

# HOPE-FULL LIVING

• *Daily Devotions for Christian Seniors* •

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## Hope-Full Living Mission Statement

To inspire God's seniors with the assurance that "This very day, I have a body, a mind, a spirit and a message—God's rejuvenating Gospel message to and through me—to share with my world, my friends and my Lord."

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Sunday, July 1, 2012

# The Abundant Life

*I came that they may have life and have it abundantly.*

*Jn 10:10*

In ancient China, wealthy people would pour drinks until cups overflowed, spill food as they ate. It showed that they had more than enough.

I don't believe that Jesus' promise of abundant life means that all who love Jesus will be millionaires. Scripture promises many times that God will provide what we need, but *abundance*? That must be something else. I think of the parable of the extravagant father (Lk 15). God is always ready to take us rebellious children back into the family. Abundant forgiveness! Abundant love!

God's love and grace overflow in our lives. He is always with us. God's love and grace are so abundant that they spill over and flow from us to others. The abundant life we now enjoy spills over into eternity. That's abundance!

The abundant life starts in the here-and-now and does not end. That's more than I could ever hope for.

*Extravagant Father, shower me with forgiveness, enfold me in love, cover me with your peace. Amen.*

*Write: Make a list of your abundant blessings.*

*Read: Jn 10:7-15; Lk 15:11-24*

*Eldor Kaiser*

Monday, July 2, 2012

# Heaven ... and Earth

*Let the heavens rejoice, let the earth be glad; let the sea resound, and all that is in it.*

*Ps 96:11*

What a great time on this summer day to thank the Lord for the earth! I don't know about you, but I often take the earth and all it provides me for granted: the food on the table, the birds in the air, the flowers that bloom and even pesky little squirrels!

Today recite the First Article of the Apostles' Creed aloud, whether anyone else hears it or not: "I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth." We are reminded of what Psalm 96 is saying to us: that God enables us to celebrate life through all of his marvelous creation! He encourages us to rejoice with the walrus and the whale, the geranium and the gerbil, even the magpie and the mosquito! God has come and is coming again to make us one in him. Thank the Lord with the Psalmist as we "sing to the Lord a new song; sing to the Lord, all the earth"!

*Creator God, thanks for heaven and earth. Help us to celebrate them today. In Jesus' name. Amen.*

*Action: Take a walk in the great outdoors (weather permitting) and see God's creation through the eyes of our faith in Christ Jesus.*

*Read: Ps 96—all 13 verses!*

*Rich Bimler*

Tuesday, July 3, 2012

# Like a Palm Tree

*The righteous will flourish like a palm tree ...*

Ps 92:12

The Psalmist tells the aging Christian pilgrim to be like a palm tree. What does he mean?

The palm tree has a long life span, well past 100 years. The palm tree is noted for its productivity. Dates growing on older palm trees are said to be the best ever. The palm tree adapts to the changing weather. It has a strong root system. The palm tree in the desert offers shade and relaxation and relief for the traveler.

That tells me that in my old age I can still bear fruit. The Bible tells me that older folks like Moses, Sarah, Abraham, Anna, Simeon, Zechariah and the apostle John were very fruitful.

I have my roots deep in Jesus Christ, and he helps me adapt to the changing scenes of life.

I can still have a purpose for daily living, reaching out in loving and caring ways, providing the helping hand. In Jesus, I have the promise of a ripe old age.

*Lord Jesus, touch me with your Spirit to become like a palm tree. Amen.*

*Ponder: Spend time today reflecting upon your life as one who seeks to be like a palm tree.*

*Read: Ps 92:1-5, 12-15*

Walter M. Schoedel

Wednesday, July 4, 2012

# Human Events

*Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord ...*

*Ps 33:12*

It happened in July 1776. The document began, “When in the course of human events ...” The signing of the Declaration of Independence was certainly one of those “human events” that stands out in the history of the United States. Each nation has its special “human events.” And yet no nation is independent of the Lord of all nations. Psalm 46:6 reminds us, “The nations rage, the kingdoms totter; he utters his voice, the earth melts.” And Psalm 33:12 assures us, “Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord!”

If a nation cannot survive and succeed without the help and blessing of Almighty God, then surely no person can do any better without him! Look back on the “human events” in your life. It was God your Savior who brought you through every one. Blessed is the person whose God is the Lord! He will faithfully help and bless you every day.

*My Savior and Lord, forgive my sins of pride and self-will. I depend on you for everything. Let me face every “human event” with faith in you. Amen.*

*Write: Write down your major “human events.” Thank God for bringing you through each one.*

*Read: Ps 33; Ps 46*

*Lonie Eatherton*

Thursday, July 5, 2012

# God's Plans

*“For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the Lord, “plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope.”*

*Jer 29:11*

It's easy to question God. How often have you heard it asked: “How can a loving God let bad things happen to good people?” or some variation. That shows a distinct lack of faith. God remains all knowing and all powerful. He sees into our hearts; he knows our needs and our desires. He knows what is good for us and what isn't. He is the ultimate parent who loves us and wants what is best for us. In Romans 8:28, God tells us that ALL things work together for good for those who love him. The Old Testament is filled with examples of God's plans for his people. The New Testament continues the story, culminating in the most perfect plan of all—God's plan of salvation, sending his Son to die for the sins of all. Through our whole lives he leads us toward that end.

*Lord, help us to accept the plans you have for us and to be grateful for them. In Jesus' name. Amen.*

*Accept: It is not always easy to accept God's plans for one's life. Can you do so wholeheartedly?*

*Read: Hos 10:12; Lk 11:5-13; Rom 8:28-39*

*David W. Eggebrecht*

Friday, July 6, 2012

# Transplanted Palm Trees

*The righteous flourish like the palm tree and grow like a cedar in Lebanon ... They still bear fruit in old age; they are ever full of sap and green.*

Ps 92:12, 14

My wife Julie and I were sitting on a tour bus on the Hana Maui road in Hawaii. The guide said: “Palm trees are *not* indigenous to Hawaii. They grow well in this climate, but they were transplanted here from other places,” supplanting our idealized picture of Hawaii as an original paradise.

People expect less productivity from people like us in our 60s, 70s and 80s. So, let’s surprise them! Let’s grow a piece of luscious spiritual fruit today. Who knows, people may be inspired, not by us, but by God our limitless Producer.

*God, thank you for working through us as well—or better—when we slip out of the limelight, and others catch a brief glimpse of you whose “power is made perfect in our weakness” (2 Cor 12:9). Amen.*

*Surprise: Surprise your younger sisters and brothers in Christ with your sweet wisdom from God’s ever-vibrant Word.*

*Read: 1 Cor 2:9-10; Eph 3:20-21*

Deane Schuessler

Saturday, July 7, 2012

# God's Gift of Beauty

*The earth is the Lord's, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it; for he founded it on the seas and established it on the waters.*

*Ps 24:1-2*

Find joy in the summer beauty that God provides: flowers, foliage and trees. Even if you are restricted to the indoors, sit by a window or look deep into the wonder of the speckled beauty of a flower. At a farmers' market, or if you are blessed with a green thumb, in your own yard, breathe in fragrances of flowers, ripe fruits and vegetables.

As you sniff a lily or taste a blackberry, think of Jesus walking among them. As you nibble a cucumber, know that Jesus likely found refreshment in this vegetable which was so popular in Palestine.

*Lord, thank you for the variety of beauty you provide. It delights our eyes, nose and tongue. Your bounty nourishes not just body but soul. Amen.*

*Do: Spend ten minutes refreshing yourself as you "drink in" the wonders of the outdoors. Walk or ride through your own garden, a park or forest, or watch from a window.*

*Read: 1 Pt 1:24-25; Ps 1*

*Patricia Rice*

Sunday, July 8, 2012

# Help Us by Prayer

*You also must help us by prayer, so that many will give thanks on our behalf for the blessing granted us through the prayers of many.*

2 Cor 1:11

Perhaps you were once very active in carrying out the work of Christ's kingdom. You went to work each day and witnessed to Christ by your words and actions. Maybe you served your church in a variety of ways and volunteered to help in all kinds of projects. Now, however, you may not be able to do so much, but you can pray.

The apostle Paul asked believers for help. They could not all travel with him. Some may not have been able to help financially. But the apostle needed their assistance in prayer. Just as the "prayers of many" helped the apostle in his work, so your prayers can help those who spread the Gospel today.

*Lord Jesus, send your Spirit to guide and strengthen all who teach your Word. Amen.*

*Pray: Pray for all who spread the Gospel message.*

*Read: 2 Thes 3:1-5*

Carol Geisler

Monday, July 9, 2012

# Live by the Forgiveness

*Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.*

*Eph 4:32*

It is true that we live in a hurting world. For so many reasons, lives are being torn apart, relationships are disintegrating and people are hurting. Deep and lasting relationships are hard to come by. So much of our contact with others is superficial, and often we are valued only on the basis of achievement.

