

The Means of Grace

January 17, 2021

One Internet provider with a national reach is advertising something called the Gig Life. Simply put, it's really, really superfast Internet service. Technically, it's described as up to 100 times faster than average broadband. The ads invite you to imagine what you could do:

- ✓ Run all your devices at the same time.
- ✓ Download 100 tunes in 3 seconds.
- ✓ Download an HD movie in less than 60 seconds.
- ✓ Upload 1,000 photos in about a minute.

The flash and dash of the digital age can cause us to overlook this amazing truth: We need to look back in time in order to find the best, fastest, most reliable, and most powerful way to communicate. There is such a mode of communication, always has been: the two-way communication of prayer. In this dialogue with the divine, God speaks to us and, in turn, we can speak to him.

WE LISTEN

Many use prayer as one-way communication, tossing brief requests and comments God's way without intending to hear from him. It's easy to mimic our selfie-taking, self-promoting culture and treat God like he's simply a follower on Twitter, Facebook, or other social media outlets. Do people (and God) really need to know where you are every single moment of every day or see a picture of every meal you eat? No, but God knows and sees anyway.

This one-way emphasis on dialogue with the divine screams, "Look at me, Lord! Pay attention! Listen, Lord, your servant is speaking!" It's a terrible twisting of young Samuel's words, "**Speak, for your servant is listening**" (1 Samuel 3:10). It's an approach that ignores the most important aspect of prayer: listening to God. It's an approach that ignores the fact that a conversation with God isn't even possible until God speaks to us.

How does God speak to us? Jesus the Good Shepherd says, "**My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me**" (John 10:27). In John 15, Jesus speaks as the vine to the branches, "**If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you**" (v. 7). The connection between the words of Jesus and the invitation to pray is clear.

There is only one place to hear the voice and words of Jesus: the Word of God in the Bible. Here God's Word is clear and unchanging. In the Scriptures, the voice of God is plain and powerful. If we want to be guided by God, we need to hear and know the Scriptures.

In the Scriptures, God invites us to pray, "**Call on me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you will honor me**" (Psalm 50:15). In the Scriptures, we learn of God's great love for us. We learn of his plan to save us from our sins, and we delight in the fulfillment of that plan. In the Scriptures, by way of the Lord's Prayer and other directions, Jesus teaches us how to pray.

Smartphone technology shapes our communication with others. Listening to God's voice through his Word enables us to pray smart prayers. God's Word shapes our prayers by informing us of God's will. God's Word guides our prayers by teaching us what to ask for and how to ask. God's Word strengthens our faith, assuring us that our prayers are included in James' declaration: "**The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective**" (James 5:16).

Someone once said that God gave us 2 ears and one mouth so that we would listen twice as much as we spoke. Listen to God first and then speak!



THIS WEEK AT GRACE CHURCH AND SCHOOL

Sunday January 17, 2021

8:30 AM Adult Bible Study in person

9:30 AM Worship Service in person with Communion

and livestream grace-wels.net/worship or facebook.com/GraceWELS

OFFERINGS CAN BE MAILED TO THE CHURCH-

7610 NE FREMONT

PORTLAND, OREGON 97213

OR online at: bit.ly/GracePortland



A Family of Ministries For Christian
Worship, Education and Care

Monday - January 18, 2021 NO SCHOOL-MARTIN LUTHER KING DAY

Tuesday - January 19, 2021

Pastor in office

10:30 AM Confirmation Class

Wednesday - January 20, 2021

Pastor in office

8:00 AM BIC @ GLS

10:30 AM Confirmation Class

1:00 PM Google Meet Confirmation

6:00 PM Google Bible Study

Thursday - January 21, 2021

Pastor in office

10:30 AM Confirmation Class

Friday - January 22, 2021

Pastor in office

9:30 AM Preschool Jesus Circle

10:30 AM Confirmation Class

1:00 PM Google Meet Confirmation

Saturday - January 23, 2021

Pastor in office/Sermon Preparation

Sunday - January 24, 2021

9:30 AM Worship Service in person

and livestream grace-wels.net/worship or facebook.com/GraceWELS

OFFERINGS CAN BE MAILED TO THE CHURCH- 7610 NE FREMONT PORTLAND, OREGON 97213



Cheri Lockhart – Cheri continues her recovery and is improving. If you'd like to send a card to encourage her, please send to her home address. 3120 NE 37th Ave. Portland, OR 97212

Lori Wells is also continuing to recover from COVID as has improved this week. We pray for continued recovery!

Dorothy Elsasser – Has returned to her nursing care home as she recovers from COVID19.

Todd Hafner, the brother of Tyler Hafner, continues to show improvement! Cards to encourage the Hafners can be mailed to: 16315 SE Rhone St. Portland, OR 97236

Faye Rutstein has a neighbor who is down sizing and has quilt material and supplies as well as tole paints and supplies. If you can use them please contact Faye at 360-931-9020 or fayzelady@comcast.net

SEMI- ANNUAL VOTERS MEETING

January 31, 2021 – 11:00 AM

We are in the midst of our fiscal year and we have much to discuss!

Changes in ministry.

Changes in membership.

Changes in our budget.

Plans for addressing current financial challenges

Plans for our properties.

Plans for our ministry.

Prayer for God's blessings.

Prayer for God's strength.

Prayer for God's people.



A sunset scene over a mountain range. The sun is low on the right, casting a warm glow over the clouds. In the foreground, a dark silhouette of a hill features three crosses.

