

Let Us Return to the LORD

A Devotional for “The Way Forward” series

In preparation for the Sacred Assembly

Union Center Christian Church
Fall 2020



Weekly Themes:

- 🌀 **Week 1** - “Love vs. Idolatry”
- 🌀 **Week 2** - “Gospel vs. Passivity/Apathy”
- 🌀 **Week 3** - “Koinonia Relationships vs. Isolation”
- 🌀 **Week 4** - “Sight vs. Blindness”

Daily Focus:

- 🌀 **Monday** - The character and heart of God. The joy that comes from intimate relationship with Him is the foundation by which we live.
- 🌀 **Tuesday** - Our identity in Christ, a reflection of the character of God.
- 🌀 **Wednesday** - Our life in Christ, how our identity is meant to impact our daily lives and relationships.
- 🌀 **Thursday and Friday** - Identifying and digging deeper into the theme sins that we will be confessing at the Sacred Assembly.
- 🌀 **Saturday** - Guides, examples and reflections that will help prepare for the Sacred Assembly.
- 🌀 **Sunday** - Worship and rest (no specified reading)

Format of each day’s devotional: (5-7 minutes to complete)

- 🌀 Truth to remember
- 🌀 Scripture
- 🌀 Observations
- 🌀 Application
- 🌀 Prayer
- 🌀 Scripture passages for further reading and reflection

Introduction

First of all, my child, think magnificently of God. Magnify His providence; adore His power, pray to Him frequently and incessantly. Bear Him always in your mind. Teach your thoughts to reverence Him in every place for there is no place where He is not. Therefore, my child, fear and worship and love God; first and last, think magnificently of Him!

~ Paternus, "Advice to a Son"

(quoted from Dallas Willard, "Life Without Lack", p. 24)

Our view of God determines how we live.

~ Bill Bright

God is beautiful, glorious, good and bigger than we could ever imagine. He created us with portions of His character imprinted on our being--His image stamped on our hearts. The greatness of His character in us is meant to be on display in the world, even spill out for our neighbors and the nations to experience through us. Often, though, God's image in us is covered up--hidden by lies we believe.

Dear, dear [children of God], I can't tell you how much I long for you to enter this wide-open, spacious life. We didn't fence you in. The smallness you feel comes from within you. Your lives aren't small, but you're living them in a small way. I'm speaking as plainly as I can and with great affection. Open up your lives. Live openly and expansively!

2 Cor 6.11-13 (The Message)

Come, let us return to the LORD; for He has torn us, that He may heal us; He has struck us down and He will bind us up... Let us know; let us press on to know the LORD; His going out is sure as the dawn; He will come to us as the showers, as the spring rains that water the earth. ~ Hosea 6.1, 3 (ESV)

We are thankful for your endurance, patience and desire to learn on this difficult journey of transition at Union Center. As we take the next step together toward the Sacred Assembly, it is our prayer that this step is ultimately toward the heart of God and each other. We pray that the Scripture you look up each day would build you up first and foremost. As you sit with the passages, allow your mind to soak in the powerful and transforming truth of God's Word. May our reflections, then, give you space to digest and help you dig deeper into the truths in the Bible passage, allowing God room to do His healing and refining work in your heart. May this guide equip and encourage you as we continue to press on to know the Lord together.

Week 1 – Love vs. Idolatry – Introduction

This is real love—not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as a sacrifice to take away our sins. Dear friends, since God loved us that much, we surely ought to love each other.

~ 1 John 4.10-11 (NLT)

“Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?” And, [Jesus] said to him, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets.”

~ Matthew 22.36-40 (ESV)

God is Love. God values us and faithfully, actively, pursues us. God loves you specifically. And not only this, God has made you in His image - an entity who can know Him, respond to Him, and work in the world as He would. You are a person who can both delight in being loved by God, and delight in loving others. You were meant for wholeness as you love God and love others.

However, we have lived smaller lives than this. We have disordered our loves, so our love of God and others falls below our love for radical individualism. This is idolatry. When a good desire to be responsibly independent (putting value on our perspectives, needs, and plans), gets moved up the priority list to compete and hinder the freedom we were made to enjoy in loving God and others - this is idolatry. We have an idolatry problem (really a worship problem) when we most delight in our own perspectives, comforts, and plans being supported.

We were made to receive God's love, delight in Him, and love others, but we've gotten focused on an idol and have lived smaller than who we are.

God says to you:

I am Love.

You are loved.

My Beloved, I have made you to love God and others.

But, you are living differently than that for which I made you.

Week 1 – Love vs. Idolatry – Monday

I am Love.

Scripture: 1 John 4.8b-10

Observations:

God is Love. This simple truth is so familiar to our ears. It is also utterly profound and foundational to our understanding of God, our faith and our identity. When I was in Bible school, I studied the attributes of God

and how each is a facet of His being. God is immeasurable, eternal, holy, faithful, unchanging, just, omnipotent and good (and much more). Because each is an aspect of who God is, and God is Love, then they also describe His Love. God's love is bigger than we can imagine, lasts forever and is perfect and set apart from all other kinds and sources of love. God's Love is loyal and fully reliable, righteous, all-powerful and beneficial.

God sent His only Son into the world to pay for our sins. What a demonstration of Love--sacrificial, pursuing Love! Before we understood or had a chance to "shape up", before we were even paying attention or felt our need for it, God made His Love tangibly clear. Love that reaches deep into all hearts, holy and able to make holy, just and able to justify, powerful to change while being unchanging, opening the way to the richness of eternal life. Amazing Love! Amazing God!

Application:

Take a few moments to ponder the breadth and length, height and depth of the Love of God. Which facet of God's love resonates with you today? Which seems impossible? Be still for a few more moments and allow God to speak the truth of His Love to your mind and heart. Write down a word or two that describes God's Love and post it in a place where you see it often. (from Eph 3.16-19, Ps 51.6)

Prayer:

God, You are love. Even when my mind can't wrap around it and my past and circumstances seem to diminish it, I choose to believe You are who You say You are. I praise You because Your Love is unfailing. Help me be rooted and grounded in Your Love, strengthened and transformed by it from the inside out. (Eph 3.16-19, Psalm 63:3, 94.18, 107.8)

For further reading on God's love: 1 Cor 13.4-8; Psalm 57.7-11, 136.1-26, 143.8

Week 1 – Love vs. Idolatry – Tuesday

You are loved.

