



62A PENTECOST 21A BIBLE STUDY

So deeply do we care

Abstract

Just as a nursing mother cares for her children, & so we cared for you. Because we loved you so much, we were delighted to share with you not only the gospel of God but our lives as well.

1 Thessalonians 2.7-8

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So deeply do we care

Sunday, October 25, 2020 | After Pentecost | Proper 25 | Year A

Old Testament & Psalm, Option I

Old Testament Deuteronomy 34:1–12

Psalm Psalm 90:1–6, 13–17

or

Old Testament & Psalm, Option II

Old Testament Leviticus 19:1–2, 15–18

Psalm Psalm 1

New Testament 1 Thessalonians 2:1–8

Gospel Matthew 22:34–46

1 Thessalonians 2.1-8

Paul recalls the confidence in God required to preach in the challenging circumstances facing them in Thessalonica. They focused not on their own needs but on God's good news, and their authority as apostles was expressed not in self-promoting demands but in self-giving tender care.

This week's resources explore: having the strength to be gentle.

Welcome and opening prayer

A prayer of approach

We bring ourselves to a moment of quiet,
to a place of peace, to this place of safety and welcome.
We bring ourselves to cast off the cares of the world
and for a time to reflect on you, Lord God,
that our batteries may be recharged,
our direction be refocused and our energy renewed;
that we may let go of things that hamper us
and be free to care gently for those we share time with.
O God, we pray, renew us that we may renew others.
Amen.

Readings

1 Thessalonians 2:1–8

2 You know, brothers and sisters, that our visit to you was not without results. 2 We had previously suffered and been treated outrageously in Philippi, as you know, but with the help of our God we dared to tell you his gospel in the face of strong opposition. 3 For the appeal we make does not spring from error or impure motives, nor are we trying to trick you. 4 On the contrary, we speak as those approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel. We are not trying to please people but God, who tests our hearts. 5 You know we never used flattery, nor did we put on a mask to cover up greed—God is our witness. 6 We were not looking for praise from people, not from you or anyone else, even though as apostles of Christ we could have asserted our authority. 7 Instead, we were like young children among you.

Just as a nursing mother cares for her children, 8 so we cared for you. Because we loved you so much, we were delighted to share with you not only the gospel of God but our lives as well.

respond

For the word of the Lord

Thanks be to God

Exegesis

New Testament: 1 Thessalonians 2.1-8

The apostles were maltreated at Philippi for 'advocating customs that are not lawful for us as Romans' and pursued by a mob in Thessalonica for 'acting contrary to the decrees of the emperor, saying that there is another king named Jesus' (Acts 16.21; 17.7). Their emphasis on the philosophical ideal of speaking the truth courageously despite opposition, on speaking 'not to please mortals, but to please God', fits being called by God 'into his own kingdom' (2.12).

'We might have made demands as apostles of Christ' refers to their entitlement, rooted in Jesus' words as he sent the twelve to proclaim the kingdom (Matthew 10.5-15), to support from their churches (1 Corinthians 9.4-12). But Paul and his companions worked for their living alongside the Thessalonians (2.9), and their intimacy is expressed using the female image of a nursing mother. A Jewish man and a Roman citizen, Paul expected to inflict rather than experience suffering. In following Jesus, he experienced hunger and hardship (2 Corinthians 11.23-28), bringing him close to the underprivileged majority of society living in the 'extreme poverty' of the Christians in Macedonia (2 Corinthians 8.1-2) and now 'very dear to us'. This seems to have made him more empathic with women, subject to male oppression in Jewish and Roman society. From his image of the nursing mother he is moved to speak of the centrality of self-giving to the preaching of the gospel, a self-giving at the heart of his understanding of God in Christ (e.g. Galatians 1.4).

Picture pointers:

Reflection questions on this week's picture

- What experience does this image most remind you of?
- How/when does care for someone require strength?
- How/when does care for someone require gentleness? What about both?



Live your faith

Look for opportunities to be strong, to express strength, or to convey a strong message, through a gentle action/response

A sending out prayer

From the security of this place, with friends and family and our faith community, be with us, eternal God, as we step into the world of 'mixed-up all-sorts'. May we be kind and caring to all people, no matter how they treat us. May we be true to ourselves and hold our heads high, sharing your love and your care with all those we encounter.

Amen.