Relationships that last are sustained by forgiveness. They are not maintained because people always do the right thing. God does not accept you because you have done the right thing, but because he has been able to forgive you in Christ. So, too, our relationships with each other are strong and deep because we also hold one another in forgiveness.

*Father, you reconciled me to yourself through forgiveness in Christ, and you hold me in that forgiveness every day. Help me to not value people only because of their achievement, but to love them with the love you also have for them. Amen.*

*Encourage:* Tell those around you how much you value them, not because of what they have done, but because of who they are in Christ.

*Read:* Eph 4:29-32; Lk 15

*Lionel Otto*

Tuesday, July 10, 2012

# Hope Without Sight

*Hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what he sees? But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience.*

*Rom 8:24-25*

When my mother died early in my life, my Aunt Alice picked up her role as encourager, loving supporter, nurturer and teacher of faith, hope and love. I prayed for her daily and wrote to her once or twice a month. In her later years, she moved from independent living to assisted living to a nursing care facility. As her health failed, so did her eyesight. She could no longer read my letters, but I kept sending them to her, hoping that in some way she would know how much God loved her and how much I loved her.

The hope that we have as Christians is so much more than wishful thinking. Because of the life, death, resurrection and ascension of Jesus, we have the certain hope of eternal life. Hope in Christ is a way of life now. Even when we cannot serve actively as we once did or when our physical body begins to fail, we can live well in hope and share that love and hope in Christ with others.

*Lord, help me to live each day in hope. Amen.*

*Offer: Offer hope and encouragement to someone.*

*Read: Rom 12:9-13*

*Dick Hardel*

Wednesday, July 11, 2012

# Pitch or Pile?

*The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof, the world and those who dwell therein ...*

*Ps 24:1*

There comes a time in everyone's life when it's either pitch or pile. You either pitch those scads of accumulated items or you pile them up to be sifted through again at a later date. Eventually, the stark reality hits home—you even have to pitch the pile!

The one consoling factor is that it wouldn't really profit us to own and hoard the whole world if we *lost our soul*. So if we keep our soul, we have more gain—much more—than if we actually did possess the entire world.

What's the way to get there? Simply put, trust in the one who holds the world in his hands, who actually *does* own it all. Then the things of this life will grow strangely dim in the light of his glory and grace.

*You, Lord, are all I have, and you give me all I need. My future is in your hands. Amen.*

*Plan: Make a schedule for downsizing the mountain of stuff you have. You'll be happier when it's a smaller hill!*

*Read: Ps 24:1-6; Mk 8:34-38*

*Don Hoeferkamp*

Thursday, July 12, 2012

# Hair Care

*Even the very hairs of your head are all numbered.  
So don't be afraid.*

*Mt 10:30-31*

Hair often falls out as we get older, and we may begin to feel we don't amount to much anymore. But God cares for us—even our hair! Isaiah wrote, “Even to your old age and gray hairs I am he ... who will sustain you ... I will carry you ... I will rescue you” (Is 46:4). God cares about old people, and he gives us important work to do right up to the day we die.

Think about two people named Moses: Anna Mary Robertson Moses, known as Grandma Moses, began painting at 80, leaving a legacy of art before she died at 101. Then there is the Moses of the Bible. God called him to lead a nation at 80, which he reluctantly did until he died at 120. We may not be able to paint or lead nations. What can we do? We can pray for others. We can cheer up others. We can live trusting always in the Rock of the aged!

*Dear Lord, my Rock, give me strength to bear fruit, to be helpful and caring even in old age. In Jesus' name. Amen.*

*Smile: Smile at everyone you meet to day. Think words of blessing as you greet each one.*

*Read: Ps 92*

*Eldor Kaiser*

Friday, July 13, 2012

# Let's Dance

*You have turned for me my mourning into dancing.*

*Ps 30:11*

While attending a wedding reception, I had the privilege of seeing one of the most beautiful dances. The host invited the grandparents of the bride to lead a special dance. Grandfather slowly stood, offered his hand to his bride of more than 50 years and escorted her to the floor. When the music started, they gazed into each other's eyes and danced like no one else was there.

The bride and groom told me earlier this was going to happen. As they celebrated the start of their marriage, they wanted to honor this couple who had been for them an example of a lifetime of love and commitment. In that moment of celebration, grandmother and grandfather were doing just that. To the outside observer it might have looked like shuffling, but to the rest it was a testimony, a prayer and a beautiful dance.

*O God, you turn my mourning into dancing. May my feet always offer you praise. Amen.*

*Dance: Find a lonely place, turn up the music and dance.*

*Read: Ps 30*

*Joe Iovino*

Saturday, July 14, 2012

# Spiritual Healing

*Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. I have not come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance.*

*Lk 5:31-32*

When the conversation gets around to the “good old days,” we like to recall that doctors actually made house calls. Today we’re lucky to get an appointment, no matter how sick we might be.

In the Gospel story above, Jesus says that just as doctors are for sick people, so he is for us who are spiritually sick. And just as we will go to any lengths to get to a doctor when we’re hurting, so should we get ourselves to Jesus for spiritual healing. He is always available and invites us to make as many “office visits” as we want and need.

*Jesus, I believe that you are my spiritual healer. Give me deeper faith that I might call on you often throughout my day. Amen.*

*Seek: Just as you seek a doctor when you’re sick, seek the healing touch of Jesus often through your day.*

*Read: Lk 5:27-32; Ps 23*

*Gwen Costello*

Sunday, July 15, 2012

# “Jolts of Hope”

*For God alone, O my soul, wait in silence, for my hope is from him.*

*Ps 62:5*

Time offers us insight. The saying “Hindsight is 20/20” is common. But hindsight also brings us foresight. We come to know what legwork we can do. We come to understand just how limited we are and how limitless God is. We turn to God more and more. God is our refuge.

God is our refuge, our salvation and the source of our greatest peace. Some moments of peace and hope are so powerful we remember them forever. But each day God offers us little “jolts of hope.” Maybe a friend drops by, our pet hops in our lap offering affection or a grandchild texts us. Time and experience have shown us just how close God is, offering us the hope that sustains our peace. It’s ours for the taking.

*Father, I appreciate the hope and peace you offer me. In Jesus’ name, I give thanks. Amen.*

*Talk: Talk about the hope of Christ with a new Christian today. Notice the jolt?*

*Read: Ps 121; Mk 10:46-52; Col 1:21-23*

*K. S. Wuertz*

Monday, July 16, 2012

# Just Be Quiet

*Be still, and know that I am God.*

Ps 46:10

A week with grandchildren reminded me how valuable “quiet time” can be. Whether eight months, eight years or eighty, we all need moments of serenity and peace. It’s a time for reading, reflection and rest in the middle of a busy day.

Jesus knew the value of time alone with the Father. “Early in the morning ... Jesus got up ... and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed” (Mk 1:35). He reconnected with the Father and his mission on earth. He was strengthened for the task ahead.

Quiet solitude for prayer and reflection does the same for us. We need it to come clean with God, acknowledging our sin. We need it to hear the encouragement and redirection offered in his Word. It fills us with his love and forgiveness. And when we are too upset to form the words, the Spirit intercedes and quiets our fears. Take some time to be quiet with the Lord today. You’ll be glad you did.

*Thank you, Father, for whispering your truth when I am quiet and still. Amen.*

*Meet: Meet with the Lord in silence and solitude every day this week.*

*Read: Mk 1:35*

Sharolyn Sander

Tuesday, July 17, 2012

# Wait for the Lord!

*They who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength ... they shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint.*

Is 40:31

Her long hair pulled back and iPod strapped to her arm, the young jogger easily passed me as I walked for daily exercise on a neighborhood street. “I used to do that,” I mused, “when I was younger and more agile.”

Remember when we were found running through life, where schedules, demands and expectations were of top priority, and we were exhausted at day’s end? As we age, running can become more like walking through life, when we pause and reflect not only upon where we have been in our lives, but where we are going. With more time on our hands, we wonder what God wants us to be and be about and, embraced with his grace, we may reflect his presence through our lives and living.

*O Lord, in the midst of my waiting and wondering, give me not only divine direction but the assurance that you are always before me. Amen.*

*Encourage:* Encourage younger persons to wait for the Lord’s guidance and direction in their lives.

*Read:* 1 Cor 9:24-26; Heb 12:1-2

Steve Albers

Wednesday, July 18, 2012

# Party with Angels

*Keep on loving one another as brothers and sisters. Do not forget to show hospitality to strangers, for by so doing some people have shown hospitality to angels without knowing it.*

*Heb 13:1-2*

As we get older, we are often thrown in with new people. Becoming accustomed to strangers when we dearly miss departed loved ones can be a challenge. Newcomers may display cultural differences that challenge our ideas of the right way to think or act. If your life has changed to a new community setting, you may be challenged to see Jesus in new acquaintances, much less love them like brothers. Yet by encouraging others to tell their life stories and patiently listening, we may find it natural to be kind to them.