Scripture: 1 John 3.1-2a, 4.13-18

Observations:

Many translations end this sentence with an exclamation point: "children of God...that is what we are!" This big, all-powerful, eternal Love reaches in and changes our identity at our very core, calling us His children! It's incredible! The holy, unchangeable Love delights in you and desires to be near you so much that He chooses to make His home (abide) in you. You are now part of the family of the Trinity. And, the only prerequisite is believing in His Son, Jesus. The gift of the Holy Spirit is evidence that God lives in you and you live in Him. In this beautiful home-sharing, you come to know and believe the love God has for you ever more deeply. This is how God perfects His Love in you, casting out fear and ushering in confidence.

Application:

Take a few moments to ponder the truth that you are loved by God right now--seen and delighted in right where you are at. You are His child, His Beloved. How does your heart receive this truth? Does it resonate like water dripping onto a sponge? Or is it more like water dripping onto a rock? Read through 1 John 4.13-19 again, inserting your name (or "I"/"me") in the place of the pronouns (ie. v13: "By this I know that I abide in him and he in me, because he has given me his Spirit"). Write down a word or phrase that sticks out to you and post it in a place where you see it often.

Prayer:

God, thank you for Jesus, Son of God, my Savior. I am so thankful that I am your child and that You love me with Your amazing Love. Help me to know and believe that I am who You say I am. Remind me each day to make my home in You as You make Your home in me. Exchange fear in me for Your perfect Love that I may be filled with Your fullness. (1 John 4.16-18, Eph 3.16-19)

For further reading on the Love God lavishes on us: Rom 8.31-39, Eph 2.4-10

Week 1 – Love vs. Idolatry – Wednesday 

My Beloved, I made you to love Me and those around you.

Scripture: 1 John 4.7-8, 11-12, 19-21; Matthew 22.36-40

Observations:

The God of immeasurable Love making a home in us naturally leads to worship of God and loving others. Like a jar with a constant source of incoming water, so the eternal Love of God fills us up and keeps pouring out (John 4.13-14, 7.37-38). It both transforms us and overflows. As we continue to grow in knowing and believing God's love for us, we are changed from the inside out. The Love poured in also spills out, both in worship back to God for His amazing Love as well as onto the people we meet. We love as we are loved with the love we give to others looking more and more like Love Himself.

Application:

Take a few moments to consider how your identity as Beloved causes Love to flow out to others. Is this reflected in your daily life and choices or is there dissonance? What might change in your mind, heart or daily life if you fully lived as God's Beloved, made to love Him and those around you? If there is dissonance, sit with it for a while, trusting that God desires His love to be made complete in you and remembering that He is faithful to the work He has started in you (1 John 4.12, Philippians 1.6).

Prayer:

Teach me to live out the truth that, in Christ, I can let You completely fill me up with Your Love--over my past, in all my hurts and emotions, over my lack and poor choices. I trust that You have my heart in process and are faithfully working. Give me the courage to join You in that work and teach me how to allow You to let Your love spill out of me to others. Amen.

Further reading about the connection between being Beloved and loving others: 1 John 3.11-5.5, 2 Cor 13.11

Week 1 – Love vs. Idolatry – Thursday

You are a beloved child of God, made to love God and others. However, you have lived differently than this and have sinned in idolatry. We have worshipped and served a life of radical individualism above God. We have tried to add God to our highest priority: the pursuit of our preferences, comfort, and plans.

Scripture: James 4.1-10

Observations:

We can attempt to use God, religion, and prayer as a means to serve our self-focused pleasures when we don't live out of our God-given identity as His beloved. There are times that God doesn't give us what we want because he knows our heart, and knows that the answer to our prayers will lead us further from Him and His abundant life. When this is true of us, God instructs us to:

-  Humble ourselves and turn to Him (God wants relationship with us),
-  Repent from our sin and resist the devil's temptations,
-  Let our new view of reality bring appropriate sadness and sorrow for our sin, and
-  Wait for God to lift us up.

Application:

Humble yourself before God. Repent and resist the temptation to idolize a life focused on pleasing your own preferences, comforts, and plans. Let your mind acknowledge and be saddened by your sin. Wait for God, who is at work to build you up, give you hope, and help you see that He is present and powerful enough to cultivate good things from the manure of your sin.

Prayer:

Engage your body in a posture of submission (laying face-down on the floor, or kneeling, or head bowed). "Heavenly Father, you are God, and I am not. I humble myself before you and desire your governing over my life. I confess that I have idolized a life that serves my own pleasures. In this I have served the temptations of the devil, my sinful nature, and the world. I turn away from this life and cling to you Jesus, and the payment for my sin you accomplished on the cross. Holy Spirit, teach me truth that my mind would be renewed, and I would rightly see my sin and its consequences. Heavenly Father, I wait for you to lift me up. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen."

For further reading: I John 2.15-17

Week 1 – Love vs. Idolatry – Friday

You are a beloved child of God, made to love God and others. However, you have lived differently than this and have sinned in idolatry. We have worshipped and served a life of radical individualism above God. We have tried to add God to our highest priority: the pursuit of our preferences, comfort, and plans.

Scripture: Galatians 5.16-26

Observations:

We are familiar with the selfish longings and movements within us, fueled by our sinful nature. However, disciples of Jesus, who are living out of their identity as God's beloved, are to live aware of the movements and longings of the Holy Spirit resident within us. These two types of longings and movements are like oil and water - they don't mix. We'll have to choose to live out of one or the other each day.

The acts of our sinful nature are clear, as our sinful nature always desires to: control our sexuality to be a means of on-demand pleasure; control our world and situations through religion and spiritual power; control our mind and relationships so that we judge and relate to others based on the pleasure they bring into our lives; control our bodies so that they are directed as an avenue of escape.

The acts being birthed from walking by the Holy Spirit are approved of by all: love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. These come from resting in God's sovereignty and love. These help thriving to be encouraged and grow in individuals, relationships, and beyond. In Christ, we have come to delight in the fruit of the Spirit, and we put to death the temptations of our sinful nature.

Application:

Open to God daily and live in tune with the Holy Spirit. Pause and reflect on how the Spirit is at work to bear fruit in your life. As you live aware of God, and take action to love and obey him, where in your life do you see your own longings being cultivated towards love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, or self-control? Today, following those longings of the Spirit being cultivated in you, so that you bear fruit in action, loving God by loving another.

