



**Daily Devotionals – November 7 to November 13, 2020**  
**To Encourage Franklin in Such a Time As This**  
**By Dr. Charles Qualls and Rev. Steve Gibson-- Franklin Baptist Church**

This brief series of daily devotionals are designed to speak into the days in which we live. But we frame that sacred time in the challenging days of the Covid-19 or Novel CoronaVirus that is spreading across our globe. Take in these daily words of devotion. We hope you will experience wisdom, perspective and yes even hope!

They draw from the Revised Common Lectionary Daily Readings by date.  
(All scriptures will use the New Revised Standard Version unless otherwise noted)

**Saturday, November 7 - Psalm 70:1-5**  
**by Dr. Charles Qualls**  
***Make Haste to Help Me!***

1 Be pleased, O God, to deliver me. O Lord, make haste to help me!

2 Let those be put to shame and confusion who seek my life. Let those be turned back and brought to dishonor who desire to hurt me.

3 Let those who say, "Aha, Aha!" turn back because of their shame.

4 Let all who seek you rejoice and be glad in you. Let those who love your salvation say evermore, "God is great!"

5 But I am poor and needy; hasten to me, O God! You are my help and my deliverer; O Lord, do not delay!

**Devotion:**

Maybe you've been there. The anxious desperation of the prayer is uttered in the darkness. The plea you trust God will hear is offered, but still you await any evidence. Any sign will do...that God has heard and answered.

Like many, this psalm is attributed to David in our Bibles. We don't know for sure if King David wrote this. Nor if so, precisely what precipitated his mood. Truth is, Psalm 70 is a small portion of Psalm 40. Actually, with minor changes it is Ps40:13-17. Read it for yourself and see. It would be natural for us to wonder why the compilers of the psalter included this one twice (or at least this portion of Ps40). The theory is that they were working from multiple sources at the time and it slipped in from each of the two unnoticed. Who knows?

What we will find if we glance over at Ps40 is that it puts these verses at least into a little better context. If one is to truly understand any biblical text, then paying attention to matters of context is paramount. Here, we notice that in V1-10 the psalmist had been in a desperate situation, but the Lord had delivered them –

*1 I waited patiently for the Lord; he inclined to me and heard my cry.*

*2 He drew me up from the desolate pit, out of the miry bog,  
and set my feet upon a rock, making my steps secure.*

*3 He put a new song in my mouth, a song of praise to our God.*

So, what we read today is actually a resolution to a situation that had been quite dire. Have you ever had someone do something for you, but they weren't sure they should have? Maybe they gave you a helpful opinion despite the fact you hadn't really asked for it. They are a mentor, a friend and you trust them. They said, "So that was okay for me to interfere?" To which you say, "Hey!...you can interfere any time when it's that helpful."

That just might be what we hear the psalmist putting to words in this piece of the psalm. An affirmation that God was right on time, and that God's help was able. Welcomed. Wanted again and again.

**Prayer:**

Lord, help us to not get too far ahead of you. In our anxiety, our pain and our fear we may appeal for you to rush. However, your time is always on time! May we have the faith to believe. Amen.

**Sunday, November 8 - Matthew 25:1-13**

**by Dr. Charles Qualls**

***Keep Awake Therefore***

1 "Then the kingdom of heaven will be like this. Ten bridesmaids took their lamps and went to meet the bridegroom. 2 Five of them were foolish, and five were wise. 3 When the foolish took their lamps, they took no oil with them; 4 but the wise took flasks of oil with their lamps.

5 As the bridegroom was delayed, all of them became drowsy and slept. 6 But at midnight there was a shout, 'Look! Here is the bridegroom! Come out to meet him.' 7 Then all those bridesmaids got up and trimmed their lamps. 8 The foolish said to the wise, 'Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out.' 9 But the wise replied, 'No! there will not be enough for you and for us; you had better go to the dealers and buy some for yourselves.'

10 And while they went to buy it, the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went with him into the wedding banquet; and the door was shut. 11 Later the other bridesmaids came also, saying, 'Lord, Lord, open to us.' 12 But he replied, 'Truly I tell you, I do not know you.' 13 Keep awake therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour.

