

February 19, 2021

Lectionary Passages:

Psalm 25:1-10

Daniel 9:15-25

2 Timothy 4:1-5



Selected Verses:

Good and upright is the Lord;  
therefore he instructs sinners in his ways.  
He guides the humble in what is right  
and teaches them his way.  
All the ways of the Lord are loving and faithful  
toward those who keep the demands of his covenant. – Psalm 25: 8-10

We do not make requests of you because we are righteous, but because of your great mercy. Lord, listen! Lord, forgive! Lord, hear and act! For your sake, my God, do not delay, because your city and your people bear your Name. – Daniel 9: 18-19

Preach the word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage—with great patience and careful instruction. For the time will come when people will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear.  
– 2 Timothy 4: 2-3

Devotional:

Four of my favorite words are “Pitchers and Catchers Report.” On Wednesday, pitchers and catchers reported to Spring Training in Arizona and Florida. Next week, all the position players report to training camp. While school was delayed this morning because of freezing rain and we have been dealing with snow for too long, “pitchers and catchers report” means spring is right around the corner. When the doctor told me I needed ankle surgery, I took the first available date in order to have the ankle healed by the time the weather warms up.

While people have favorite seasons, and many enjoy the snow, there is something about spring. Everything seems to be alive. Birds will be chirping, flowers blooming, crops growing in the field, and lawns needing mowing. Often, we look forward to spring without getting ready for spring. As many across the nation are dealing with not being ready for a winter snowstorm, we are not ready for spring. At least, each spring I make more than one trip to Ace Hardware after I already needed them. Since I didn’t get around to blowing out my sprinkler this fall, I am sure I will have extra work this spring.

Most of the time, we can handle something when it comes up. If it is difficult, there are often friends and family willing to pitch in and help. Yet, Paul’s words to Timothy remind us that it is always the season to prepare to share the word of God with others. Bible study is for us to grow in our relationship with God. When we are humble before God’s word, we can be taught

the ways of the Lord and live within the covenantal relationship with God. The discipline of learning Scripture is necessary for all followers of Jesus Christ. Paul tells us that there are three reasons for learning Scripture: to correct, to rebuke and to encourage. Years ago, someone told me, "God wanted me to do that." I simply asked, "where in the Bible does God condone that behavior? In fact, more than once, the Bible speaks directly against it." While I spoke truth, it needed to be done "with great patience and careful instruction." The purpose is never to condemn someone, but to bring them (and you) back into a right relationship with God and others.

Yet more often than not, we need to be prepared in season and out of season because we never really know the season. When the call comes to go to the hospital to say the final "good-bye." When someone asks for your advice. When you are standing in line buying groceries and the person in front of you comments about a tragic event in their life. Knowing God's word, and being able to share God's love and grace with others is needed.

More than once, Janet and I have printed Scripture passages and taped them to the bathroom mirror. While brushing my teeth, I read, re-read and try to memorize the passage. One of the struggles has always been memorizing the passage. I know the Bible states "be prepared in season and out," but I forget where it is. Remembering that Timothy was a student of Paul, and this is the instructions of a teacher at least reminds me it is in one of the books of Timothy.

During this season of Lent, maybe it is the season to spend more time reading the Bible. Or maybe it is time to memorize a few passages to share with others. Or, even enter spring training, practicing sharing the gospel with others. You never know when you will be called into the game.

#### Prayer:

Almighty God, we come to you not because we are righteous, but because of your great mercy. Lord, listen to our prayer. We pray for those who do not know your love and grace. Give us the right words to say and not to say to share your love with others. Lord, forgive our sins. Forgive us when we do not follow you and listen to your word. Forgive the sins of our nation. Bring wise counsel to our leaders that we may be a nation following you. Lord, hear our prayer and act. May your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. May your grace be shown throughout our community, our nation, your world. In Jesus' name, Amen.