Prayer:

Holy Spirit, my counselor, give me grace to be sensitive to your work and promptings within me. Strengthen my resolve to walk by as God's beloved, loving God and loving others, by following your promptings and living out of the longings you are cultivating in me. May I be one who bears much of your fruit, and brings glory to you Heavenly Father. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.

For further reading: Romans 12.1-2

Week 1 – Love vs. Idolatry – Saturday 

Please check your email today. We will send you an email which includes: 1) a document outlining the sins we will be confessing at the Sacred Assembly, and 2) provide a guide about "What to expect at the Sacred Assembly".

We long for you to open to and obey God about the truths we will be identifying at the Sacred Assembly. We offer these documents today, to help shepherd you to engage with God about these things now. May this Sacred Assembly be a culmination of the work we are engaging in with God and each other before November 15.

Week 2 – Gospel vs. Passivity/Apathy – Introduction

Your beauty and love chase after me every day of my life.
~ Psalm 27.6 (The Message)

Jesus came and told his disciples, “I have been given all authority in heaven and on earth. Therefore, go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Teach these new disciples to obey all the commands I have given you. And be sure of this: I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”
~ Matthew 28.18-20 (NLT)

From the beginning, God has actively, even relentlessly, pursued the hearts of the people He created--all peoples and all nations. He pursued Adam and Eve when they were hiding in the garden (Gen 3.8-9), then promised blessing for all the peoples of the earth through Abraham (Gen 12.3). God raised up Moses, brought His people out of Egypt and led them into the Promised Land to make His power and His name known in all the earth (Ex 9.16, Josh 4.23-24). God’s loving pursuit of all peoples is most clearly seen in His sending Jesus, to restore our relationship with Him. We are to continue this pursuit as Jesus commanded us to “go and make disciples of all nations” (Matt 28.18-20).

This is the gospel: God is our Pursuer and He has made us to pursue others just as He pursues us. He delights in and seeks after the world and individual hearts--including yours! And, God has invited us into this adventurous pursuit of the nations, which culminates in the corporate worship of a great multitude from every nation and tribe and people in heaven (Rev 7.9-10). What a celebration!

God says to you:

I am the Pursuer.

My Beloved, You are pursued.

My Beloved, I have made you to pursue God and others.

But, you are living differently than that for which I made you.

Week 2 – Gospel vs. Passivity/Apathy – Monday

I am the Pursuer.

Scripture: Genesis 12.1-3

Observations:

At this point in Biblical history, ten generations after Noah, the earth begins to fill up with people once again. In Genesis 11, God initiated multiple languages among the people and dispersed them over the earth. Now, in Genesis 12, he speaks to Abram and reveals Himself as the Pursuer of the people He created. God promises to make Abram into a “great nation”. This is an amazing and loving promise for 75 year old Abram and his barren wife, Sarai. He sees and knows the desire of their hearts and pursues them through their

deep longings. Their offspring will be greater than the number of stars (Gen 15.4-6), but, this fulfillment of the desire of their hearts is not just for them. “I will bless you...so that you will be a blessing...in you all the families of the earth will be blessed” (12.2-3). God is also pursuing the hearts of the nations.

We continue to see God’s pursuing heart throughout the Old Testament as He makes provision for the poor and foreigners through the Law (Lev 19.9-10, 25.35-55) and often speaks of His heart for the nations through the prophets (Is 49.6, Dan 7.14, Zeph 8.2-23). Jesus further shows God’s Pursuer heart as He calls His disciples, touches lepers, asks probing questions, meets physical needs, and eventually gives His life to redeem us.

Application:

Take a few moments to ponder God as the Pursuer. Which of the stories of God as Pursuer creates wonder and delight in you? Take some time to praise God for His heart and delight in Him as Pursuer.

Prayer:

God, You are Pursuer. In the pages of Scripture, I see how You have sought out the hearts of people and I see Your plan to draw all nations to Yourself. I choose to believe You are who You say You are. I praise You because You see the longings and needs of the people You created and You are a God of blessing and second chances. The earth is full of Your steadfast Love. Let all the peoples of the earth praise the Lord! (Ps 33:5, 8; 117.1-2)

For further reading on God’s pursuing heart: Song of Solomon 2.1-17, Luke 15.3-24

Week 2 – Gospel vs. Passivity/Apathy – Tuesday

My Beloved, you are pursued.

Scripture: Matthew 13.45-46, 2 Corinthians 5.14-21

Observations:

God pursues us! Like a bridegroom bounding over mountains to his bride, a shepherd searching after a lost sheep, a woman turning her house upside-down to find a lost coin, and a father racing toward his son, God pursues us with His great Love. In the parable you read for today, we can see God’s heart behind His pursuit of us. The merchant searches until he finds a pearl of great value. The value of the pearl is worth everything to him, so he goes and sells all he has to buy it and make it his own. The value God sees in you is worth everything to Him. He gives His Son to “buy” (redeem) you and make you His own. Jesus sees your value, too, because He also gave up everything to make you His own. He made Himself nothing, took the form of a servant and humbled Himself to the point of giving His own life, even the painful and shameful death on a cross (Php 2.6-8).

When we believe and allow God to love and pursue us, we are changed. Through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus, we have been made new creations. Our sins are no longer counted against us, but, in

Christ, we have become the righteousness of God. We have been reconciled to God, our relationship restored. This is intentional, relentless, sacrificial Love! This is amazing news! This is the gospel.

Application:

Take a few moments to ponder the truth that you are pursued by God. He sees your heart and highly values you. He delights in you and desires to redeem your heart, to make it all His own. Spend some time writing down how you have experienced God pursuing you. Then, consider to what extent you are responding to God's pursuit. How are you allowing Him to pursue your whole life, your whole heart? What areas do you find difficult to share with Him?

Prayer:

God, thank you for Your relentless pursuit of my whole heart. I am so thankful that You see me and value me, even when I have a hard time seeing my own value. Help me to know and believe more deeply that I am who You say I am. Thank you for the amazing gift of Jesus' life, death and resurrection, through which you make me Your own--a new creation, righteous and reunited in relationship with You.