Maybe we'll find that they resemble angels, messengers of God, helpers in our journey to God.

*Lord, with the help of the Holy Spirit, let me make others' days better by welcoming them and listening to them. Help me be tolerant and flexible with newcomers. Help me welcome strangers as Christ did. Amen.*

*Talk: Today speak to someone whom you've left on the margins of your life and listen to their stories.*

*Read: Heb 13:1-4; Rom 12:10; Jn 3:14-18*

*Patricia Rice*

Thursday, July 19, 2012

# Wag More—Bark Less!

*The people read it and were glad for its encouraging message.*

*Acts 15:31*

Seen any good bumper stickers lately? Some are cute, weird or crass, but some have a clear message from the Lord, like “Wag More—Bark Less.” How clever, how theological, how encouraging! Check out your own life. Have people barked at you more than they’ve wagged their tail to encourage you? How much barking have you done? How much “wagging”? Whether we love dogs or not, one has to admire their ability to teach us how to forgive and move on. What a joy for dog owners to come home and find their pet waiting with joyful jumps and tail a-wagging! If only we could celebrate life that way!

Acts 15:30-35 shares an affirming experience.

Judas and Silas had every right to come to Antioch barking because of the situation there. But instead, through the power of the Spirit, they came encouraging, wagging all the way!

*Lord, help me ease my barking and allow my life to be like a wagging tail, encouraging others. Amen.*

*Today: Be aware of how much you bark and how much you wag. Work at wagging!*

*Read: Acts 15:30-35*

*Rich Bimler*

Friday, July 20, 2012

# One Small Step

*For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.*

*Jn 3:16*

It happened on July 20, 1969. Neil Armstrong was the first man in human history to step out onto the surface of the moon. “That’s one small step for man, one giant leap for mankind.” Armstrong’s words were magnanimous. It was not his achievement alone. It was not even just his nation’s accomplishment. He stepped out in the name of all people, as a citizen of the whole wide world. He did it for everybody!

Remind you of anyone? Yes, Jesus took an even greater step for all mankind when he came into this world. Every step he took was for our salvation. The result? There has never been a greater leap for all mankind. For God so loved the world ...

Let every step you take, every move you make, give praise to the God who saved you.

*Dear Savior, you took the step for me that no one else could take. Thank you for living, dying and rising to give me eternal life. Amen.*

*Step: Take a small step to tell someone about the step Jesus took for you.*

*Read: 1 Tm 1; Ps 90*

*Lonie Eatherton*

Saturday, July 21, 2012

# Keep Learning

*O God, from my youth you have taught me, and I still proclaim your wondrous deeds.*

*Ps 71:17*

Scientific studies tell us to keep our minds active! Doing crossword puzzles, reading and learning new skills keep our minds alert and developing, and help preserve the knowledge and memories of a lifetime. Look for ways to follow that advice by pursuing a lifelong interest or by learning something new.

In Holy Scripture, you can review the old and learn the new. As you hear and read the Word, the Holy Spirit is at work, teaching, leading and revealing anew the mighty works of God. Jesus said of the Scriptures, “It is they that bear witness about me” (Jn 5:39). As you read and listen to God’s Word, you will meet your Savior. Renewed by the Spirit through the Word, in your daily conversations you can practice that lifelong skill of sharing the Good News of your salvation!

*Lord, teach me as I read and hear your Word.  
Amen.*

*Look: Look for a new lesson from the Holy Spirit in the Scriptures.*

*Read: 2 Tm 3:14-17; Jn 20:30-31*

*Carol Geisler*

Sunday, July 22, 2012

# Little Things Mean a Lot

*Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father ...*

*Jas 1:17*

Remember that “golden oldie” song, “Little Things Mean a Lot”? Every once in a while that tune pops up into my mind even though no one has “thrown me a kiss from across the room” recently!

Think of “little things” in life that have meant a lot to you recently—perhaps a phone call, an e-mail, a cup of coffee, the sound of rain, a laughing child, a cute comic strip, a game of cards. It is easy to simply accept these experiences with little thought and miss the connection between them and our gracious and living Lord who continues to gift us with both big things and little things each day.

Take time today to be aware of those “little things.” Thank the Lord for them, for it is not only that they cheer us up, but they remind us of the Giver of all of these gifts! His love for us in Christ is so big, even through these “little things.”

*Lord, thanks for the little things that come to me today. Help me to share them with others. Amen.*

*List: Make a list of little things in your life that really are big things to you!*

*Read: 2 Cor 9:10-15*

*Rich Bimler*

Monday, July 23, 2012

# Moving On

*I am going there to prepare a place for you ...*

*Jn 14:2*

Recently my wife and I moved to a continuing care community. It was time to move on. It was time to live nearer one of our children. It was time to down-size. That was the hard part. Our unit is half the size of our house. Also, here we are surrounded by people of our own generation, unlike our former neighborhood. That also requires adjustment. Now we are busy making this place our home.

Home is not only where the heart is; home is where we live and invite those we love to come to be with us. Jesus says if we love him, God will come and live with us (Jn 14:23). It doesn't have to be a mansion or even a house. God takes very little space!

Jesus says, "In my Father's house are many mansions," and he is going there to prepare a place for us. What a move that will be! We won't have to down-size or even pack any boxes.

*Gracious Savior, show me the way home. You are the Way, and I will follow you. Come here and live with me now. Make my home your home. Amen.*

*Invite: Invite a few dear friends to your home. Sing a hymn together and ask God to bless your home.*

*Read: Jn 14:1-27*

*Eldor Kaiser*

Tuesday, July 24, 2012

# Finding Real Comfort

*As one whom his mother comforts, so I will comfort you.*

*Is 66:13*

The *Peanuts* are memorable characters of many holiday movies. Remember Charlie Brown's friend Linus? There's something Linus always brings with him: his treasured blanket. He uses it as a slingshot, a head wrap and for protection. This frustrates Lucy all too often.

As Christians, we try to comfort ourselves with our own blankets. Sometimes we use a job, family or exercise as comfort instead of going to the Lord. Thankfully, God already has given us the best comfort of all. It is the gift of his love that surrounds us each and every day. He is the true comforter. What an amazing love that is!

*Lord, please comfort me the way you best see fit.  
Amen.*

*Discover: Discover what your comfort blanket is, and ask God to replace it with his comfort instead.*

*Read: Ru 2:13; Ps 119:76*

*Allison Lewis*

Wednesday, July 25, 2012

# Helping Others Hear

*I thank my God always when I remember you in my prayers, because I hear of your love and the faith which you have toward the Lord Jesus.*

*Phlm 1:4-5*

Paul knew that honeyed words help others hear. So when Paul set out to help Philemon do the right thing, he began by “buttering him up.” No lies. Just high-class truth laid on thick.

We can learn a lesson from Paul here. Why not begin conversations with some long overdue compliments? Ask your friend or home-helper about their life and then listen carefully to their answer. Then finish your time together, no matter how brief, with an expression of appreciation for their visit. In her last years my mother ended every phone call with, “Thanks for calling—I really appreciate it.” Guess how often I called?

*We have so much to learn from you, Lord. You are such a patient listener! In Isaiah 65:24 you say, “Before they call I will answer.” Hey! That “they” is me. Thanks. Amen.*

*Decide: Decide to improve your communication skills, starting today.*

*Read: Phlm 1:4-7; Acts 26:2*

*Charles S. Mueller, Sr.*

Thursday, July 26, 2012

# All Is Well!

*I give them eternal life, and they will never perish,  
and no one will snatch them out of my hand.*

*Jn 10:28*

How can anyone these days be so naïve to actually say, “All is well”? Just look at the front page of the newspaper, listen to the lead story on the evening news or simply take a quick review of your own problems, pains and pressures. “All is well?” No way!

But the Lord says, “Yes way!” Or more precisely, “Yahweh!” God indeed has come to us to assure us that we are forgiven and made one with him through the life, suffering, death and resurrection of Jesus! “All is well” because Christ has made us well, in him!

Life doesn’t get much better than that! In the midst of our worries, wars and woes, the Lord comes to us through Word and Sacrament to announce to us daily, “Even though all is not well in our lives and in the world ... all is well, in Christ.”

*Lord, thanks for making all things well, in you, in the midst of the sorrow and the suffering and the sadnesses of life. Teach us to love well and live well, in you. Amen.*

*Bring: Bring God’s Word of wellness to the unwell today, beginning with yourself.*

*Read: Heb 13:5; Phil 4:19*

*Rich Bimler*

Friday, July 27, 2012

# Spirit-filled Dreaming

*I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh; your sons and daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, and your young men shall see visions.*

*Jl 2:28*

Prophecies are what *will* be, at least those rooted in Scripture. Visions are what *should* be, and keep the Church involved in mission and ministry. And dreams are what *could* be.