**Devotion:**

*Being ready.* That seems almost understated as soon as we read Jesus' parable here, don't you think? Parables, including this one, contain mystery. They contain elements from which we could derive multiple understandings or applications. On the notion of being ready...this parable lacks no clarity. So, part of the work might be to understand what being *ready* needs to actually mean.

In the story, Jesus made it clear that the decision upon which some were understood to be "foolish" vs. "wise" was the *oil*. If we are to learn from this parable, then what would Jesus say this oil represents in our lives of faith? If we want to understand, we'll be challenged to be as specific as we can on the values and virtues that make us ready for the bridegroom.

Everybody wants to know when Jesus is coming back. Some choose to try to pick through, proof-text and contrive some predictions from the Gospels and Revelation. Others throw their hands in the air and say, "Well,

we'll never know. So why does it matter?" This scripture text calls upon us to focus on the parable's central aim, no matter which of those camps you may land within. *Be ready.* Now, all my life I've heard Christians say, "I'm ready for the Lord to return! I wish he would today." They're thinking about going to Heaven. But, that's not really what this parable is talking about.

So, if the kind of being ready that Jesus is advocating isn't just hopping on the Heaven Bus and taking a ride into Glory -- then what is this all about? His being ready has to do with how we are spending our time on earth. His kind of being ready has more to do with what is shaping our hearts and guiding our lives this side of Heaven.

His kind of ready just might be focused on identifying our attitudinal or relational blind-spots. It might be in and kindling up our willingness to serve while we're still here. You know, the kinds of things that help us to bear some resemblance to Christ. We have plenty of work to do while we wait for the return of Christ. What does Jesus need you to be doing right now so that you are ready?

**Prayer:**

God of our days, may we actively prepare ourselves that you would find us ready. Ready by serving you, ready by loving others and ready by our dedication to you. Amen.

**Monday, November 9 - Joshua 24:1-3a, 14-25**

**by Dr. Charles Qualls**

***As for Me and My Household***

1 Then Joshua gathered all the tribes of Israel to Shechem, and summoned the elders, the heads, the judges, and the officers of Israel; and they presented themselves before God. 2 And Joshua said to all the people, "Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel: Long ago your ancestors -- Terah and his sons Abraham and Nahor - - lived beyond the Euphrates and served other gods. 3a Then I took your father Abraham from beyond the River and led him through all the land of Canaan and made his offspring many.

14 "Now therefore revere the LORD, and serve him in sincerity and in faithfulness; put away the gods that your ancestors served beyond the River and in Egypt, and serve the LORD. 15 Now if you are unwilling to serve the LORD, choose this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your ancestors served in the region beyond the River or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you are living; but as for me and my household, we will serve the LORD."

16 Then the people answered, "Far be it from us that we should forsake the LORD to serve other gods; 17 for it is the LORD our God who brought us and our ancestors up from the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery, and who did those great signs in our sight. He protected us along all the way that we went, and among all the peoples through whom we passed; 18 and the LORD drove out before us all the peoples, the Amorites who lived in the land. Therefore we also will serve the LORD, for he is our God."

19 But Joshua said to the people, "You cannot serve the LORD, for he is a holy God. He is a jealous God; he will not forgive your transgressions or your sins. 20 If you forsake the LORD and serve foreign gods, then he will turn and do you harm, and consume you, after having done you good."

21 And the people said to Joshua, "No, we will serve the LORD!" 22 Then Joshua said to the people, "You are witnesses against yourselves that you have chosen the LORD, to serve him." And they said, "We are witnesses." 23 He said, "Then put away the foreign gods that are among you, and incline your hearts to the LORD, the God of Israel." 24 The people said to Joshua, "The LORD our God we will serve, and him we will obey." 25 So Joshua made a covenant with the people that day, and made statutes and ordinances for them at Shechem.

**Devotion:**

***"...but as for me and my household, we will serve the LORD."*** If this were a magazine or newspaper article, that might be the *pull quote* that got set off in a little box and put in a special font so we would notice it first. If this were a Christian bookstore (ask me someday why I stopped going to them long ago!), then you might find this quote embroidered on throw-pillows and printed on bumper stickers.

We love that line from today's scripture. But this is real life.

What if we found a new way to love that quote instead of just in our sentiment? What if our way of loving it were to read today's larger scripture text and ask why Joshua said it in the first place?

