

DAILY BIBLE READINGS - Week of December 30, 2018

**THEME: "Ministry of the Church"
CHURCH'S PURPOSE**

Sunday Read Ephesians 4:7-16

"From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplies, according to the effectual working of every part, makes increase of the body unto the edification of itself in love." Ever since the day of Pentecost described in Acts 2, God has been doing His work on planet earth through the Church. Jesus first spoke of His Church in Matthew 16:18 when He said this to His disciples: *"I will build my church, and the gates of hell will not prevail against it."* Right there Jesus warned that the work of the Church would have Satanic opposition, that same enemy who attacked Adam and Eve at the beginning of the human race. In that announcement about the war, Jesus made it abundantly clear that Christians would win, that Satan would not prevail; but it is urgent for Christians to focus on God and follow His Word. In today's Bible reading, we are told that all parts must be working, and they must work together. If any part of a body is not working, the body is handicapped. We all know that from our own experience. If one part of our body is injured and not able to function; other parts have to do a little bit more. If one arm of our body, or even one finger, is hurt, it presents a problem. We will manage, but not as easily as when all parts are working. The same is true of the body of Christ, and that is exactly how Jesus refers to His Church! We are told that in I Corinthians 12:27: *"Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular."* The purpose of the Church is twofold: edification of the saints and evangelization of the lost. The lost is the Biblical description of people who have never made the decision to receive Christ as Savior. The reason lost is an apt description is that unbelievers are living in spiritual darkness and not in the light of Scriptures. They are not living as our Creator intended: in fellowship with God. Believers can have fellowship with each other because they have fellowship with God, and our Lord wants His people to reach the lost.

EXALTATION

Monday Read John 4:19-24

"The hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshipers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God is a Spirit: and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth." The highest priority in the Christian life and the most vital for spiritual growth is worship, both private worship and corporate worship. Spending time alone with God is essential for growing if the life of faith. Corporate worship for many people is only on Sunday, and that is a good thing; for others, maybe one or two more times in the week. But there are seven days. Since reading the Bible is our spiritual food, it is urgent that our souls and spirits be fed seven days a week the same as our bodies. Not to do so spiritually is as harmful, if not moreso, as it is to deny our bodies their physical nourishment. The time spent meeting alone with God may well be the time best spent the whole day. Think of it: meeting alone with our Creator, the one Who made the heaven and earth and each of us in our mother's womb. God is the One who gave us the personality and talents we have to do His will. He knows all about us, the trials and the triumphs. He wants the best for us! He wants, but the guidance of the Holy Spirit, to teach us from His Word, and guide us in the decisions we must make and the paths we should follow. All that Divine assistance becomes a possibility if we indeed take time for private worship; that, in turn, will inspires us to be involved in corporate worship!

EDIFICATION

Tuesday Read I John 4:7-11

"Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God." True Christianity is first and foremost a personal relationship with the Lord Jesus making us instantly a child in the family of God. Immediately, a believer has brothers and sisters in God's family. It is the plan of God that every believer becomes part of a local church family, and the Holy Spirit gives Divine direction in the choice of that identification with a church. We can be certain that it will be in a local church which is a true defender of Biblical truth. That must be a point of emphasis because Satan has succeeded in having some churches under the umbrella of Christianity insert manmade doctrine into their teaching and practice. When placed in a local church by the leading of the Spirit, each individual brings a God-given talent the church needs. Equally important as exercising that God-given gift in

the church function, is the responsibility to all others in the church family, to encourage and build others up. That display of love brings honor to our Savior who taught us that love is what shows we are true followers of the Lord Jesus, as He mentioned in John 13:25: *"By this shall all men know ye are my disciples because of your love one for another."*

EXHORTATION

Wednesday Read Hebrews 10:23-25

"Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more as you see the day approaching." Equally important to the ministry of the church as is edification is the command to exhort each other, to give instruction in the word and the ways of God. All Christians are a work in progress, hopefully gaining in spiritual maturity all the time. Love for believers ranks high in our reasons for corporate gatherings to engage in worship and fellowship. Just being with others of like faith is a lift to our spirits, and hopefully others might benefit from being with us. No human was meant to go through life alone; we need each other, and others need us. God intends that families serve that purpose, and local assemblies are a church family. Little wonder that God's enemy has attacked the family, whether it be the natural family or the church family. Christians should be just as determined to keep family ties well knit as the devil is intent on destroying natural and church families with issues that should be used to edify and certainly not divide. Since we are engaged in spiritual warfare, Christians are compelled to exhort one another!

EVANGELIZATION

Thursday Read Mark 16:15-18

"Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature." This command of our Savior just before He departed earth to return to heaven is now the responsibility of those in His Church. The message of the angels to the shepherds was that it was for all people. The Holy Spirit was very careful to include in the account of Jesus' birth in Luke this vital detail that surely honored the Savior in Luke 2:17: *"And when they had seen it, they made known abroad what they had seen and heard."* They told others! That is what the woman at the well did after meeting Jesus during His earthly ministry as we read in John 4:28-30 that resulted in many others coming to know Jesus: *"The woman then left her waterpot, and went her way into the city, and saith to the men, Come, see a man, which told me all things that I ever did: is not this the Christ? Then they went out of the city, and came unto Him."* What the shepherds did by sharing with others and the woman did after meeting Jesus is what all of us should do now! They were the witnesses of Jesus in their day, and that is the instruction of Jesus to us in His last words as recorded in Acts 1:8, where He told us that we are His witnesses! We are to do what He said He had come to do in Luke 19:10: *"The Son of man has come to seek and to save that which is lost."* The shepherds and the woman were His witnesses then; we are His witnesses now!

COMPASSION

Friday Read Matthew 9:36-38

"When He saw the multitudes, He was moved with compassion on them, because they were...as sheep having no shepherd." The key to the Jesus being inspired Him to seek the lost is what we read in today's Bible reading: His love and compassion. He compared them to lost sheep who had no shepherd who cared. There are more people today like sheep without a shepherd than those who see Jesus as their shepherd to guide them through life. That is how He identified Himself in John 10:11: *"I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep...I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of my sheep...I lay down my life for the sheep."* It was the love of God that compelled Him to send Jesus into the world, and it was the love of Jesus while He was in the world to reach out to people to bring them to Himself and to care for those who placed their faith in Him. All of us have occasions when we see multitudes of people, whether it be at a mall or in a stadium or arena or maybe a school cafeteria. Do we see them as lost sheep wandering away from God? Realizing that unbelievers are heading to an eternity in hell while going through life in spiritual darkness ought to give us a compassion and inspire us to share the light of Scriptures to bring them to Jesus.

ALERTNESS

Saturday Read Colossians 4:2-6

"Withal praying also for us, that God would open unto us a door of utterance to speak the mystery of Christ." If we are going to be effective witnesses, it is essential that we be alert to opportunities to be a witness to lost souls. In winning souls, we must be aware that it is a joint effort with the Holy Spirit as mentioned in I Corinthians 3:9: *"We are laborers together with God."* The role of the believer is to be a light to the world and share God's truth with others. The Holy Spirit works in hearts to convince people of their need of a Savior. If believers try to do what only the Holy Spirit must do, their efforts can be counter productive. This requires prayer which keep us in touch with God. A good way to pray for others as we see in today's Bible reading is for them to have open doors for witness. The Holy Spirit is working in the hearts, and He is looking for believers, you and me, to share the truth!