So it is not coincidental that the prophet Joel referred to “old men” (and women!) dreaming dreams. For the older you get, the more of life you have seen, and your perspective becomes broader. Based on your life experiences, you can see far better than most what the future *could* be, not glorifying the past but using it as a classroom of learning. There is nothing more invigorating for the Church than grey-haired dreamers, individuals who know who they are—members of the Body of Christ—where they’ve been when once they were called the “future of the Church” and where they want the Church to be and go by God’s grace, long after they leave this earth.

*Lord, help me to dream big spiritually. Amen.*

*Share: Share your dreams for the Church and your hope for the future in Christ.*

*Read: Acts 2:14-41*

*Steve Albers*

Saturday, July 28, 2012

# You Belong

*By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.*

*Jn 13:35*

“Sometimes I feel as if I do not belong anywhere!” was something my wife would express, especially when we were moving to another parish. It was never easy to leave people you had grown to love and move to another place where you knew no one.

One of the amazing blessings that impacted us was the way we were immediately enveloped into the warmth and love of each new family when we arrived. We did not have to prove ourselves. Nor were we ever treated as outsiders until someone let us in. We left with tears for those who had been our family, only to find it was still family in the new place.

Such is the mystery and gift of those who belong to Christ. In Jesus, hearts are opened and love responds to welcome with joy all those touched by his love.

*Father, thank you for the gift of family that is ours in Christ and for those who have welcomed me in your name with friendship and fellowship. Amen.*

*Reflect: Think about the moves you have made and the way God’s people have received you. Be a welcomer to those new to your church family.*

*Read: Jn 13:31-35; 1 Jn 4:7-18*

*Lionel Otto*

Sunday, July 29, 2012

# Still at Work

*I will bless the Lord at all times; his praise shall continually be in my mouth.*

*Ps 34:1*

I am what the world might consider old, past my prime and maybe pretty useless to society. That would be a wrong assessment. I may not be the getter I once was, but I am very useful to God. You have heard it said that the only hands God has to do his work are our hands. My hands remain busy—busy touching others to comfort them with God's promises. But most of all, I fold my hands in praise to God and in prayer for others.

As you look at me with my wrinkles and gray hair, you can't see my heart; you can't see God's grace flowing through me. His love continues to allow me to serve him by praising and praying. I may appear useless to some, but I know God continues to use me for his work.

*Holy Spirit, continue to guide me in my prayer life. Amen.*

*Remember: Remember that there are many ways to serve God.*

*Read: 2 Thes 3:5; Ps 89:1*

*Jean Plesko*

Monday, July 30, 2012

# God's Word Runs

... *his word runs swiftly.*

*Ps 147:15*

God's Word runs swiftly. St. Augustine said that God's Word is everywhere at once. It does not move from point A to point B. It "appears" at A *and* at B. Physicists teach that electrons may not travel around the nucleus. They may "appear" at one point, then simply "appear" at another, without traversing the distance in between. If this can happen in nature, why not in the spiritual realm?

God's Word instantly created the universe out of "nothing that can be seen." God's Word is always ready to appear at your side. Jesus is the Word Incarnate. He is so "fast" that he is always with you—Immanuel! God's promise is to be with you. Trust him. Trust God to be as good as his Word.

Are you close to the Lord today? God delights in being with you. Do you need the Lord in a special way today for strength, hope or peace? Look, he is already at your side.

*Thank you, Lord, for your promise to come to me quickly. Come, Lord, come. Amen.*

*Find: Find someone in need and assure them of God's presence.*

*Read: Is 55:8-13*

*Don Schatz*

Tuesday, July 31, 2012

# Not Yet

*Even to your old age I am he ...*

*Is 46:4*

A retired friend of mine just got a job offer. Just when he thought he was “done” and was wondering what he’d do with his life, God called him for a new adventure! I guess the saying is true: “God isn’t finished with me yet.”

Sometimes we reach a point in life where we feel all our work, all our contributions are behind us. We forget God still holds surprises for us, often in a call to new and unexpected service. God even calls us who are “over the hill.” That’s not new. God called Abraham, Moses, Simeon, Anna and many others of advanced age to serve and praise him.

No matter where we are or how old we are, God can still surprise us with a call to work for him. New doors always open when we are open to his will. My friend got a new church to serve. I got a chance to write devotionals. We may not be able to change the world. But we can still change one life—sometimes our own.

*Lord, open my heart to your calling. Amen.*

*Ask: How can God use me?*

*Read: Ps 71:17-21*

*Al Schenk*

Wednesday, August 1, 2012

# Faithful Forever

*The Lord ... remains faithful forever.*

*Ps 146:5-6*

Our Lord is faithful forever, even though our lives may be in turmoil. We may have experienced the loss of a loved one, have a serious illness or have disturbances in our family. At times we may feel lonely and forgotten.

Yet it is well! How can we say that? Because of who we are—children of a compassionate and loving and serving God. He remains faithful forever. He promised to send a Savior to forgive and restore our lives. He kept his promise. Now he promises to be with us to calm a troubled heart. He promises us grace that is sufficient for all the issues of life, peace that surpasses all understanding and strength to cope with daily living. He promises us the gift of eternal life. Clinging to these promises, we find ourselves confessing, “All is well!” After all, the Lord remains faithful forever.

*Heavenly Father, thank you for your never-ending faithful promises. Continue to strengthen our faith in you. In Jesus' name. Amen.*

*Ponder: Focus your attention on the promises of God in the midst of today's happenings.*

*Read: Ps 146*

*Walter M. Schoedel*

Thursday, August 2, 2012

# My Two Cents

*This poor widow has put in more than all those who are contributing to the offering box ... she out of her poverty has put in everything she had ...*

*Mk 12:43-44*

A poor widow drops her offering into one of the large collection jars as she enters the Temple. It was a public display in those days, and some made quite a show of it. In contrast, this widow quietly drops two small, insignificant coins into the treasury. She has little to spare. Jesus, standing nearby, declares to his disciples that she has given more than those who gave larger sums. This is not bad math. Jesus is looking at something else.

There are times when, like that woman, we wonder what we have that is worthy to give. Money is tight on a fixed income. Getting on the floor to play with the grandchildren is not as easy as it used to be. We ask ourselves, "What do I have to offer?" Jesus asks us to offer all we have. No matter how small it looks to us, he can use it for great things.

*God, what I have is yours. May my offerings be used to your glory. Amen.*

*Give: Give your time, your knowledge, whatever you have, to someone today.*

*Read: Mk 12:41-44*

*Joe Iovino*

Friday, August 3, 2012

# Angels

*You will be my witnesses ... to the ends of the earth.*

*Acts 1:8*

Angels are hot right now. They zip around in movies and TV dramas. Angel figurines clutter knick-knack shelves and dashboards. People claim guardian angels do marvelous things. Certainly that is comforting. But we miss the point if we spend our time looking for angels. We might miss the chance to be an angel.

The word *angel* means “messenger.” Most of what the angels do in Scripture is to carry messages—to shepherds, young girls, wise men, prophets—about how human beings are going to connect with God.

We all are angels, and we carry a message—Good News. We tell of God-with-us in Jesus Christ. Hebrews 13:2 tells us that if we fail to practice hospitality we might miss entertaining God’s angel. Even more, if we fail to carry the message, we might miss being God’s angel.

*Lord, make me an “angel” with the message of Good News in Jesus Christ. Amen.*

*Share: Be an angel to someone today. Share a Good News message with them.*

*Read: Heb 13; Acts 1*

*Ted Schroeder*

Saturday, August 4, 2012

# Staying Fresh and Green

*They still bear fruit in old age, they will stay fresh and green, proclaiming, "The Lord is upright; he is my Rock, and there is no wickedness in him."*

*Ps 92:14-15*

Our Boston fern spends the winter indoors. Filtered and artificial light protect it from darkness and cold. Sporadic watering prevents it from drying out. When spring arrives, the fern returns to the outdoors. What a difference! Glorious sunshine warms the plant. Rain quenches the fern's thirst. Before long new green tendrils branch out. The fern enjoys a newfound restoration to its full potential.

Like the fern, we can get dried out, stiff and withered. But if we approach the light of Jesus and bathe in his living water, we can also be restored to what we are meant to be. His Word is a light unto our path and a lamp unto our feet. He bathes us in his living water when we spend time with him in his Word. He makes us into new creatures who can go out into his world and live his Gospel.

*Lord, wash me clean, enlighten me and quench my thirst with your living water so that I can be strengthened to serve you all my days. Amen.*

*Water: Water some plants today.*

*Read: Jn 4:1-26; Ps 1*

*Alice J. Schuman*

Sunday, August 5, 2012

# Living “Whole-ly”

*You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength. The second is this: You shall love your neighbor as yourself.*

*Mk 12:30-31*

“Pastor, I’d like to bring communion to some of the older people,” said a member of our church, an incredible offer knowing she is 93.

This woman loves the Lord with her heart and her soul and her mind and all her strength. She eats well and moderately; she is moderately physically active; she reads voraciously, and she stays connected with family and friends.

