

Seeds of Faith, People of Faith Devotional

November 8 through November 14



**Growing commitment and
community in Christ**

Sunday, November 8

Scripture:

Now there came to Ephesus a Jew named Apollos, a native of Alexandria. He was an eloquent man, well-versed in the scriptures. He had been instructed in the Way of the Lord; and he spoke with burning enthusiasm and taught accurately the things concerning Jesus, though he knew only the baptism of John. He began to speak boldly in the synagogue; but when Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they took him aside and explained the Way of God to him more accurately. *Acts 18:24-26*

This week we are looking at Priscilla, Aquila and Paul in our People of Faith series and how they reached out to others with the Gospel of Jesus Christ. From this reading, we can see that the Holy Spirit worked through Priscilla and Aquila to give Apollos a better understanding of Jesus, the "Way of God."

Priscilla and Aquila were married. They were tentmakers like Paul and that is how they got to know Paul. All three ended up in Corinth and Paul stayed and worked with them because they were of the same trade. When the three of them went to Ephesus, Paul went on to Caesarea, but Priscilla and Aquila stayed there and then met Apollos.

How mysterious it is to see how God brings people together to enlighten them with the Gospel and strengthen them to share God's good news. Paul traveled west from Athens and Priscilla and Aquila southeast from Rome when they arrived in Corinth. Apollos came north from Alexandria to Ephesus and Corinth. We can infer from the description of Apollos that he may have had more

education than Priscilla and Aquila. Yet the Holy Spirit worked through all of them to unite them in Christ.

Through whom has the Holy Spirit worked to bring you to Christ and who are you bringing to Christ through the work of the Holy Spirit? It might be the most unlikely persons from near or distant lands. Gender and nationality make no difference. Whether one is a tradesman or a scholar, a pastor or lay person, the Holy Spirit is still working through us to bring us closer to Christ.

Therefore, we thank you God for those who reached out to us and those to whom we can reach out, for it is through the Holy Spirit that we are united to grow in Christ. Amen.

—Contributed by Pastor Fred Hasecke

Monday, November 9

Scripture:

After this Paul left Athens and went to Corinth. ²There he found a Jew named Aquila, a native of Pontus, who had recently come from Italy with his wife Priscilla, because Claudius had ordered all Jews to leave Rome. Paul went to see them, ³and, because he was of the same trade, he stayed with them, and they worked together — by trade they were tentmakers. ⁴Every sabbath he would argue in the synagogue and would try to convince Jews and Greeks.

¹⁸After staying there for a considerable time, Paul said farewell to the believers and sailed for Syria, accompanied by Priscilla and Aquila. At Cenchreae he had his hair cut, for he was under a vow. ¹⁹When they reached Ephesus, he left them there, but first he himself went into the synagogue and had a discussion with the Jews. ²⁰When they asked him to stay longer, he declined; ²¹but on taking leave of them, he said, "I will return to you, if God wills." Then he set sail from Ephesus.

²²When he had landed at Caesarea, he went up to Jerusalem and greeted the church, and then went down to Antioch. ²³After spending some time there he departed and went from place to place through the region of Galatia and Phrygia, strengthening all the disciples.

²⁴Now there came to Ephesus a Jew named Apollos, a native of Alexandria. He was an eloquent man, well-versed in the scriptures. ²⁵He had been instructed in the Way of the Lord; and he spoke with burning enthusiasm and taught accurately the things concerning Jesus, though he knew only the baptism of John. ²⁶He began to

speaking boldly in the synagogue; but when Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they took him aside and explained the Way of God to him more accurately. *Acts 18:1-4, 18-26*

Theme: "Reaching Out"

Paul in Corinth with the Good News. What it must have been like to be a lone preacher of this new theology among the wicked. His task was huge – it's hard for us to imagine. He was human, as much as you and me. So, when the people in Corinth didn't listen, he got mad. He'd practically given up when the Lord stopped him, embraced him, and gave Paul renewed resolve in the challenges before him in Corinth. The Lord reached out to Paul, and Paul's reach became extensive.

I've known many missionaries in my work over the years in Hispanic ministry. The good ones have a common thread - they don't like being comfortable. Contentment makes them squirm. They're uneasy when things aren't challenging. A light load just doesn't suit them. One man's chains, another's freedom... For Paul, it seemed he just needed that occasional nudge from the Lord, keeping him strong and focused. Reaching out became an extension of the Lord's love of him, and of all the people of Corinth.