For further reading about God's pursuit of you: Eph 1.16-19, 2.1-10; Php 1.6, 2.13; Rev 3.18-21

Week 2 – Gospel vs. Passivity/Apathy – Wednesday

My Beloved, I made you to pursue others--your neighbor and the nations.

Scripture: 2 Corinthians 5.18-6.13

Observations:

Jesus pursued us, by extending His love and His life, and made us His own so that we could become a part of His plan to pursue the nations. We are, like Abram, blessed to be a blessing. We are highly valued by God and He is inviting us to live out of that identity by valuing and pursuing others. We are now new creations and Jesus lives His life in us. Jesus' work of reconciling the world to Himself is now accomplished through us as His ambassadors. We have been entrusted with the beautiful message of God's heart for people and good news (gospel) of Jesus' life, death and resurrection that imparts life. Jesus' sacrificial Love both empowers and drives us to be ministers of reconciliation, that is people who show and speak of God's value, delight, love and desire for the hearts of people. We open the way to God for people by serving them with purity, knowledge, patience, kindness, the Holy Spirit, genuine love, truthful speech and the power of God.

Paul uses many other word pictures in the early chapters of 2 Corinthians to reveal our new identity as pursuers of people with God. We are the aroma of Christ (2.15), commissioned by God (2.17), ministers of the new covenant (3.6) with the ministry of the Spirit/ministry of righteousness (3.8, 9), carrying the unveiled glory of God (3.18), servants (4.5), bearers of light (4.6), jars of clay carrying treasure (4.7), manifesting the death and life of Jesus (4.10-11), a new creation (5.17), ministers of reconciliation (5.18),

ambassadors for Christ (5.20). These are powerful roles, but our ability for the task comes solely from God through His Spirit (2 Cor. 3.5-6).

Application:

Take a few moments to ponder how your identity as valued, pursued and blessed is God's invitation for you to pursue and bless others. What might change in your mind, heart or daily life if you fully lived as God's pursued, made to actively pursue Him and those around you? Choose one of Paul's word pictures from above and write it out in the form of "I am _____". Ask God whom He is inviting you to pursue and take a few moments to quietly listen. Add the names, neighborhoods, people groups or nations that come to mind underneath your "I am" statement.

Prayer:

Pursuer God, thank you for pursuing me and inviting me into Your plan to show Your heart to the world. Teach me to live out of this new identity, no matter what circumstances come my way. Increase my capacity for grace and compassion so that Your powerful, life-giving message to others through me may be clear. Widen my heart so that I will love and pursue the people around me. Give me courage to show and speak the truth of who You are. And, by Your grace, may even the nations be blessed through me. (2 Cor 5.19, 6.1-10, 12-13; Ps 2.8).

Week 2 – Gospel vs. Passivity/Apathy –Thursday

You are the pursued child of God, made to pursue others. However, you have lived differently than this, and have sinned through apathy and passivity towards Jesus' command to make disciples.

Scripture: Revelation 3.14-20

Observations:

Our deeds are laid out before God with clarity. He is still pursuing us, and is intimately aware of what has been going on. The Gospel of Jesus Christ is of a pursuing God, a people receiving God's pursuit, and in turn, responding with God to pursue others with Him. A church can be apathetic and passive and this is a distasteful experience to God. A church can be blind to its own reality. They can be deceived into thinking they are all good, yet actually be spiritually bankrupt because they are rejecting God's pursuit of them and not taking action to pursue others whom God is also pursuing.

God tells the church to come to Him, He's already pursuing them, knocking on their door and correcting them out of His devoted love for them. God is calling the church to repent and buy from God what is needed and valuable to address their poverty, their shame, and their blindness.

Application:

Spend a few moments to consider how you have been apathetic, passive, and even holding back from responding to God's pursuit of you. What is the door you have shut in your life, that keeps God on the outside? Confess that to God, open the door of your life to him, and receive His pursuit of you.

Prayer:

Heavenly Father, thank you for the Gospel of Jesus, that reveals the depths of your faithful pursuit of me. Thank you for your rebuke of me, fueled by love. Give me grace to turn to you and away from the sinful ways I have lived resisting your pursuit and the Gospel. I want to take delight in your pursuit, and join you in your Gospel pursuit of others. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.

For further reading: Luke 15.11-32 Parable of the Lost Son

Week 2 – Gospel vs. Passivity/Apathy –Friday 

You are the pursued child of God, made to pursue others. However, you have lived differently than this, and have sinned through apathy and passivity towards Jesus' command to make disciples.

Scripture: Luke 10.25-37

Observations:

The expert in the law, who asked Jesus the question, as well as the priest and Levite in the parable, were passive and apathetic about the care of those unlike them. Their religion was a hindrance to their pursuit of others with love and care. Their religion was a barrier to their love of God and obedience to His commands.

However, Jesus chose to use the Samaritan in the parable to display the love of God that was required. A Samaritan, who the religious leaders would have rejected as having a false religion and as being part of a rejectable people-group. Jesus did this to highlight that God's command to love others was to be lived out without boundaries or qualifications about who is deserving. Loving God was about loving others, not loving religion. This is the Gospel, the Good News, in Jesus. Pursuing others in love was about freedom, not rules.

In Jesus' parable the Samaritan saw the man, valued him, drew near to him, took needed action to care for him, was sacrificially generous in his work to restore the man to wholeness. The Samaritan is a picture of God and his loving pursuit. This parable is a picture of the Gospel being lived out, where someone who was helpless was pursued, provided for, and restored to health.

Application:

Consider your own life. How has your religion led you to be apathetic and passive about loving God by obeying his command to love others? How have you passively and apathetically been hiding in religion? Turn to God with the below prayer.

Prayer:

Heavenly Father, you have specifically pursued all of me, seeing all of my needs. You sent Jesus so that I might be reconciled to you, and have all that is needed provided for. Help me see as you see. Help me value who you value. Help me draw near to others as you draw near to them. Help me take action as you take

action. Help me be sacrificially generous to help others experience restoration and reconciliation, as you have been sacrificially generous to me. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.

For further reading: Matthew 28.18-20

Week 2 – Gospel vs. Passivity/Apathy –Saturday

Guidelines for Public Confession :

The Sacred Assembly will include times of personal confession. To prepare for that personal, public confession, please use the directions below.

1. Own your own sin specifically

Example: “Whatever else may have happened, my sin is _____. “ This is what I did, thought, said, etc.