Moses had passed on. Israel had indeed long since crossed over into the Promised Land. Our scripture today is from the last pages of the book of Joshua. We get the impression that Israel is victorious and settled. Still, something isn't right. Joshua names it -- Israel isn't right with God! The people have brought a little bit of this from the Egyptian faith and combined it with a little bit of that faith from those who were already living in Canaan. Yet, they were supposed to be the chosen people of Yaweh God. A holy nation!

Joshua's message is simple. Our God is a jealous God. Choose this day whom you will serve. But you cannot serve multiple gods, and you can't dabble in the faith when it comes to Yahweh. Either God is God and you aren't -- or you are your own God. We simply can't have it both ways. Right then, that's when Joshua said it: *"...but as for me and my household, we will serve the Lord."*

- When we are ignoring God and not gathering with the church, we are not serving the Lord.
- When we pitch in, rather than watch other people do all the ministry for us, we are serving the Lord.
- When we are bearing false witness to support causes that Jesus wouldn't tolerate, we are not serving the Lord.
- When our politics and our biases are shaped by our faith -- rather than the other way around -- we are serving the Lord.
- When we refuse to perpetuate things in our economy and our culture that Jesus would have overturned, whipped and driven out, we are serving the Lord.
- When we have fashioned a God after our own images, rather than following the one Yahweh God, we are not serving the Lord.

**Prayer:**

Lord, help me to make Joshua's words more than just a quote that hangs in my kitchen on a plaque. Help me to be serious about my faith shaping my life -- rather than my life shaping my faith. Amen.

**Tuesday, November 10 - 1 Thessalonians 3:6-13****by Dr. Charles Qualls*****For All the Joy That We Feel***

6 But Timothy has just now come to us from you, and has brought us the good news of your faith and love. He has told us also that you always remember us kindly and long to see us -- just as we long to see you. 7 For this reason, brothers and sisters, during all our distress and persecution we have been encouraged about you through your faith. 8 For we now live, if you continue to stand firm in the Lord. 9 How can we thank God

enough for you in return for all the joy that we feel before our God because of you? 10 Night and day we pray most earnestly that we may see you face to face and restore whatever is lacking in your faith.

11 Now may our God and Father himself and our Lord Jesus direct our way to you. 12 And may the Lord make you increase and abound in love for one another and for all, just as we abound in love for you. 13 And may he so strengthen your hearts in holiness that you may be blameless before our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all his saints.

**Devotion:**

This past Sunday, our sermon came from this same Pauline letter to the Thessalonians. It was from the very next chapter after this.

From 1991 to 2004, my beloved Atlanta Braves went on a run of championships that remains unprecedented in any American sport. For 14 seasons in a row, they won their division title and reached the postseason. For 10 of those years, there were 3 pitchers in the rotation together. Each of these reached baseball's Hall of Fame upon their retirements. For 2 of them, they attributed their success to a surprising source: Charlie Leibrandt. You might ask, "Who's Charlie Leibrandt?" That would be a fair question.

If you've never heard of Leibrandt, it's understandable. He had a wonderful 14 year career in the major leagues, compiling a 141-119 record. He was a good if unspectacular pitcher who never won a Cy Young award. He was brought to Atlanta to be a starting pitcher on a last-place team near the finish of his career. That could have been the end of his story. But young eyes were watching. Tom Glavine and John Smoltz were youngsters, barely in their 20s as they pitched on the same staff. Day after day, they watched how Leibrandt went about his business. How he took care of himself, prepared for games and managed his emotions. Both credit him with teaching them how to be major league pitchers. They were both among the later Hall of Famers.

This section of Paul's letter to Thessalonica is part of a larger document sent to instruct and to encourage. But notice that the Apostle credits the Thessalonians, with their generous and dedicated reputation, as being part of his own support system. He is encouraged by them as much as they are by him. Who they are, and how they go about their business, shows him stability and gives him hope.

Part of life together in the church is exactly that. Among other vital roles, when we are together we have a chance to --

- Encourage each other
- Accompany one another
- Accomplish more together than any of us could alone
- Model spiritual and personal health for each other
- And discover perspectives and answers by learning together more than we could alone!