Not everyone has the physical ability to do all those things, but the key for her and for us is her “ATTITUDE” of loving God and living to the fullness of her capabilities. A balance of faith, self-care and connection make for faithful living in the ways we show love for God and others.

*O God, show me the way to love: love for you and love for others. Amen.*

*Balance: Try for a life balance of prayer, reading and interacting with others each day.*

*Read: Dt 6:1-19; Mk 12:28-34*

*Linda Seyenkulo*

Monday, August 6, 2012

# Daily Inventory

*And he appointed twelve (whom he also named apostles) so that they might be with him ...*

Mk 3:14

What does Jesus require of us? Sometimes the way we hear the Christian faith, we hear all kinds of expectations. We get focused on our obedience.

When Jesus first called his disciples, he gave them one requirement. He said, "I have called you to be with me." First and only, that was all that Jesus asked. He had chosen and called them into the closest of relationships with himself. All he asked was that they would remain in that relationship with him. Whatever followed would grow out of that relationship.

That is truly the greatest blessing of all that we have as followers of Jesus. The only inventory that we ever need to take is to check out each day how we are being with Jesus, as he comes to us in his Word, the sacraments and the fellowship of his people.

*Lord Jesus, thank you for the life that you have given me. You are with me everywhere I go. Help me to celebrate every day. Amen.*

*Celebrate: Thankfully celebrate that you live each day with Jesus because he is always with you.*

*Read: Mk 3:13-19; Jn 15:1-8*

Lionel Otto

Tuesday, August 7, 2012

# A Hearing Aid

*Jesus put his fingers into the man's ears ... the man's ears were opened.*

Mk 7:33, 35

“What did you say, I didn’t hear you?”

Hearing loss is such a difficult, life-changing ailment. A person becomes isolated. Sound becomes garbled. Words become noise. Age can dull the sense of hearing.

Many older adults experience this loss. Life becomes confusing. Yes, hearing aids can help. They have become smaller (others don’t notice) and more efficient (yet very costly). But they can’t fix it.

Jesus did restore the sense of hearing to a man who was deaf. He was not an audiologist. He was, he is, God in the flesh, and he did a miracle. Mark wrote: “People were overwhelmed with amazement.”

Jesus could do it again. Pray for healing. And if not now, Jesus will do it again on the day of resurrection! You will hear him when he returns!

*Lord, if I hear less, may I hear you more. Amen.*

*Be Patient: Accept the hard of hearing.*

*Read: Is 35:1-6; Mt 11:1-6*

*Randy Shields*

Wednesday, August 8, 2012

# Your Gifts to Serve

*As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another ...*

1 Pt 4:10

The early Christians shared their possessions. They were one in heart and soul, which is a way to say they were there for each other. They enjoyed serving one another. Peter, who was among them then, later continued to encourage such service.

People who are retired might think that the only gifts they have are now in storage since the primary utilization of them has come to an end. But then it happens! “Grandpa, will you teach me how to drive a stick shift?” asks a grandson. And it’s fun to watch stuttering starts evolve into smooth clutch work. A neighbor asks, “Would you show me how to crochet?” And the resulting handiwork is beautiful. What you have because you’re older is a reservoir of knowledge and abilities and time that you can put to use with the strength that God supplies, so that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ.

*Jesus, help me daily to use my gifts to serve others to the glory and praise of your holy name. Amen.*

*Do: Be open to using your gifts. If you’re able, volunteer at a social agency that needs your abilities.*

*Read: 1 Pt 4:7-11; Acts 4:32-35*

Luther Strasen

Thursday, August 9, 2012

# Greatness of the Past

*You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.*

1 Pt 2:9

It happened in July 1911. The ancient settlement of the Incas at Machu Picchu was discovered in Peru. The deserted structures revealed that an advanced civilization once thrived there. The Spanish explorers virtually wiped out the Incas in the sixteenth century. The greatness of the past was lost forever.

The greatness of the past still lives in our memories. You may remember some hard times. But you also remember the faith and sacrifice of your parents, the devotion of loved ones, the courage of faithful souls who trusted in God. The greatness of the Incas is found today only in the history books. But the greatness of God's people lives on in lives redeemed by Christ and dedicated to sharing his Gospel of life.

*Dear God, thank you for making us your people both then and now. Give us eyes to see the great things you do in our lives each day. Amen.*

*Tell: Tell someone in a younger generation that Jesus died for them.*

*Read: 1 Pt 2; Heb 12*

Lonie Eatherton

Friday, August 10, 2012

# Rich in Kindness

*Return to the Lord your God, for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger and rich in kindness.*

*Jl 2:13*

My grandmother was “slow to anger and rich in kindness.” She had sixty-four grandchildren, and I’m sure (as my mother used to say) we got on her nerves. Yet we knew that she loved us and even when she scolded us, it was always with kindness.

Why do we so easily forget that God loves us more than the most loving of grandparents? Perhaps because we forget to set aside time for prayer, one of the best ways possible to talk to and *experience* God. Perhaps, too, it is because we forget that when we receive kindnesses from our sons and daughters and grandchildren, God is loving us through them.

*Help me focus today on your love for me, O God, and help me to accept your love through the kindnesses of my children and family. Amen.*

*Try: Try to be loving and patient with all you meet in the course of this day—to be “slow to anger and rich in kindness.”*

*Read: Eph 3:14-21*

*Gwen Costello*

Saturday, August 11, 2012

# Follow the Leader

*For though you have countless guides in Christ, you do not have many fathers. For I became your father in Christ Jesus through the gospel. I urge you, then, be imitators of me.*

1 Cor 4:15-16

He moved a little slower than he did when he was younger. Getting around required the use of a cane. Nevertheless, he led me. He helped lead me from childhood into adulthood. He guided me in paths of righteousness. He taught me what it meant to be a lifelong follower of Christ.

Leaders are not always found in the front of the pack. Spiritual leaders, like the one from my childhood, are worthy of following because of the years they have spent following Christ. Wisdom takes years of preparation; God has prepared you to share your spiritual wisdom with a child in the faith. You can show others that tired bodies house a faith that is wide awake.

*Gracious God, you have trained me through many spiritual leaders. Help me to patiently train children in the faith. Amen.*

*Write:* Write down the name of someone who would benefit from a spiritual mother or father.

*Read:* 2 Tm 1:3-7

A. Trevor Sutton

Sunday, August 12, 2012

# Leading the Way

*Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God according to the promise of the life that is in Christ Jesus, to Timothy, my beloved child.*

2 Tm 1:1-2

As a youth, I looked to parents, teachers, coaches, youth leaders and other adults as examples of behavior and for encouragement. Starting my career, I sought out those who had been successful in my field to learn from them. Sometimes I engaged them, others I never met, but through them all I learned tricks of the trade. I am thankful for all those who poured themselves into me, shaping me into who I am.

Timothy was blessed to have Paul as a guide. Paul, who had many other things to do, took time to mentor his protégé. I used to be Timothy. Today I am more like Paul, and like him I need to carve out time to help someone else. Some are watching, even when we don't know it. Others long to learn from our experience. Our job now is to make ourselves available to encourage someone else in the way of Jesus.

*God, I make myself available to encourage someone else to walk in your way. Use me. Amen.*

*Reflect: Pause to remember all those who mentored you and those who may be watching you.*

*Read: 2 Tm 1:1-7*

Joe Iovino

Monday, August 13, 2012

# Look at the Moon

*The Lord is God, and he has made his light shine on us.*

*Ps 118:27*

There is a song that goes: “I see the moon and the moon sees me, and the moon sees someone I want to see.” The moon has no light of its own, only that which it receives from the sun. Even when we cannot see the sun, it sends us light by way of the moon.

In some ways, we are like the moon. We receive our light of goodness and love from Christ, the Sun of Righteousness, and reflect that goodness to others. The righteousness of God is Christ making things right between himself and us through his death and resurrection. As we trust in the righteousness of God that Christ gives us, Christ fashions us to be lights in this world. But we are more than moons that reflect light. Jesus says, “You ARE the light” because Christ lives in us and shines through us into the lives of those we touch with love and care. So we look beyond the moon to God and pray:

*God bless the moon, and God bless me, and God bless the someone I want to see. Amen.*

*Reflect: Who is that person you want to see? How can you shine joy into his or her life?*

*Read: Mt 5:13-16*

*Leo Symmank*

Tuesday, August 14, 2012

# If I've Said It Once

*To write the same things to you is no trouble to me and is safe for you.*

*Phil 3:1*

“If I’ve said it once, I’ve said it a thousand times.” Have you ever said that? Maybe you’ve only said it a hundred times, but the phrase may find its way now and then into a frustrated reminder for children or into a heated discussion. Sometimes we repeat ourselves because we like to tell a favorite joke again or recall a treasured story. We may repeat ourselves due to memory lapses as friends and relatives listen patiently and silently number the times they’ve heard it all before.

The apostle Paul had no trouble repeating himself. Over and over again, Paul presented the saving story of Christ crucified. He couldn’t stop telling it and his listeners needed to hear it!