SUNDAY MORNING BIBLE STUDY

**In Person & Live Streamed on Facebook
Starts Sunday, October 11th
8:30 – 9:15 AM Grace Church**

A landscape scene featuring a vibrant rainbow arching over a misty field. The foreground is a lush green field, and the background shows a line of trees under a soft, hazy sky.

GOD'S FAITHFULNESS
ENDURES *Forever*

**Bible History Lessons
With Applications
From Luther's Catechism**



Sunday School Lessons for Remote Learning

Attention Parents! In light of current challenges related to classroom gathering, our church is introducing a new approach to Sunday school!

This year Sunday School lessons will be taught by experienced WELS teachers and will be available free via YouTube. The engaging and age appropriate Lesson Videos will tie to printed Student Lessons that our church will provide to you at no cost. This new approach presents an easy yet meaningful way for you to encourage your child's faith in Christ.

Each week, you will receive an email from Pastor containing all the lessons and the YouTube links. Simply print the appropriate lesson and click on the appropriate You Tube link for your child and bring Sunday School into your home!

Each week we will also feature a book of the bible. In the announcements we will include the book from the previous week and the new book feature for this week.

We will also include the YouTube link for the previous week's Chapel Chat from Grace School with Pastor Bitter or Mr. Eternick.

May God bless your child as we together continue to share His love with the next generation!

Pastor Bitter

EZRA

AT-A-GLANCE



O.T. BOOK #15



AUTHOR: THE SCRIBE AND
SCHOLAR EZRA



WRITTEN: 450 BC

Covering the time period of 550-510 BC

15

Old Testament: 39 Books

New Testament: 27 Books

After 70 years of captivity in Babylon, God's people returned to Palestine. Ezra and Nehemiah recount the struggles of the Israelites as they returned and restored their homeland.

FAMOUS STORIES INCLUDED:

- King Cyrus decrees the work of the Temple may begin.
- Men with foreign wives sent them all away.

MOST FAMOUS VERSES:

Then the family heads of Judah and Benjamin, and the priests and Levites – everyone whose heart God had moved – prepared to go up and build the house of the LORD in Jerusalem. **Ezra 1:5**

Therefore, do not give your daughters in marriage to their sons or take their daughters for your sons. Do not seek a treaty of friendship with them at any time, that you may be strong and eat the good things of the land and leave it to your children as an everlasting inheritance. **Ezra 9:12**

Important Points about the Book:

- This book details the rebuilding of Solomon's Temple after the Great Exile.
- In the book of Ezra, the rebuilding of the new temple is the center of all. It shows the unity among the returning tribes as they came home from the Babylonian Exile. Later, the first returnees stopped work on the city walls. Workers felt burned out and became spiritually lazy.
- Ezra arrived with another 2,000 people. His enthusiasm and power from the Lord sparked a spiritual revival.
- One problem before the exile was that men had married foreigners, who chronically drove them away from God and into idolatry. Ezra was dumbfounded to find that people were already doing this again—before the Temple was even built! When the men repented and offered to send these foreign wives away, Ezra did not object.
- By the end of Ezra, Israel had renewed its relationship with God and were being very obedient.

DEVOTIONAL THOUGHTS FOR THE WEEK OF EPIPHANY 2 2021

Sunday Isaiah 8:19-22

- ✚ That seemed to be the source of spiritual information sought by many in Isaiah's time?
- ✚ What does Isaiah have to say about these sources? V19 What are they missing? V.20
- ✚ How will all such get along in life without the light of God? Vv. 21-22
- ✚ What is their darkness? What is utter darkness, their ultimate destiny?

Monday Isaiah 9:1-2

- ✚ What did the people of Zebulon and Naphtali experience?
- ✚ Who is the HE that brought this to come upon them?
- ✚ What is the distress and humility of sitting in darkness? Define this darkness.
- ✚ Who is the HE who will honor Galilee and all nations?
- ✚ What happens to darkness when strong light hits it?
- ✚ How does this play out with spiritual darkness and light spoken of here?

Tuesday 1 John 2:3-6

- How do we understand the will of God? How do we know what he wants of us?
- What is a part of knowing God? How important is doing the will of God? Explain.
- What is a person doing who says he knows God but doesn't do his will? Luke 11:28
- How do we truly show our love for God? Who is our role model? Mt. 5:48; 1 Thess. 1:6

Wednesday 1 John 2:7-11

- Is John writing something new? Explain.
- Is he writing these words to focus on light or darkness? What does this mean? V.8
- What are some characteristics of living in the light? Ephesians 5:8
- How does John describe those who walk in darkness?

Thursday Matthew 4:12-16

- Why did the imprisonment of John make Jesus cautious?
- What would have happened if Jesus had a confrontation with Herod?
- What had not come yet for Jesus?
- Where did Jesus go? Why was this important for His Ministry? V. 14
- Explain the prophecy. Why was it important that Jesus fulfill this prophecy?

Friday Matthew 4:17-22

- What is the next step in Jesus' ministry as describes here? What was the purpose for which Jesus called these men? How does the word relate to this purpose?
- Is this still our purpose as followers of Jesus? Explain.
- What was the response of the men Jesus called? How quickly did they respond?
- What do you think prompted such an immediate response? John 8:31-32

Saturday Matthew 4:23

- Describe Jesus' ministry? What seems to have been His "routine"?
- What was His message? Focus on "good news". What is the "good news"? Rom. 1:16
- Why did Jesus perform miracles? Did he focus on certain miracles that were "easy"? Explain.
- What is our role in sharing Christ? Mark 16:20; Acts 15:35-36; Romans 1:16; 10:17; 2 Timothy 4:2