**Prayer:**

Lord, may we be a source of encouragement and hope for each other here at Franklin Baptist Church. Lead us to never forget that you are always watching -- and so are others. Amen.

**Wednesday, November 11 - Matthew 24:29-35**

**by Rev. Steven R. Gibson**

***The Coming of the Son of Man***

<sup>29</sup> “Immediately after the suffering of those days, the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of heaven will be shaken.

<sup>30</sup> Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see ‘the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven’ with power and great glory. <sup>31</sup> And he will send out his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.

<sup>32</sup> “From the fig tree learn its lesson: as soon as its branch becomes tender and puts forth its leaves, you know that summer is near. <sup>33</sup> So also, when you see all these things, you know that he is near, at the very gates. <sup>34</sup> Truly I tell you, this generation will not pass away until all these things have taken place. <sup>35</sup> Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.

**Devotion:**

Every generation since Jesus has been preoccupied with his return, and that is certainly true today. If we think about it, hasn't the world always been in turmoil? In today's world, with instant communication from any point of the globe, we tend to see turmoil every time we access the news.

This section follows the initial verses of the Chapter, where the disciples asked Jesus, “What will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?” (Matthew 24:3) What the disciples really wanted to know is this -- when will Jesus reveal his power and usher in the promised kingdom? When will the promised Messiah expose his true purpose and usher in heaven on earth? The disciples were an inquisitive bunch, just as we are today. After all, we want to know how this will affect *us!*

Jesus does not pinpoint the actual date and time of his return, but he does give us a few guidelines. They are listed in order from verse 29: The sun will be darkened; the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from heaven; the powers of heaven will be shaken. Added to this list are the following: The Son of Man will appear in heaven coming on the clouds; his angels will be sent out with a trumpet call; the elect will be gathered from the four winds. As if this was not enough, he adds the lesson from the fig tree. The fig tree predicts the next season -- when its branch becomes tender and puts forth its leaves, then summer is near. Jesus then states that this generation will not pass away until all these things have come to pass.

Exactly what does all of this mean for you and me? Many people will focus their reading of this passage as the coming judgement of people. A better reading could well be understood in two outcomes -- salvation or judgement. Perhaps we should understand this passage as the judgement of human empires, the comprehensive reach of the Son's authority and the certainty of his coming.

This passage points out the dimension of the Son of Man's authority -- even to the whole world without end. His appearing is without parallel, because it not only includes the known cosmos, but also all of creation.

Jesus answers his disciples question in general terms, but not in terms that his followers would be able to pinpoint or set in stone. His answers did not include a definite timeline, but assures them that only his Father knows the hour and the day of his coming.

As we enter the ninth month of Corona virus, we are setting up shop in the disciples shoes. They, like us, have grown weary of pressing on during significant difficulties and are ready for this to be over. We must be willing to resist the temptation to return to business as usual. When we are able to be patient, even during the pandemic, then we are perhaps closer to the people that God desires us to be.

**Prayer:**

God of the whirlwind, please be patient with us as we strive to serve you. Amen.

**Thursday, November 12 - Psalm 90**  
**by Rev. Steven R. Gibson**  
***God's Eternity and Human Frailty***

**A Prayer of Moses, the Man of God.**

<sup>1</sup> Lord, you have been our dwelling place in all generations.

<sup>2</sup> Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever you had formed the earth and the world, from everlasting to everlasting you are God.

<sup>3</sup> You turn us back to dust, and say, "Turn back, you mortals."

<sup>4</sup> For a thousand years in your sight are like yesterday when it is past, or like a watch in the night.

<sup>5</sup> You sweep them away; they are like a dream, like grass that is renewed in the morning; <sup>6</sup> in the morning it flourishes and is renewed; in the evening it fades and withers.

<sup>7</sup> For we are consumed by your anger; by your wrath we are overwhelmed.

<sup>8</sup> You have set our iniquities before you, our secret sins in the light of your countenance.

**Devotion:**

This is the only Psalm that is attributed to Moses, and as such, elevates its importance. In these short verses, we find that the length of our time on earth is finite. Because all of us have much to do, how can we find the time?