*Lord Jesus, if I’m going to repeat anything, let me repeat the saving story of your love. Amen.*

*Tell: Tell someone the story of Jesus—again.*

*Read: Phil 3:1-21*

*Carol Geisler*

Wednesday, August 15, 2012

# Thanks-Living

*I will praise you, Lord my God, with all my heart ...  
you have delivered me from the depths ...*

*Ps 86:12, 13*

“Turbulence ahead. Be sure your seat belts are fastened,” the copilot warned, as we flew toward Hong Kong. Turbulence? This bit-of-bounce was nothing compared to what awaited me in Hong Kong! I was coming to have my yearly check-up, full of hope. It was especially poignant because just ten months earlier I had a lumpectomy in Hong Kong, followed by six weeks of radiation for breast cancer.

So often, we hear that people “know” when something isn’t right. As I waited, my senses went into hyper-drive, and I quietly prayed for strength to accept the results. I had a double mastectomy.

Seven years have passed, cancer-free. Daily, as I look in the mirror, I am reminded that I am here for God’s purpose. It’s through my *thanks-living* in not-so-turbulent as well as turbulent times that he is glorified!

*Lord, bless me to continually be a blessing to others through my thanks-living. Amen.*

*Thank: Thank God for your life today.*

*Read: Ps 23; Ps 86:1-7, 11-13; Ps 126*

*Louise Schini Weber*

Thursday, August 16, 2012

# Time in a Bottle?

*Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death?*

Rom 6:3

Jim Croce had an idea to talk about time in a bottle, yet also acknowledged that time cannot be completely captured. The philosopher Heraclitus said, “You cannot step in the same river twice.” We can accept that statement because time is always moving forward, according to our human state. But time moves in many directions when we consider the parameters of God. If we look at our baptism, we see that it covers things of the past, present and future.

Our baptism daily washes us as much as when we were first washed of our sins—and it will continue to be that way into life everlasting. So you *can* say that “you can step into the same river twice,” and that this river is a river that cannot be captured in a bottle of time—but in an eternity of infinite time that is defined and molded by a merciful God.

*Wash me with your mercy, O God, and renew me with the waters of my baptism. Amen.*

*Recall: Recall your baptism—who was there, who spoke on your behalf—and revel in God’s grace.*

*Read: Mt 28:16-20*

Cory A. Wielert

Friday, August 17, 2012

# Rest Assured

*I know that my redeemer lives, and that in the end he will stand on the earth.*

*Job 19:25*

There is comfort in holding a strong conviction. It gives us a solid foundation from which we build our relationship with God and others. Even in crisis, in his own “desert,” Job didn’t doubt God’s existence.

My family used to marvel at my great Aunt Red’s faith. She was unflappable. In the midst of the deepest crisis or during hard times, she would keep her routine—day and night. “Why should I stay awake? The Lord’s up,” she would say, and then she would go on to bed and sleep!

We can be sure of God and sure of the end result. We just don’t know how it all works out from here to there—that’s God’s department. God’s got it. So rejoice! The Lord is with us and the results are in.

*I am thankful, Lord, for the gift of comfort through conviction. Amen.*

*Repeat: Repeat Aunt Red’s conviction before bed tonight: “Why should I stay awake? The Lord’s up.”*

*Read: Ps 27; Mt 11:28-30*

*K. S. Wuertz*

Saturday, August 18, 2012

# Letters

*And you show that you are a letter from Christ delivered by us, written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God.*

2 Cor 3:3

The envelope retrieved from my seminary mailbox held a note, “Tommy, Proverbs 25:25 ... Love, Dad,” and a \$30 check! The passage read, “Like cold water to a thirsty soul, so is good news from a far country.” Ouch! I quickly wrote thanks to Dad and Mom!

In a Twitter-tweeting world, letters are rare, and even e-mails are not the same. St. Paul reminds us, “You are a letter from Christ.” God has “written” to you in Jesus, the Word made Flesh. His personal note to you is one of forgiveness, acceptance and eternal love. Now it is your turn to write. How can you encourage a despairing friend or bring light to another’s darkness? Remembering Paul’s encouragement, get to it! Your words will be like cold water to a thirsting soul!

*Lord Jesus, help me offer to others the refreshment of forgiveness and hope in your name. Amen.*

*Send: Send a note to that person whom you know is thirsting for words from you!*

*Read: Jer 31:31-34*

Tom Zehnder

Sunday, August 19, 2012

# Trade Roles with Me?

*Yes, we are of good courage, and we would rather be away from the body and at home with the Lord. So whether we are at home or away, we make it our aim to please him.*

2 Cor 5:8-9

When the words *role reversal* enter our ears, we may have mixed feelings. My eleven-year-old granddaughter, Myia, was showing me her flute: “Grandpa, there are three parts to a flute, so it is easier to clean inside.” She cleaned, then reassembled it, pressed some buttons and made clear sounds.

As Myia talked, I noticed her voice held an adult-like lilt. We seemed more like peers, and I was taking my turn as a learner. Children and grandchildren are honored when we ask for their kind help. They receive joy for the chance to share their strength and their words.

*Heavenly Father, grace our family with humble love, especially when we first begin to reverse roles across generations. In Jesus, the greatest Role-Reverser of all time. Amen.*

*Acknowledge: Tell God how grateful you are for your kids and grandkids. Tell them so.*

*Read: Eccl 12:1-7 (Solomon, on how it feels when our physical prowess wanes)*

Deane Schuessler

Monday, August 20, 2012

# Inheritance

*He has caused us to be born again ... to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled and unfading, kept in heaven for you ...*

*1 Pt 1:3-4*

Financial matters consume a lot of time. Tax forms, retirement documents and insurance papers pile up. You may be concerned about caring for family members now and providing for them after the Lord has called you home. It's a source of anxiety. What might happen to a carefully saved inheritance? Will fees be raised? Will banks fail?

You may worry about earthly finances, but there is no need for concern about your heavenly inheritance. By God's mercy, through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, you have the rich inheritance of eternal life. It is "imperishable, undefiled and unfading, kept in heaven for you" and for all who trust in Christ as Lord and Savior. There is no need to worry. Your inheritance is guaranteed.

*Lord Jesus, thank you for winning the inheritance of eternal life for me. Amen.*

*Tell: As you work with earthly finances, tell someone about your heavenly inheritance.*

*Read: 1 Pt 1:3-5; Eph 1:11-14*

*Carol Geisler*

Tuesday, August 21, 2012

# Give Me a Sign

*... they asked him to show them a sign from heaven.*

*Mt 16:1*

Sometimes I wish I had an owner's manual for my life. When my DVD player isn't working, I grab the manual, find the problem in the index and turn to the proper page for the fix. When my computer malfunctions, I call tech support, explain my problem and get a solution. When I am trying to find my way around a new place, I look for signs telling me where to go. When I am awakened at 2 o'clock in the morning with a thought or worry that won't go away, I wish I had a resource like that.

Like the Pharisees and Sadducees in today's text, I often want a sign—a voice from heaven or a burning bush. God's voice is often more subtle. He speaks to us through the words of a friend, the feelings of our hearts or by focusing our thoughts. As Jesus told them, shifting our focus toward God will help us see and hear his leading.

*God, help me to see you at work in my life throughout my day. Amen.*

*Listen: Take a moment today to sit in silence listening for God.*

*Read: Mt 16:1-4*

*Joe Iovino*

Wednesday, August 22, 2012

# Divine Painkillers

*Death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away.*

*Rev 21:4*

Tramadol. Advil. Ibuprofen. Codeine. Morphine. Sound familiar? If you have pain—lots of pain—you want to kill it. And painkillers do help for a while. But sooner or later the pain comes back. And then you want to kill it some more.

There are divine painkillers, too, both temporary and permanent. The temporary ones tend to give mental relief. It can be tremendously comforting to hear Jesus tell us: “Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest” (Mt 11:28). Of greater solace and hope is the permanent solution. In heaven there will be no more pain or crying at all (or death either). This is God’s promise that assures both physical and mental healing from suffering. It’s available to anyone who comes to the Lord in firm faith. Thank God there is freedom from pain forever!

*Hear me when I cry out, O Lord. Rescue me from all misery and suffering. Amen.*

*Do: Offer divine comfort to someone who is suffering from pain, physical or mental.*

*Read: Rev 21:1-7; Mt 11:25-31*

*Don Hoeferkamp*

Thursday, August 23, 2012

# Thankfulness

*Give thanks to him and praise his name.*

*Ps 100:4*

A mother got a call from school that her son was ill. She tried to leave, but she had locked her keys in the car! She spotted an old coat hanger. “I don’t know how to do this,” she said and silently prayed to God. A rough-looking man pulled up on a motorcycle. “Do you know how to do this?” she cried. “Sure,” he replied, and soon the car was open. She hugged him and said, “You are such a nice man!” He replied, “I’m not ‘nice.’ I just got out of prison for car theft.” She threw her hands in the air and shouted, “Thank you, God. You sent me a professional!”