Are we listening when the Lord asks us to be a symbol of Him? Do we feel His nudge? Do we intentionally reach out, even when it's uncomfortable?

Holy Father, help us to see our sin and to hear when You call us. Give us an extensive and substantive reach, as we hear Your call to serve others. Energize us, as Your love works through us. In Your gracious and holy name, Amen.

—Contributed by Erin Smith

Tuesday, November 10

Scripture:

When a large crowd was coming together, and those from the various cities were journeying to Him. He spoke by the way of a parable:

"The sower went out to sow his seed; and as he sowed, some fell beside the road, and it was trampled under foot and the birds of the air ate it up.

Other seed fell on rocky soil, and as soon as it grew up, it withered away, because it had no moisture.

Other seed fell among the thorns; and the thorns grew up with it and choked it out.

Other seed fell into the good soil, and grew up, and produced a crop a hundred times as great." *Luke 8:4-8*

I used to teach my catechism students that a "parable" was an earthly story or act with a heavenly meaning. Jesus used special stories to tell truths to his disciples, both biblically and for today's understanding. His 40+ different parables in the New Testament fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah 6: 9-10. Like a two-edged sword, the parables of Jesus cut both ways. They enlightened those who sought the truth and blinded those who were disobedient.

In the Parable of the Seeds and the Soils, Jesus is talking about the spreading of seed as the teaching or preaching of God's word. He is telling the hearer that seed that is sown carelessly, or in poor soil, or on land infested with thorns is unfruitful. It is the fertile soil that produces abundantly and assures a good harvest of believers.

The text is telling us as believers to share God's word faithfully and generously, not becoming discouraged because it appears that much of the seed is wasted, or that our message of God's love through Jesus is for whatever reason not heard by others. The important part of this passage is that each of us share the word of God. The rest must be left up to God.

Heavenly Father, place on our hearts and our lips the seed of God and help us to remain patient and kind in our attempts to bring those we love to know Jesus in a more personal and intimate way. The word of God calls for each of us to be evangelists in our words and deeds. Help each of us Lord to reach out and bring others to you. In Jesus name we pray." Amen.

—Rev. Vernon Graham

Wednesday, November 11

Scripture:

All the ends of the world shall remember and turn unto the Lord *Psalms 22: 27*

The song, "All the Ends of the Earth" sings of heaven, earth and sea all praising God in exultation. Indeed, we – creatures and creation alike – can "Break into song at the deeds of the Lord."

Every pebble, tree, brooklet and mewling kitten; each birdsong, season, greening meadow and hushed snowfall; scores of ageless stars, summer solstices, storms, and even lowly mud puddles – all, by the very dint of their being, exist in Him, and He in them. Look on these entities to remember Him, for all are perfect in Him, each in its own joyful way....

How can one not recall and worship the glory of God when sensing any of these marvelous experiences? How can we fail to stand, hat in hand, when we gaze upon cotton-candy clouds, hear the holiness of children laughing, taste the sweetness of a Honeycrisp apple or feel a lover's heart-beat?

Oh, Lord, grant that Your glory may be reflected in each task we do, and please make each day a simple prayer of reflection, worship and gratitude for enriching our lives so dearly. You didn't have to do it but You did – Thank You so much! Amen.

—Contributed by Barb Sieminski

Thursday, November 12

Scripture:

How lovely is your dwelling place,
O LORD of hosts!

²My soul longs, indeed it faints
for the courts of the LORD;
my heart and my flesh sing for joy
to the living God.

³Even the sparrow finds a home,
and the swallow a nest for herself,
where she may lay her young,
at your altars, O LORD of hosts,
my King and my God.

⁴Happy are those who live in your house,
ever singing your praise.

⁵Happy are those whose strength is in you,
in whose heart are the highways to Zion.

