



DAILY FAITH PRACTICES

Sunday, November 6-12 (C) – 2 Thessalonians 2:1-5, 13-17

Focus: *The Day of the Lord and Tradition*

word of life

“As to the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our being gathered together to him, we beg you, brothers and sisters, not to be quickly shaken in mind or alarmed, either by spirit or by word or by letter, as though from us, to the effect that the day of the Lord is already here.”

(2 Thessalonians 2:1-2 NRSV)

Read 2 Thessalonians 2:1-5, 13-17

This second letter to the Thessalonians was written to a people facing the duress of persecution. In part this letter is meant to reassure believers in Christ to keep the faith despite the difficulties of the day. But there is another issue facing the young church in Thessalonica. It has to do with the second coming of Jesus Christ. It seems they wanted to know the specific date when Jesus would return to the earth because they wanted to be ready for that Day of the Lord.

1. *How might living under persecution have fueled questions about the return of Jesus?*
2. *When was the last time you pondered the return of Jesus?*

It sounds like some of the congregation in Thessalonica might have heard that Jesus had already returned, but not to their community. Those kinds of rumors had the potential to stir up resentment and confusion especially among Christians being persecuted for following Jesus. If Jesus had returned, certainly he would visit Thessalonica and this thriving congregation. The church is encouraged not to be deceived by any of this news.

But it was more than rumors. There were other signs of the beginning of the Day of the Lord (or Messianic Age.) Take a moment to familiarize yourself with the signs of the end of time as described in the following passages: Daniel 12:1, 1 Thessalonians 5:3, Mark 13:8, 13. (There are additional images in the Book of Revelations but that book was probably written after 2nd Thessalonians.) The early church connected the return of the Lord to the signs of the end of time.

3. *Describe the Day of the Lord.*
4. *What will it mean when Jesus returns again in all his glory?*

This letter also addresses the issue related to a man of lawlessness, one who opposes God. This one is particularly dangerous because he proclaims himself to be God. Although our lectionary text skips over verses 6-12, it is helpful to read the colorful description of this one who rebels against God. There has been much written about this figure. Take a moment to read 2 Thessalonians 2:6-12.

5. *Who do you think this man of lawlessness is?*
6. *Why might people be tempted to follow him?*

No wonder the Thessalonians are told to keep the faith and stand firm. No wonder the author offers a prayer of thanksgiving for their current faithfulness and a prayer of comfort for their difficulties. “But we must always give thanks to God for you, brothers and sisters beloved by the Lord, because God chose you as the first fruits for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and through belief in the truth. For this purpose he called you through our proclamation of the good news, so that you may obtain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.” (2 Thessalonians 2:13-14 NRSV)

7. *How might it have helped the Thessalonians to know they were chosen by God?*
8. *Why is it important to be ready for the Day of the Lord?*

Word among us

The congregation gathers for worship and prepares to receive the Sacrament of Holy Communion. The narrative describing Jesus taking bread and wine is done in remembrance of Jesus Christ. And then, the congregation is invited to proclaim the mystery of faith: “Christ has died. Christ is risen. Christ will come again.”

In doing this memorial proclamation, Christians cross over denominational barriers and are united with believers throughout the world. That proclamation is not reserved for one specific congregation, but sums up the faith of the church.

1. *What does “Christ has died. Christ is risen. Christ will come again” mean to you?*
2. *Are you concerned about the second coming of Christ? Why so? Or why not?*

As the church in Thessalonica is encouraged to keep the faith, they are also encouraged to keep the traditions that they were taught. “So then, brothers and sisters, stand firm and hold fast to the traditions that you were taught by us, either by word of mouth or by our letter.” (2 Thessalonians 2:15 NRSV) This verse can fuel a heated debate between traditionalists and non-traditionalists. Take a moment to try to understand this verse in its original context.

3. *How might keeping traditions have helped strengthen faith in the first century church?*
4. *What connection is there between preparing for the return of Christ and keeping traditions?*

Over the last two thousand years there have been many more traditions passed along by word of mouth, letter, and observation. Some people today are convinced no changes are needed and advocate that worship resemble the church of old. Others believe “church” should be done in the context of our contemporary culture and speak a relevant message for today.

5. *What guidelines would you suggest to a congregation which is evaluating their traditions—choosing which traditions to keep or let go?*

faith practice in daily life

Hear God’s Word and share in the Lord’s Supper

The Augsburg Confession of the Lutheran Church includes in its list of articles of faith and doctrine this description of the church, “This is the assembly of all believers among whom the Gospel is preached in its purity and holy sacraments are administered according to the Gospel.” (Article VII, *The Book of Concord*, Fortress Press, Philadelphia, 1959, p. 32) Thus, two things are needed to be the church. The Gospel preached in its purity and holy sacraments rightly administered. That certainly leaves room for variety and tradition.

6. *What are new ways the Gospel is being preached? Is that helpful to you? To others?*
7. *What traditions strengthen your faith and prepare you for the Day of the Lord?*

Prayer

Holy One, increase our faith so we might endure difficulties and be ready for the Day of the Lord, when you will come in glory. Amen

last word

This week select one tradition to practice with renewed passion.

Daily Faith Practices

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