God is our help in every trouble. We turn to God in every need and give thanks for his goodness. We are grateful when we recognize how God blesses us, when we recognize that the people around us are God’s blessing. Thank God for sending people who help in times of need!

*Gracious God, thank you for putting caring people in our lives. Help us to see their goodness, and in them, to see your goodness. Amen.*

*Think: Who has been helpful to you? Say thank you or write a note to them.*

*Read: 1 Thes 5:15-19; Ps 100*

*Eldor Kaiser*

Friday, August 24, 2012

# Remember

*I do not cease to give thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers.*

*Eph 1:16*

When Jamie was six and visiting Grandpa, as he pulled the covers around her and kissed her forehead each night, she caught his hand. “Grandpa,” she said, “when you are old, will you remember me?”

“Yes, Jamie,” he said. “I will remember you. Nothing could make me forget you. You are God’s gift to me. You are caught in my heart forever.”

The years passed. Jamie got busy with her life. There seemed to be less and less time to visit Grandpa. Then the doctor said that the old man could not last much longer.

Jamie came. She tucked him in and fluffed the pillow. He caught her hand. “Jamie,” he said in a whisper, “when I am gone, will you remember me?”

“Yes, Grandpa,” she said. “I will remember you. Nothing could make me forget you. You have been God’s gift to me. You are caught in my heart forever.”

*Lord, help me remember those who remember me and give thanks for them. Amen.*

*Remember: Let someone who is lonely know that you will remember them in prayer and in your heart.*

*Read: Phil 1; Eph 1*

*Ted Schroeder*

Saturday, August 25, 2012

# The Fans in the Stands

*Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses ... let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus ...*

*Heb 12:1-2*

In our senior years life turns from a sprint to a marathon. Out of breath spiritually, we may wonder why we should make the effort to stay attentive and fit. That's when we need a boost from supporters.

Here in Kansas City, the Chiefs play football at Arrowhead Stadium, reputed to be the loudest stadium in the country. Chiefs' players frequently express gratitude for the fan support and credit the crowd with assisting in victory.

As a Christian, you, too, have fans in the stands cheering their hearts out for you. They know that the race is not only winnable, but is already won for you by Jesus. They watch in wonder as you run your course, not because they don't know the outcome but because they do. You are a winner.

*Bless you, Jesus, for all the saints beside you whose lives cheer me on in my race here below. Amen.*

*Imagine: Scan the grandstands of your faith forebears and see the cheering relatives, teachers, mentors and friends who have gone before you.*

**Read:** *Heb 11:1—12:2*

*Mike May*

Sunday, August 26, 2012

# Who Do You Believe?

*But the centurion paid more attention to the pilot and to the owner of the ship than to what Paul said.*

*Acts 27:11*

Paul, a prisoner on a ship that was trying to get to Rome before the winter, advised his centurion captor, “We’d better stay put until spring.” The owners of the ship and its captain said, “We know more about sailing. We can make it.” Did they make it? Not even close. The ship was lost in the stormy seas, and everyone on board very nearly lost their lives. That’s the way it goes when good guidance is ignored, especially if it comes from our Father.

Some people think the Ten Commandments are just ten opinions. Or they believe the Golden Rule doesn’t apply to them. Or that John 3:16 can’t be believed because it ignores all they’ve done that makes them worthy before man—and even God. So they set sail doomed from the start.

So, who are you going to believe? Know-it-alls or One who knows it all?

*Dear Lord, I believe. Help me with my unbelief.  
Amen.*

*Think: What advice from the Word have you been ignoring because it doesn’t agree with your opinions?*

*Read: Ps 119:105; Jn 3:16*

*Charles S. Mueller, Sr.*

Monday, August 27, 2012

# A Child Shall Lead

*Let the children come to me; do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of God.*

Mk 10:14

Calen is a gift. His unbridled two-year-old joy around adults is contagious. One of his favorite games is to throw his hands upward with an energetic smile and shout, “Yea!” Recently his 41-year-old daddy went home to heaven. In a packed auditorium as fellow teachers and coaches, family and friends sang through tears and grief, this young Downs Syndrome prophet led his cheer. Reluctant hands and struggling hearts followed his lead in a moment of grace.

Let the little children continue to cheer your soul as you remain young at heart in the aging adventure.

*Jesus, open our eyes and hearts as we become little children of yours once again and find the light of grace for the dark days of life. Amen.*

*Do: Let go of some adult inhibition today and become giddy with child-like joy.*

*Read: Ps 98*

Rodney Otto

Tuesday, August 28, 2012

# Feed My Sheep

*A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.*

*Jn 13:34-35*

Remember that old song, “Don’t Get Around Much Anymore”? That’s me, as I don’t travel much and stay mostly in the area in which I live. Jesus’ disciples were told to go out into the world to tell of Jesus and his love. Going out into the world is not always an option for me.

My world is visiting the people who live in my building, the apartment next door or the one down the hallway. I can show Jesus’ love and tell of his sacrifice even if my “out into the world” is just a few feet away. His love is not limited by near or far boundaries and neither is my discipleship or yours. To feed his sheep means wherever you are is the place he wants you to be, for his sheep are everywhere.

*Dear Lord, help to feed your sheep wherever they are. Amen.*

*Talk: Talk to someone today and share Jesus’ love.*

*Read: Jn 21:15-19; Is 40:11*

*Jean Plesko*

Wednesday, August 29, 2012

# Share Wine, not Whines

*(At) a wedding at Cana in Galilee ... Jesus said to the servants, "Fill the jars with water." And they filled them up to the brim. And he said to them, "Now draw some out and take it to the master of the feast." ... the master of the feast tasted the water now become wine.*

*Jn 2:1, 7-9*

Just uphill from Nazareth, Jesus and his mother joined friends for a wedding. Jesus didn't spend time there chastising sinners whose sins disrespected his Father. When the hosts ran out of wine, Jesus extended the joyful celebration by turning water into wine.

As we age, the opportunities to celebrate might offer chances to vent about our new challenges. We whine. Updating family and friends on changes in our health, transportation, housing or financial needs is vital, of course. But give praise for blessings at celebrations and wait to discuss challenging issues away from joyful celebrations. When it's time to celebrate, be joyful!

*Lord Jesus, help us to celebrate each day with you!  
Amen.*

*Expand: Expand the joy at celebrations. Humbly eliminate your whines.*

*Read: Jn 2:1-11; Mt 7:3-4; Ps 122:8-9; Ps 150*

*Patricia Rice*

Thursday, August 30, 2012

# No Headlamps Needed

*The city has no need of sun or moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and its lamp is the Lamb.*

Rev 21:23

I have a headlamp. I read with it at night. It illuminates just the book. It does not illuminate all the darkness.

In John's vision of heaven, there is no need for headlamps, moon or sun! God is the light. All human "lights" are darkness compared to the light that is God. Remember, this is not a picture of the future. This is a picture of the present. Heaven is, has always been, just this way.

We too easily forget that. We live as though this life alone is what it's all about. *This life* is actually "practice" for Real Life—lived out in the gloriously unveiled presence of God. Enjoy all the various lights today and tonight! Let them remind you of John's vision of the Lord, illuminating his whole creation.

*Lord, may sun, moon and stars and all the man-made lights of my world remind me of you today. Light up my life. Amen.*

*Thank: When you turn on a light, give thanks for the light of Christ!*

*Read: Ps 36:7-9*

Don Schatz

Friday, August 31, 2012

# No Need to Forget!

*My Father's house has many rooms; if that were not so, would I have told you that I am going there to prepare a place for you?*

*Jn 14:2*

Why is it that so many older adults, even Christians, do not want to talk about death? We all die, and yet we act and live as if we will not die.

Have we forgotten that on the cross Jesus died to defeat death and Satan? Because of his victory on Easter morning, death for the Christian becomes a doorway into eternal life with Jesus. Have we forgotten that Jesus is preparing a place in heaven for us? When we die, he is the One who has paid the price for our entrance. Just think—he will be there to welcome us.

Now is the time to confess with the apostle Paul, “for to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain” (Phil 1:21). Paul also writes, “We know that when these bodies of ours are taken down like tents and folded away, they will be replaced by resurrected bodies in heaven—God-made, not handmade” (2 Cor 5:1-2).

*Jesus, help me face death with confidence. Amen.*

*Think: Think of someone who is facing death.  
Share the Good News with him or her.*

*Read: 2 Cor 5:1-8; Jn 14:1-4*

*Walter M. Schoedel*

Saturday, September 1, 2012

# What's in a Name?

*I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church ...*

Mt 16:18

There is an outside chance that the name “rock” for Peter was meant to be humorous. If Peter was anything (at least before Pentecost) a rock he was not. Volatile, impulsive, boastful and often weak, he blundered his way through his disciple years.