2. Confess your sin completely

Example: “When I did, thought, said _____. I was wrong.”

Agree with God and others that you are wrong without qualification. Don't try to explain it—no ifs, ands, or buts. Be cautious that your confession doesn't create problems for others!

3. Request forgiveness

Example: “I recognize that my sin has caused hurt and harm to God, to others, and to myself. I was wrong, please forgive me.”

This is to be an act of humility, not something done because you are being forced or because you've been caught.

4. Return to your seat and be still

Be still before the Lord. Wait on him and trust him in regards to how others respond. Don't explain or describe how you yourself have been hurt, or what others have done to you, or what you have learned from the experience.

5. Begin to make restitution

Let your repentance—your change of mind, direction, and actions—speak for you as you make amends, repay debts, if necessary, and rebuild trust.

Summary: Let your confession be short, simple, succinct, sincere, then wait silently.

Reflection Questions about the areas of sin we will be confessing:

-  When has the pursuit of a life focused on my own preferences, comforts, and plans taken priority over my love for Jesus and his teachings?
-  How have I been passive or apathetic about Jesus' commission to make disciples?

- ☞ Who have I been connected with, but now, when I see or think of them, I am indifferent towards, avoid, or have contempt for? In what relationships have I picked up offenses, refused to forgive, or withheld care from?
- ☞ To what extent am I living in the light; believing in Jesus, receiving his teachings, and living in obedience to Jesus and the work of the Holy Spirit?

Week 3 – Koinonia vs. Isolation – Introduction ☞

Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be His people, and God Himself will be with them as their God.

~ Revelation 21.3

In Christ we, though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others....

Be devoted to one another in love. Honor one another above yourselves. Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord. Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer. Share with the Lord's people who are in need. Practice hospitality. Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn. Live in harmony with one another. Do not be proud, but be willing to associate with people of low position. Do not be conceited. Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everyone. If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone.

~ Romans 12.5, 10-18

God desires to be with the people He created and for them to know Him intimately. He is Emmanuel. Sin entered our hearts with Adam and Eve's choices and caused separation from God. But, God's desire to be near us and for us to know Him did not change. As Love and Pursuer, He constantly seeks out the hearts of His people to be in intimate relationship with them. God gave plans for the construction of the temple so that He could dwell among His people in a tangible way (Ex 29.43-46), but promised even closer "with us" was yet to come (Ez 37.26-27, Jer 31.33-34). It is through being in relationship with the "with us" God and the gift of the indwelling Holy Spirit that we can live in deeply loving, family relationships with our brothers and sisters in Christ.

God says to you:

I am Emmanuel.

My Beloved, You are not alone. I fill you.

My Beloved, I have made you to be with others in koinonia relationship.

But, you are living differently than that for which I made you.

Week 3 – Koinonia vs. Isolation – Monday

My Beloved, I am Emmanuel.

Scripture: John 1.1-18

Observations:

God promised, through the prophet Isaiah (Is 7.14, Matt 1.23), that He would soon be with His people in a very tangible way--as a baby named Emmanuel. His desire was to be with us more closely than He was dwelling among His people in the Old Testament temple. In the temple, there was still much separation--sacrifices and cleansing rituals, limited times and people and layers of thick curtains. But then, God came in the flesh (the Word, Jesus) and dwelt among us. He was born and lived His life in a family and a community, in the middle of funerals and conflict and celebrations. He lived as a son and brother and friend, eating, touching, teaching, loving, all while displaying the grace and truth and glory of His Father, God. When Jesus ascended to the Father after conquering death, he sent the Helper (the Holy Spirit of truth) to be with those who believe, dwelling with us and in us (John 14.16-17). How pursuing, how loving is our Emmanuel God!

Application:

Take a few moments to ponder Emmanuel, God with us. What aspect of Almighty God pursuing you and being with you is restful, comforting? Is there an aspect of God desiring to be with you that is strange or uncomfortable? Reflect on the past few weeks or months. When have you clearly experienced God with you? When has it been difficult to trust that He is with you? Express these thoughts to God. Perhaps there is a thought or truth that would be helpful to write down and post where you can see and remember regularly.

Prayer:

God, You are Emmanuel. Even when my heart feels far from You and life circumstances make it hard to trust that You are near, I choose to believe You are who You say You are. I praise You because You are always with me. And, you have always and will always desire to be with me. Help me to trust You as Emmanuel and allow this truth to strengthen and transform me from the inside out. (Eph 3.16-17)

For further reading about God dwelling among us: Ez 37.26-27, 1 Cor 3.16, 2 Cor 6.16

Week 3 – Koinonia vs. Isolation – Tuesday

My Beloved, you are not alone. I fill you.

Scripture: Colossians 2.6-15

Observations:

The moment Jesus died, the separating curtain in the temple was torn (Matt 27.50-51) and a “new and living way” was made for intimate relationship with God (Heb 10.19-20). Now, when you receive Jesus Christ, you are made alive, forgiven and righteous before God. You are God’s temple and God makes His home in you by way of the Holy Spirit (John 14.23). God dwells in you. This truth may seem over-familiar, easily forgettable or small. But, it is BIG.

*In Christ the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily,
and you have been filled in Him...*

Jesus, who has all of God in Him, fills you. This is incredible! This level of intimacy between God and His people is why Jesus became flesh, lived, died and rose again. Emmanuel.

Jesus fills you. He fills up all those empty, needy, lonely, dark and hurting places. You never have to thirst or be in want. And you are never alone (Matt 28.20, Heb 13.5).

Application:

Take a few moments to ponder the truth that you are not alone. How does your heart receive this truth? Has there been a time recently when you have felt alone? Perhaps you felt alone in a struggle with doubt or sin, after a death or a broken friendship, in the middle of a time of waiting. Take a few minutes to let the truth that the loving, pursuing God of the universe fills you wash over you.

Prayer:

Emmanuel God, thank you for the life, death and resurrection of Jesus that makes it possible for You to make Your home in me. Thank You that You fill me so that I am never alone. Thank You for filling all of the empty places in my heart. Help me to know and believe that I am who You say I am. Remind me each day to make my home in You as You make Your home in me. Help me to live out of the fullness of You dwelling in me, abounding in thanksgiving and walking in Your ways.

