

pray . fast . give .



Living Lent | Day 11

Praying, Sacrificing, and Giving for the Least

“[Josiah] defended the cause of the poor and needy, and so all went well. Is that not what it means to know me?” declares the Lord.”

Jeremiah 22:16 NIV

Encouragement for the Lenten Journey:

Many of us understand that Lent is the period where we make the trek alongside our Savior toward Jerusalem, toward betrayal, toward suffering and death, and toward the tomb. It is the period before Resurrection when our Hope, and then all hope, appears lost.

Lent is a time for three focuses: Prayer, Sacrifice and Giving. We invest in these activities to draw closer to our Savior. Prayer is *our* fulfillment of our relationship in Christ. Sacrifice is *our* honoring of Christ’s sacrifice for us. Giving is *our* response to the ultimate gift which God through Jesus Christ bestows upon us.

There are multiple verses in the Bible which call us as God’s people respond to His love by making provisions for the poorest among us.

Jeremiah 22: 15-16 (ESV) asks of King Jehoiakim son of King Josiah: “Did not your father eat and drink and do justice and righteousness? Then it was well with him. He judged the cause of the poor and needy; then it was well. Is not this to know me? declares the Lord.”

In Matthew 25: 35-37 (NIV): Jesus said: “For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.”

Though confused the people have no memory of these charitable acts. And they ask: “Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?’ The King will reply, ‘Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.’”

When I think of the Children of Morningstar Children & Family Services, I often reflect that they are the epitome of “the least of these”? Children who are without means, intellectually disadvantaged, estranged from their families and from environments none of us would wish upon any child.

2020 was a difficult year without precedent and 2021 certainly holds unknowns for us all. While it is human nature to view these times through the prism of our own difficulties, God understands that it is through our giving that we are self-relieved of our burdens? Will we remain so inwardly focused on ourselves this Lent? Shall we be inured to the plight of “these least”? For our sakes, I pray not.

As we make this trek with Christ toward the most blessed of Holy days, what is our response to the ultimate sacrifice which led to the ultimate gift? A gift that once given, once received, can never be taken away! Paul stated that “we are adopted into the family of God” and this passage contains an unknown promise in its message. You see in Paul’s time, a child adopted into a Jewish family, could not be cut off from his inheritance! A natural child could be cut off, but an adopted child could not. How glorious to be adopted into God’s family!

Let us be prayerful, fulfilling our relationship with Jesus. Let us fast or sacrifice in a meaningful way in memory of Christ’s atoning sacrifice for us. And finally, let us be a giving people. As a response to Christ’s love for us, let us love one other, the Morningstar kids, those least among us, in recognition and reverence of God’s blessings upon our lives.

Challenge to Prayer and the Exercise of the Privilege of Generosity

As you pray and sacrifice throughout this Lenten Journey, will you take this opportunity to pay forward in generosity a gift of at least \$1 per day throughout the 40 days for the Children of Morningstar? It is a privilege and a blessing to give as we all look forward to Easter and the Resurrection.

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Contributors

Bryce and Mandy Bunting, Statesboro, Georgia, are active members of Pittman Park United Methodist Church, and serve as the “host family” for the occasional evacuations that Morningstar has encountered these past couple of years during Hurricane Season. Bryce is a member of the Board of Directors of Morningstar and both Bryce and Mandy have embraced the Vision of growing the Counseling Services of Morningstar by volunteering their time, energies, and talents most recently in assisting in the transformation and expansion of the Perry Counseling Center of Morningstar located in Perry, Georgia, which currently serves 182 children in that area of Georgia.

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