

Grace Guide



OCTOBER 12-18

“Trappings of the Day”

Our Conference Superintendent Scott Gallagher is preaching the 11:00 service and has chosen Matthew 22:15-22 as his preaching text. His sermon is called “Trappings of the Day”

**MONDAY
10/12**

JEREMIAH 29:1-14

The prophet Jeremiah's letter to the exiles contains an important word for anyone who finds themselves living in circumstances they did not choose. The Israelites were far from home, surrounded by a culture that was not their own, yet God did not tell them to simply withdraw from the world around them. Instead, God called them to build lives, seek the welfare of their community, and remain faithful to the Lord while they waited for his purposes to unfold. We, too, can sometimes wish our circumstances, culture, or surroundings were different, but God calls us to faithfully live where he has placed us, seeking the good of others while remembering that our ultimate hope rests in God alone. Prayer helps us remain patient and faithful when God's timetable is different from ours.

1. What circumstances in your life do you find yourself wishing were different, and how might God be calling you to faithfully live within them rather than simply wishing them away?
2. How could knowing that God is present and working even when we cannot see the outcome change the way we pray?

TUESDAY
10/13

DANIEL 6:1-23

Daniel's circumstances changed dramatically when his enemies manipulated the political system in an attempt to destroy him. Yet Daniel did not allow their actions to impact his faithfulness. When he learned about the new law, he continued his established practice of praying to God three times a day. Prayer was not something Daniel suddenly began doing when trouble arrived, it was already woven into the rhythm of his life. Because his relationship with God was established before the crisis, he knew where to turn when the crisis came. Our own lives are filled with pressures, distractions, and circumstances that can pull our attention in countless directions. A consistent life of prayer helps us remember who we are and whose we are before pressures have an opportunity to define us.

1. What practices or habits currently help keep your relationship with God at the center of your daily life?
2. What would a more intentional rhythm of prayer look like in your life?

WEDNESDAY
10/14

ROMANS 12:1-2

The apostle Paul calls believers to offer their entire lives to God and to resist simply allowing the values around them to determine how they think and live. Transformation begins when our minds and hearts are continually renewed by God rather than shaped exclusively by the expectations of the world around us. That can be difficult because we are constantly being told what success looks like, what we should desire, whom we should admire, and all that should make us happy. Following Jesus means learning to recognize those influences and bringing them before God. Prayer gives us a place to slow down, listen, examine our desires, and then ask God to reshape our thinking. As our minds are renewed, we become increasingly able to discern what is good, pleasing, and faithful.

1. What messages or values surrounding you most strongly compete for your attention and allegiance?
2. How can you tell when something has influenced your thinking more than your relationship with God has?

THURSDAY
10/15

1 PETER 2:9-17

The apostle Peter reminds Jesus followers that our primary identity comes from belonging to God. We are “a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people,” and that identity should shape how we live among those who do not share their faith. Peter doesn't call believers to isolate themselves from society, nor does he tell them to simply blend into it. Instead, he calls believers to live honorably, practice good, respect others, and use their freedom responsibly. Our faith in God through Jesus Christ gives us an identity deeper than our occupation, political views, social position, successes, or failures. When we know who we are and to whom we belong, we can engage the world around us without allowing it to determine our worth or dictate our behavior.

1. Which parts of your identity tend to have the greatest influence on how you see yourself?
2. Where might your life give others an opportunity to “see” something about God through the way you treat them?

FRIDAY
10/16

PSALM 16

This is a declaration of trust in God in the midst of a world filled with competing sources of security and satisfaction. The psalmist recognizes that the things others pursue cannot compare with the goodness found in God. He describes God as his inheritance, his security, his counselor, and the one who gives him joy and hope. We are constantly invited to place our confidence in people, possessions, achievements, experiences, and circumstances. None of these things are necessarily bad, but none of them can bear the weight of being our ultimate source of security. Prayer gives us the opportunity to remember where our true treasure lies and to place our lives once again in God's hands.

1. What does it mean for you personally to say, “I have set the Lord always before me”?
2. When have you experienced God providing a kind of peace or joy that circumstances alone could not provide?

**SATURDAY/
SUNDAY
10/17-18**

MATTHEW 22:15-22

The question presented to Jesus about paying taxes appears straightforward, but it is actually designed as a trap. Jesus refuses to be drawn into the political argument his opponents have constructed and instead points them toward a deeper question: What belongs to God? The coin bears Caesar's image, but human beings bear God's image. That distinction reminds us that while we have responsibilities within the world around us, our ultimate allegiance belongs to God. We live among competing demands for our attention, loyalty, money, time, and identity. Jesus calls us to recognize those responsibilities without allowing them to become our highest priority. Prayer helps us sort through those competing claims and remember that before we belong to any institution, group, or cause, we belong to God.

1. If your life bears the image of God, what difference does that make in the way you live and how you treat others?
2. What would it look like this week to consciously give God what belongs to God: your time, your attention, your resources, and your trust?

VERSE OF THE WEEK

Then he said to them, "So give back to Caesar what is Caesar's, and to God what is God's."

(Matthew 22:21b)