For further reading about God filling us: Acts 2.1-4, 37-39; John 14.15-20, 23; Eph 3.16-19

Week 3 – Koinonia vs. Isolation – Wednesday 

My Beloved, I made you to be with others in koinonia relationship.

Scripture: Colossians 3.1-17

Observations:

The resurrected Jesus lives in you and you have been given new life in Christ. In this new life, you are being changed to look more and more like your Creator. As His beauty and Love grow in you, your old life dies. For your new life, God has given you a new set of clothes, fit for His Beloved and pursued. They are beautiful clothes! Compassion, humility, kindness, patience and forgiveness, all sewn together with love. When you “dress in the wardrobe God made for us” (v. 12, The Message), that is to live out of your new-life

identity, people will not see your shameful nakedness or soiled garments (Rev 3.4, 18). They will see someone adorned with the fruit of the Spirit (Gal 5.22), the beautiful workmanship of God (Eph 2.10).

From this place of delight, joy and freedom in Christ, you are made to experience koinonia relationships with others. Instead of being isolated and divided, like individuals in a crowd, we can experience the intimacy of being with each other as biblical family, enjoying the “clothes” God made for each of us. Sometimes we need to be taught, reminded, corrected, warned and encouraged. We do that for one another, perhaps by sewing a patch or washing a stain in love, perhaps by helping remove and replace old clothes (John 11.44). Doesn’t doing that for and receiving it from each other both require Jesus’ peace and build thankfulness in our hearts?

Application:

Take a few moments to ponder how your identity as filled by God and never alone is God’s invitation for you to live with others as koinonia family. Take a few more minutes to consider the following questions: What would it look like to fully live as God’s chosen dwelling place, made to be with Him and those around you? What would it look like to wear the “new clothes” God made for you? How might your view of God, yourself and others change? What might it look like to enjoy the “new clothes” of others? Imagine the kind of relationships we could have if we help to sew, wash, dress others and allow others to do the same for us?

Prayer:

Thank You, Emmanuel, for always being with me, for filling me. Teach me to live out of this new identity. Help me to trust that Your Love and peace fill me completely and cause them to spill out into my words, attitude, actions and relationships. Give me courage to wear the wardrobe You made for me and allow others to sew, wash and dress me. Teach me how to lovingly do that for my brothers and sisters.

For further reading: Romans 12.10-18, Hebrews 10.19-25

Week 3 – Koinonia vs. Isolation – Thursday

God is with you in deep communion, and he has made you to engage in koinonia with others. However, you have lived differently by sinfully pursuing division and isolation instead of engaging as a biblical family.

Scripture: Genesis 3.1-9

Observations:

The serpent pursued Adam and Eve to divide. He sowed doubt through exaggeration, lying, and sowing seeds of envy. Adam and Eve responded to this temptation with pursuit, and it brought pleasure and desire to look at the fruit. When they ate, their eyes were opened - but only to evil. Up until then they had known only freedom and good. They then experienced shame, a sense that they were unacceptable as they were.

So, they took control to cover themselves - but that did not affect anything about the shame they felt relationally with God so they ran into isolation from Him.

Yet, God saw over dividing lines, over shame, through the trees. God came walking in pursuit, and called out to ask them to come out of hiding. Then, God spoke directly to the problem. How kind! God pursues. God doesn't bully. God beckons into relationship. God, who experiences complete and whole love in the Trinity, has made us to be able to participate in that same love and community by engaging in koinonia with one another.

Adam and Eve's response mirrors the natural sinful response we have. They doubted God's goodness and truth, as we can. They falsely believed that trying to act like God would bring a better life, instead of resting in his care, as we can. They responded to shame, division, and sin through control and hiding, as we can.

As always, God's response is to faithfully pursue a relationship that swims in grace and truth as family, and includes sacrifice for the good of the other.

Application:

Take time with the questions below to consider how you have allowed division and isolation to be fostered, instead of pursuing koinonia with God and others. Adam and Eve were led away from communion with God, and it ended up causing division between others. What are you tempted to pursue that leads you away from God and others? How does this impact your gathering as a church - is it more of a gathering of a crowd, or is it more of the gathering of a family who intentionally pursues and cares for one another?

Prayer:

Heavenly Father, you have created me for relationship. I am not complete without knowing and abiding in you and participating in the family you prepared me for. I have not lived into this truth as you desire me to. Help me to step into your light about this reality in my life. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.

For further reading: | John 1.5-7

Week 3 – Koinonia vs. Isolation – Friday 

God is with you in deep communion, and he has made you to engage in koinonia with others. However, you have lived differently by sinfully pursuing division and isolation instead of koinonia in relationships.

Scripture: Jonah 3.10-4.11

Observations:

God wanted good for the Ninevites, and for Jonah. God called Jonah to accomplish this task to highlight the division between God and the Ninevites. The task was also highlighting the sinful division between Jonah and the Ninevites, and thus Jonah and God. God was at work to bless the people of Nineveh and Jonah!

Jonah resisted God and His command when it didn't fit with his desires. Jonah longed for his enemies to be condemned. He wanted to be divided from them. He took steps to hinder their experience of good.

The Ninevites and Jonah both participated in evil ways. The Ninevites committed sins that brought destruction to them. Jonah sinned through the omission of good God called him to offer. Jonah also rejected the good longings and truth God led him towards.

The Ninevites humbly responded to God's correction, saw the error of their ways, and repented. Jonah, though personally questioned and shepherded by God, melodramatically sat on the outside of a city changed by God, while angry, blind, and unrepentant.

The end of Jonah sees division and isolation as the trajectory of a life resisting God's commands and work. God guides us towards love and unity in relationship with Him and each other.

Application:

Be like the people of Nineveh. Humble yourself before God. Consider how you have resisted God's commands and work to draw you into relationship with Him and others. Where in your life are you experiencing the anger that Jonah expressed when God is not serving your interests, but is calling you to serve Him and His interests? When you listen, who is God calling you to pursue and bless, but you want to avoid?

Prayer:

Heavenly Father, I have allowed division and isolation to be fostered among our church family. Soften my heart that I would respond to you as the people of Nineveh did. I long to find joy in my relationship with you and the koinonia you have made me for with others. Lord, have mercy. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.

For further reading: John 13.18-30; Hebrews 10.24-25

Week 3 – Koinonia vs. Isolation – Saturday

Please check your email today. There will be documents outlining how in our sinful patterns we sinned specifically against the Shippis. These will help prepare us for a portion of the Sacred Assembly when we will confess these sins.