Like all of life, we need to orient our lives to God. All of our time needs to be prioritized to God. We must allow God to reshape our lives and our priorities. Because God is able to reorient our lives, we must follow his lead, our days on earth are intended to focus on God and God's direction. Because God is eternal and faithful, we have hope. Because God is eternal and faithful, our time on earth has meaning. Indeed, our time can become meaningful and purposeful and enduring and yes, joyful!

Read in this manner, Psalm 90 becomes a bedrock of faith and hope. Even though the Psalmist had not seen it come to pass, the Psalmist trusts that God can and will fulfill God's promises. The Psalmist also places their trust, like their ancestors, in the God that loves and forgives. Psalm 90 is often used in funeral services because it moves the reader and the hearer from futility to hope.

The following quote from Reinhold Niebuhr provides an excellent summary of Psalm 90:

Nothing that is worth doing can be achieved in our lifetime; therefore we must be saved by hope. Nothing which is true or beautiful or good makes complete sense in any immediate context of history; therefore we must be saved by faith.

Nothing we do, however virtuous, can be accomplished alone; therefore we are saved by love. No virtuous act is quite as virtuous from the standpoint of our friend or foe as it is from our standpoint. Therefore we must be saved by the final form of love which is forgiveness.

**Prayer:**

May our lives reflect your pure love and forgiveness. Amen.

**Friday, November 13 - Ezekiel 7:1-9**  
**by Rev. Steven R. Gibson**  
***Impending Disaster***

7 The word of the Lord came to me: <sup>2</sup>You, O mortal, thus says the Lord God to the land of Israel: An end! The end has come upon the four corners of the land.

<sup>3</sup>Now the end is upon you, I will let loose my anger upon you; I will judge you according to your ways, I will punish you for all your abominations.

<sup>4</sup>My eye will not spare you, I will have no pity. I will punish you for your ways, while your abominations are among you. Then you shall know that I am the Lord.

<sup>5</sup>Thus says the Lord God: Disaster after disaster! See, it comes.

<sup>6</sup>An end has come, the end has come. It has awakened against you; see, it comes!

<sup>7</sup>Your doom has come to you, O inhabitant of the land. The time has come, the day is near -- of tumult, not of reveling on the mountains.

<sup>8</sup>Soon now I will pour out my wrath upon you; I will spend my anger against you. I will judge you according to your ways, and punish you for all your abominations.

<sup>9</sup>My eye will not spare; I will have no pity. I will punish you according to your ways, while your abominations are among you.

**Devotion:**

I write this on the day before the election, November 2, 2020. I am basking in the meaningful worship offered for All Saints Day, and yet that blissful memory cannot stay with me forever. I will have saved that memory and will, from time to time recall that memory. The people during Ezekiel's day surly needed such a memory. Their world had been turned upside down and they needed hope -- just like us today.

The length of the virus and the more people that are killed compounds our situation and our collective moods. We are at the point of throwing up our hands and say, "Enough." Where is God when I really need God?

This chapter (V 2-4) begins with God speaking to Ezekiel, essentially laying out the case for Israel's punishment. Following these verses of doom and gloom, there is a single verse, 4b that captured my attention -- "then you shall know that I am the Lord." The coming judgement is a consequence of Israel's sins. It is as if Israel had exceeded the limits of divine mercy.

The second section of this chapter, verses 5-9 has a similar theme -- the sinfulness of Israel. While it is true that divine pity can save from punishment, their history affirms that God is "merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness...forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin." (Exodus 34:6-7) While we certainly prefer God's benevolence, we are not worthy of it. This passage appears to say that the only way Israel's great impurity can only be eradicated by a thorough purge. There is another element that caught my attention, Israel's destruction is not based on an outside force or nation, it is completely of their own doing.

This "doom and gloom" mentality needs to be contrasted with the Good Shepherd found in Psalm 23. Whether they acknowledge it or not, people need community. People need a community that will support and undergird them. People need a community that will allow them to be themselves. People need a community that will allow them to make their own decisions, and yes, sometimes fail. I'm convinced that all of us have this yearning. How are you doing?

This is why I am proud to be a minister and a member of Franklin Baptist Church. It is my prayer that all of us will continue to look to the Lord for direction in these difficult days.

**Prayer:**

Lead us Lord in your righteousness, that our lives may be pleasing in your sight. Amen.