⁶As they go through the valley of Baca
they make it a place of springs;

the early rain also covers it with pools.
7They go from strength to strength;
the God of gods will be seen in Zion.
8O Lord GOD of hosts, hear my prayer;
give ear, O God of Jacob!
9Behold our shield, O God;
look on the face of your anointed.
10For a day in your courts is better
than a thousand elsewhere.
I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God
than live in the tents of wickedness.
11For the Lord GOD is a sun and shield;
he bestows favor and honor.
No good thing does the LORD withhold
from those who walk uprightly.
12O LORD of hosts,
happy is everyone who trusts in you. *Psalm 84*

"How lovely is Your dwelling place, oh, Lord Almighty!" How timely this scripture is as we still float on the joy and wonder of our Seeds of Faith celebrations of only a few weeks ago. With the newly adopted ELCA hymn of the same name, it is particularly endearing to us at Trinity.

"Blessed are those whose strength is in you, who have set their hearts on pilgrimage." With the blessings of Seeds of Faith, is our Trinity family being asked to move toward pilgrimage? Pilgrimage begs of movement, action. Should we as a church feel we should be reaching out to our community?

Are you allowing the Holy Spirit to move you?

I was arriving to a meeting at Trinity a few weeks ago. It was 8pm, all the lights were on in the new parking lot, and the façade of the building was lit up. I was late to the meeting, so I wasn't paying attention to much but the clock. A scruffy-looking man was passing on foot through our parking lot. He sort of startled me, by saying, without breaking his stride, "Isn't the church beautiful?!" I was so

taken aback, feeling ashamed for 1) being afraid of this kind fellow, and 2) not paying attention to the beautifully-lit front of the building. My response was, "Yes, it is beautiful isn't it?"

To be sure, our new facilities at Trinity are stunning. But brick and mortar do not a church make. This gorgeous building is merely the façade of the real beauty within – Christ's people. WE are his church. WE must be the hand that reaches out as the Holy Spirit moves us.

Dear Father, help us to keep our trust in You, to love as You have taught us to love, to show others of Your beauty not just by where we are, but by who we are. Amen.

—Contributed by Erin Smith

Friday, November 13

Scripture: Acts 18:1-4 [See Monday, November 9]

This passage in scripture gives us a picture of ancient Corinthians as well as Paul's vocation as a craftsman, as a tent builder. The important part of this passage is found in verse 4 when the word of God proclaims that Paul was in the Jewish Synagogue, each and every Sabbath day reasoning, arguing, and spreading the Gospel about Jesus Christ as the way to Salvation. Can you imagine the courage of a lay person, to stand up for Jesus in the religious house of another religious group today. We would be seen as trying to steal members, intolerant of diversity, or not at all sane at least. Yet, what testimony of faith to all of us as to what following Jesus and reaching out to others is all about.

According to a recent national survey, people who join a church come for a variety of reasons.

The 3 main reasons are:

- A friend or a neighbor invited them. 74 %
- The Congregation had a great pastor. 9 %
- The Location or the Church Facilities. 4 %

We, at Trinity English Lutheran Church, can reach out and double the size of our congregation in a year's time. Won't you become like Paul, and invite someone who doesn't attend church to Trinity English Lutheran Church next Sunday.

Heavenly Father, we pray to you today to hear our prayers. Bless all the family and friends of Trinity Lutheran Church today. Help each of us to show our love for you by sharing our love for others wherever we go today, by our actions and our words. Amen.

—Contributed by Pastor Vernon Graham

Saturday, November 14

I've been involved in Hispanic mission in the Fort Wayne area for 15 years – teaching ENL (English as a New Language) to both adults and my young high school students and organizing mission outreach to Hispanic families. This passage from Romans was especially meaningful to me as I would organize any of our outreach functions, and I would routinely tell the volunteers how I admired their “feet”.

Paul is very practical as he writes in his letter about all the people out there just waiting for the Good News. “How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? And how can they preach unless they are sent? As it is written, ‘How beautiful are the *feet* of those who bring good news!’”

In what shape are your feet these days? As a high school ENL teacher who stands in uncomfortable shoes all day, there are times I'd like to just lop off my feet; I certainly don't feel like pulling more duty on them! But, oh, what joy comes from doing the Lord's work! We open our hearts to the Lord and we find we're filled with the Holy Spirit, energized with faith, and that nudge from the Lord to move *our* feet is joyful!

Father, bless my soul, move my spirit, and use my feet to bring good news to all who would hear it! Amen.

—Contributed by Erin Smith

Infinite thanks to Pastor Richard G. Frazier for his cheerful efforts to identify and secure weekly leaders—and many writers, as well—for this new devotional venture. We remain grateful recipients of his faithfulness