Week 4 – Sight vs. Blindness – Introduction

Be strong, do not fear; your God will come, He will come with vengeance; with divine retribution He will come to save you. Then will the eyes of the blind be opened and the ears of the deaf unstopped. Then will the lame leap like a deer, and the mute tongue shout for joy. Water will gush forth in the wilderness and streams in the desert.

~ Isaiah 35:5-6 (NIV)

I am the Lord; I have called you in righteousness; I will take you by the hand and keep you; I will give you as a covenant for the people, a light for the nations, to open the eyes that are blind, to bring out the prisoners from the dungeon, from the prison those who sit in darkness. I am the Lord; that is My name; My glory I give to no other, nor my praise to carved idols.

~ Isaiah 42:6-8 (ESV)

I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which He has called you, the riches of His glorious inheritance in His holy people.

~ Ephesians 1:18 (NIV)

The contrast of light and darkness permeates Scripture. Light is the first thing God spoke into being over the dark void and also the first thing He proclaimed as good (Gen 1.1-4). God is Light and the Father of lights (James 1.17) and Jesus is the Light of the world (John 8.12). In God, there is no darkness or shadow (1 John 1.5). Light is truth, imparts life and exposes and overcomes darkness (John 1.4-5, 3.20-21). Darkness is lack of faith, living in secret, wickedness and lies, spiritual ignorance, hardness of heart and rebellion.

The concepts of sight and blindness correspond to light and darkness, describing the state of the heart. When the eyes of our hearts are open, we see truth, we hope and we allow God to expose and heal darkness in us. Blindness is self-deception, lack of perception and choosing to hide, rather than expose, sin.

As we trust in Jesus--His death and resurrection--we are delivered from darkness to light and are called to both walk in the light and shine light in the darkness of the world (Col 1.13, 1 John 1.7, Php 2.15).

God says to you:

I am Light.

My Beloved, You are a child of Light.

My Beloved, I made you to walk in the Light and be a Light for others.

But, you are living differently than that for which I made you.

Week 4 – Sight vs. Blindness – Monday

I am Light.

Scripture: Revelation 21.22-27

Observations:

God is light and the Lamb of God a lamp. From beginning to end, the Alpha and Omega God is light. He spoke forth light into the dark void on the first day of creation and shines His glory so brightly in the New Jerusalem that there is no need of sun or moon. In this city that He has prepared to eternally dwell with His people, there will be no night, no shadows, no dusk or dawn or hint of darkness at all because His light dispels darkness (Jam 1.17, 1 John 1.5).

God as light continues to reveal Himself as Love and Pursuer and Emmanuel:

...because of the tender mercy of our God, whereby the sunrise shall visit us from on high to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace (Luke 1.79, Is 9.2)

This is Jesus--the Sunrise, the Light of the world that came to shine in the darkness and deliver those who trust Him into His kingdom of light. Each day, as we walk through life, He is a lamp for our feet and a light for our path (Ps 119.105). We will dwell with Him forever in light. And, in this light, the nations--races, ethnicities, peoples of various cultures--walk with us as fellow worshippers eternally.

Application:

Take a few moments to ponder the truth that God is Light. Close your eyes for a moment and picture a dark room, so dark that you cannot see even your hand in front of you. Imagine what it feels like to stand and move there. Imagine, then, light flooding the room. More than a lightbulb, it is a light that is so bright and so full that there are no shadows. Every hint of darkness is gone. Imagine what being in that light is like. Express these thoughts to God. Perhaps there is a thought or truth that would be helpful to write down and continue to ponder.

Prayer:

You are God of Light and Father of lights! Even though it's hard to imagine any kind of light that doesn't change or cast a shadow and, even though the penetrating, exposing light may be painful, I choose to believe that You are who You say You are. Help me to trust You and Your light. Your light is also Love and pursuing, with me and filling me. I stand in awe and am so thankful.

For further reading: John 1.4-9, 8.12; James 1.16-18

Week 4 – Sight vs. Blindness – Tuesday

My Beloved, You are a child of Light.

Scripture: Matthew 5.14-16

Observations:

Light of the world. That is what Jesus calls you in this passage. He identifies you with the same name He gives Himself (John 8.12)! What a title! Jesus is reaffirming that you were created in the image of God, one with Him, made to display Him and let Him live through you in the world. A light like that, especially in a place where there is much darkness, looks like a bright city on a hill. It stands out, it's nature in contrast to the dark space around it (Php 2.15). It draws people to it, like a silent invitation. When a lamp is put on a stand, it shines far beyond it's bulb and shade to the corners of the house, helping us to see ourselves and others more clearly. It also exposes and, in it, shadows and secrets and darkness cannot stay hidden.

You are a child of light (Eph 5.8, 1 Thes 5.5). God's light has shone in your once-darkened heart so that you could see God's glory in Jesus (2 Cor 4.6). God called you out of darkness and into His marvelous light (1 Pet 2.9) and were delivered from the domain of darkness into the kingdom of Jesus Christ. You now share in the Light-kingdom inheritance with all those who are called children of God (Col 1.12-13). God pursued you with His Light and you are now a child of light. The light of the world.

Application:

Take a few moments to ponder your identity as a child of light and light of the world. Is there resonance or dissonance with this part of how God made you? What kind of light do you see yourself as (spark, candle, flashlight, ember, spotlight, laser, floodlight, firefly, etc)? What would it look like for you to embrace your identity as a city on a hill or a lamp on a stand?

Prayer:

God of light, thank you for rescuing me from darkness, for making me a part of Your kingdom of light, for shining in me. Even when I feel dim, intentionally hide myself under a basket, or am inclined to be a spotlight for others without love, help me to believe that I am who You say I am--a child of light. I pray that You would flood my heart with Your light so that I can more fully understand the confident hope You have given me (Eph 1.18, NLT).

For further reading on your identity as a child of light: Col 1.12-13, 1 Thes 5.5-11, 1 Pet 2.9

Week 4 – Sight vs. Blindness – Wednesday

My Beloved, I made you to walk in the light and be a light for others.

