life of holiness and service. What does it mean for you to embrace this identity of baptism?

- Baptism is often described as regeneration, an inner cleansing, and new birth. What images come to mind when you hear these descriptions? What does this mean in practicality?

- When someone is baptized they are incorporated into the life of the church, and we commit to give them ongoing support in their lifelong journey of faith. How have you seen this in your life, and how can/do you offer it to others?

Week 2

Communion

"For Christians, to share in the Eucharist, the Holy Communion, means to live as people who know that they are always *guests* – that they have been welcomed and that they are wanted. It is, perhaps, the most simple thing that we can say about Holy Communion, yet it is still supremely worth saying. In Holy Communion, Jesus Christ tells us that he wants our company."

- Rowan Williams, *Being Christian*

- In the United Methodist Church we celebrate an "open table" where all are welcomed as guests to the table. Why do you think this is important? What does it communicate about God's grace? What do you share in common with the other "guests" at the table?

- Communion is alternatively called "eucharist" coming from the Greek word for "thanksgiving." What do we give thanks for in communion? Look in the hymnal or find on the internet the United Methodist "Service of Great Thanksgiving" and look for all the things we give thanks for.

- Communion provides nourishment/grace for the journey. It strengthens us for our lifelong journey of faith. How is this the case for you? What difference does receiving communion make to the way you live?

- Communion is a foretaste of the great heavenly banquet, when the world will be set right by God. How does receiving Holy Communion help you to see the world differently now?