Scripture: Ephesians 5.1-21

Observations:

At your core, you are God's Beloved. This needs to be the foundation for how you live, both the motivation and the power. Living as God's Beloved, you will reflect God and walk as Jesus did—in life-giving light and in extravagant love. Walking in love, walking in light and walking in the Spirit are the same. It is the life that comes from trusting that God is who He says He is and believing that you are who God says you are. It is the life lived out of the reality that you are valued and desired, sought after and rescued, filled to overflowing and casting brightness wherever you go.

Picture the contrast of lighting a candle when the power goes out, seeing a firefly on a summer night or shining a flashlight on a dark forest path. That is the contrast of a life filled with acts of goodness, truth, thanksgiving, wisdom, watchfulness, worship, celebration and honoring others to a life filled with immorality, impurity, foolish talk, idolatry, greed, secrecy, laziness and a clouded mind.

Now picture lighting a hundred candles together like at a Christmas Eve service, a valley with thousands of fireflies or a huge search party, all with flashlights. The light of a congregation full of children of light is MUCH more brilliant and far-reaching!

[Shining our light before men] is an active process as we live out our lives in the world before God in such a way that people see the goodness of our lives and acknowledge God as the source of that goodness.

(Dallas Willard, *Life Without Lack*, p. 56).

Application:

Take a few moments to consider the truth that you were made to walk in the light and be a light for others. What fruit of walking in the light do you see in your life? In what areas might there be darkness instead? What would it look like for you to walk vulnerably and lovingly in light with others? Imagine people around you able to acknowledge the goodness of God by looking at your life and the life of our church. What would it take to be that kind of light in the community?

Prayer:

Thank You, God of light, that Your love and work in my life makes it possible for me to walk in the light. Teach me how to live fully out of who you created me to be so that You are clearly displayed in me for others to see.

For further reading: 1 John 1.5-2.11; John 12.35-50; Php 2.12-16

Week 4 – Sight vs. Blindness – Thursday 

We are children of Light, made to live in the Light and be a light for others. However, we have lived differently than this, and have been spiritually blind to how we have departed from loving God and obeying his commands.

Scripture: Matthew 7.19-27

Observations:

People who seek to call Jesus “Lord,” but not do the will of God the Father can be blind to reality. Anything less than hearing and practicing Jesus’ words are disconnected from Jesus, truth, and reality. This divided type of life is fostered in darkness and blindness.

The consequence of living a divided and blind way in response to Jesus’ words is that a person lives self-deceived. When a person lives this way they can imagine closeness to Jesus, yet be blind to how they dismiss and reject his words and person. This passage is directed to religious people who have an imagined relationship with Jesus, while being blind to how they live apart from him.

Immediately before this passage, Jesus is instructing people in specific ways to love God by loving others. Love your enemies. Forgive those who harm you. Offer good when evil is done to you. Rest in the Father’s care, don’t worry. Delight in what God’s provided you, don’t long for the things of others. Being reconciled to someone is more important than attending a religious service. Tell the truth. After these teachings, Jesus said, “everyone who hears these words and puts them into practice is like a wise man...”

Application:

Take two minutes to reflect on your life this past year. Consider how in this past year you have practiced the specific teachings of Jesus described above (from Matthew 5-7). Where in your life have you imagined closeness to Jesus, while being blind to how your life is contrary to Jesus’ teaching and person?

Prayer: Jesus, you are the Light of the world. You have made a way for me to walk in the light. I hold out to you the blindness about not following your commands in our family at Union Center. Help us see what you see, and take your teachings to heart and practice them. In Jesus’ name I pray. Amen.

For further reading: John 15.1-17

Week 4 – Sight vs. Blindness – Friday 

We are children of Light, made to live in the Light and be a light for others. However, we have lived differently than this, and we have been spiritually blind to how we have departed from loving God and obeying his commands.

Scripture: John 9.35-41

Observations:

Jesus healed a blind man on the Sabbath (big no-no with the religious leaders). Jesus did not let religion hinder his love of the Father by loving this blind man.

The religious leaders rejected Jesus because his love fell outside of their religious patterns and perspectives. They held onto their religion instead of turning towards Jesus. They turned a blind eye towards what was good, lovely, and right in Jesus. The religious leaders were guilty because they turned away from the truth they had an ability to see. They chose to not step into the light and humbly practice the life of light and freedom that Jesus was revealing to them.

Can you see yourself in the actions of the Pharisees? Like them, we can ignore, look over, or outright reject Jesus and his teachings when they fall outside of our religious traditions and practice. Like the religious leaders, we can turn a blind eye when we read a passage that pokes holes in our religious practice and traditions...choosing religion over Jesus. We too can harden our hearts against Jesus and His ways. We can ignore or reject Jesus and his teachings to love our enemies, pray for those who persecute us, forgive those who harm us, and prioritize the making of peace above our attendance at religious services. We can turn a blind eye to Jesus and his words while masquerading as God's people.

Application:

Humble yourself. Ask God to give you courage and eyes to see the reality between you, Jesus, and His teachings. To what extent are you obeying his command to love your enemy? To what extent are you obeying his teaching to forgive those who harm you? To what extent are you obeying his teaching to prioritize the seeking of peace with others?

Prayer:

Heavenly Father, Light of the world, shine into the places of my life where I have lived in darkness and willful blindness. I do not want to turn away from your light and reject you and the reality that you see in my life. Give me the desire to whole-heartedly rest in your love, step into the light, and then walk with you in repentance. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.

For further reading: John 3.16-21

Week 4 – Sight vs. Blindness – Saturday

Reflection questions to prepare for the Sacred Assembly tomorrow:

-  How has the pursuit of a life focused on my own preferences, comforts, and plans taken priority over my love for Jesus and his teachings?
-  How have I been passive or apathetic about Jesus' commission to make disciples?
-  Who have I been connected with, but now, when I see or think of them, I am indifferent towards, avoid, or have contempt for? In what relationships have I picked up offenses, refused to forgive, or withheld care from?
-  To what extent am I living in the light; believing in Jesus, receiving his teachings, and living in obedience to Jesus and the work of the Holy Spirit?

As you consider the questions above, and the Sacred Assembly outline made available this week, what sin might the Holy Spirit be counseling you to humbly confess at the Sacred Assembly?

Please use the Public Confession Guide in this devotional (on Saturday of Week 2) to intentionally plan your confession for tomorrow. In this way you can help prepare and guard your heart and mouth from harming another in this communal experience.

The Sacred Assembly is tomorrow, Sunday, November 15th.