But Jesus is patient with him. God is like that. He continually chooses the unlikely and ill equipped and “names” them into an expectation of greatness.

I wonder what name God has for us. We often operate with the lowest expectation of ourselves when it comes to discipleship. We would probably name ourselves “trying” or “doing my best.”

I wonder what Jesus might name us: Challenger? Proclaimer? Comforter? Witness? Martyr? Maybe we ought to try a couple of those names on. You never know, the Spirit might push us a little so they just fit.

*Lord, help us to live as though we were named “follower of Jesus.” Amen.*

*Research: Look up the meaning of your given name. How does it fit you? If you could name yourself, what would that name be?*

*Read: Mt 16:13-28*

*Ted Schroeder*

Sunday, September 2, 2012

# Spirit and Truth

*God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth.*

*Jn 4:24*

A disgruntled Elsa left church. The “young folks” had taken over Sunday worship. There had been no organ music, no familiar hymns. She felt like she had not worshipped. Her Sunday was ruined.

As life progresses, we hold on to those things that are familiar, especially those things that first connected us to God. That was the case with the Jews and the Samaritans and worship. They were tied into particular worship places. It was far more than just a preferred place. It was “the” place to worship. For us our worship “preferences” are more than just preferences, they are what have tied us to God.

Jesus comes to us, and to the Jews and Samaritans, with the news that it isn't place or preference that brings God closer. It is worshipping in spirit and truth, which comes in a variety of shapes and styles.

*Fill my heart and soul with the joy of worship, O God. Amen.*

*Open: Open your heart to enjoy one new way of worshipping God.*

*Read: Jn 4:7-26*

*Linda Seyenkulo*

Monday, September 3, 2012

# How Sweet It Is!

*How sweet are your words ...*

*Ps 119:103*

It was comedian Jackie Gleason's trademark expression: "How sweet it is!" From a dish of ice cream to that birth announcement of a new granddaughter or great-grandson, there are all kinds of sweet moments in life. Taste buds and emotions remind us of Gleason's words.

But a sweet taste (sugar high) or a sweet feeling (warm, fuzzy moment) slips away quickly. Our spirit cries out for more, and the Word of the Lord gives us more.

When we confront the sour-full and sorrow-full experiences of life, we need comfort and peace and hope. Scripture connects us to the voice and the power and the Spirit of God—how sweet it is!

And the Word is Jesus—God with skin on. He knows all about us and loves us just the same! His death forgives. In his resurrection we live—how sweet it is! How sweet HE is!

*Sweet Jesus, let me savor your Word. Amen.*

*Taste: Eat something sweet today.*

*Read: Jn 20:30-31; Prv 16:24*

*Randy Shields*

Tuesday, September 4, 2012

# Free to be Patient

*But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self control; against such things there is no law.*

*Gal 5:22-23*

Another “buffalo jam”! Cars park on both sides of the highway that crosses Yellowstone Park to take pictures of bison, so others stop right on the highway. Those who have been in the park for days get impatient at the delays. Patience is not an easy virtue.

St. Paul tells us patience is a fruit of the Spirit, and that there is no law against it. Nothing should stop us from being too patient. But we stop ourselves when others stop us from having our way. We even get impatient with God when we think he isn't doing what we want. But the Holy Spirit continues to endow us with his power to be patient as we hear God's Word and live according to it. Daily look in faith to Jesus who went to the cross to be our Savior. He is an example of unlimited patience. His forgiveness renews. And you're freed to be patient.

*I wait for you, O Lord, and in your Word I put my hope. Amen.*

*Do: Be patient with others, taking into consideration their needs. Forgive them their impatience.*

*Read: Gal 5:22-26; Ps 130*

*Luther Strasen*

Wednesday, September 5, 2012

# A Butterfly's Struggle

*(God) comforts us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction ...*

2 Cor 1:4

A young gardener with a kind heart watched a butterfly trying to break out of its cocoon. He wanted to help, so with a pair of scissors he clipped off the tip of the cocoon. The butterfly fell out without a struggle. Good? No, bad. The butterfly's body became swollen, and its wings shriveled. It could not fly. It died. The gardener did not understand God's plan. Creating a struggle for the butterfly was God's way of forcing the fluid from the body into the wings so that they would be strong enough to fly.

Sometimes when an aging spouse or friend is going through a struggle, we want to help by fixing it. Maybe God has a different plan. Our role may be to just be there, to listen, to console and to pray together, then to watch as God sets our loved one free to a renewed life here or life with him in heaven.

*God, you know our struggle. Make us stronger through it. Teach us patience. Lift us up on eagle's wings to see the greater vision. Amen.*

*Share: Share acts of kindness.*

*Read: Jas 1:2-8*

Leo Symmank

Thursday, September 6, 2012

# Singing Witness

*How good it is to sing praises to our God, how pleasant and fitting to praise him!*

Ps 147:1

“Nali?” the Shanghai driver asked. I responded slowly with my taxi-language Mandarin, “Pudong, JinQiao, Hong Feng Lu.” Whew! He nodded his head. He’d understood!

Yet, another surprise awaited. The music coming from the front of the car was a familiar hymn: “Beautiful Savior.” What? Can’t be! Sure enough, it was from a tape. I began to quietly sing the words in English. The driver said something ... I didn’t quite understand, but I responded with, “Wo ai Jesu (I love Jesus).” A huge smile appeared on his face. We continued to sing ... he in Mandarin, me in English. I never encountered him again.

That experience is a continual reminder to me that we never know when our Lord will use us to witness for him. Are you ready?

*Lord, let me be always ready to share my love for you in word or song. Amen.*

*Think: List moments you witnessed through word or song and celebrate your continual opportunities!*

*Read: 1 Pt 3:15-16*

Louise Schini Weber

Friday, September 7, 2012

# Steady on Your Feet

*Keep steady my steps according to your promise, and let no iniquity get dominion over me.*

*Ps 119:133*

Walking is important exercise, but it may no longer be as easy as it once was. Your steps may not be so steady, and obstacles like stairs may be difficult to navigate. It's helpful, if humbling, to use a cane or a walker, or perhaps just to stop and rest a bit every now and then.

Ask God for his help and care as you walk. Ask him also to steady the progress of your spiritual steps according to his promises. He will forgive your sins. He will not fail or forsake you. He hears and answers your prayers. He will deliver you from evil and shield you from temptation. Neither life nor death can separate you from him and you will live forever in his presence. The promises are all there in his Word. Map out your steps accordingly.

*Lord Jesus, guide the forward progress of my life according to your promises. Amen.*

*Challenge: If possible, help or simply accompany someone who has difficulty walking.*

*Read: Ps 37:23-28; Acts 3:1-10*

*Carol Geisler*

Saturday, September 8, 2012

# The Parlor

*For where two or three are gathered in my name,  
there am I among them.*

Mt 18:20

My grandmother's house had a room adjoining the living room that was called the parlor. My mother told me this room was only used for special occasions, such as Christmas morning, funerals or when "important" company was coming and they needed the extra seating. As I contemplated this information, my first reaction was "What a waste." To only make use of a lovely room a few times of the year seemed ridiculous.

I realized, however, that many people treat their time and relationship with God exactly like a parlor. They only spend time in God's house when it is a special occasion: Christmas, a funeral or perhaps when they have guests visiting.

We need to fling open the doors of the parlor and enjoy the blessings of time spent with our Heavenly Father every day, not just on special days.

*Heavenly Father, let me see the need to be in your presence whenever possible, not only at special times. Amen.*

*Encourage: Encourage friends who only go to church a few times a year to attend with you.*

*Read: Acts 21:46; Ps 150:1-6*

Gloria Doty

Sunday, September 9, 2012

# Who Is This Really?

*But Jesus answered them, “You are wrong, because you know neither the Scriptures nor the power of God.”*

*Mt 22:29*

I got an e-mail the other day purportedly from a friend of mine stuck in another country. The e-mail asked me to send her money to help her come home. Despite how much it looked like it was from her, I knew it was a hoax because I had spoken with her the day before. Someone used her account to try to get money from me.

We can also be fooled into believing something is from God when it is not. I recommend knowing God well, checking in with him often and being wary of claims that are too good to be true. Then you’ll know when you are hearing from a charlatan rather than the One who longs to be in relationship with you.

*Protect me, O God, from those things that are not from you. Amen.*

*Watch:* Watch a “whodunit” movie or TV show, looking for clues about who the characters really are.

*Read:* Is 55:1-13

*Joe Iovino*

Monday, September 10, 2012

# He Looks at Your Heart

*Man looks on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart.*

1 Sm 16:7

We prize youthfulness. At reunions there can be gossip about how someone's appearance has deteriorated. But even those being petty can be unhappy about how they themselves look. Oh, to be young again! So it's quite different when we read that David, a physically attractive lad, was almost rejected to be the next king of Israel because he was too young.

The progress of aging usually brings about more wrinkles, baldness and maybe added weight. There can be illness and loss of energy. Some days we don't want to look in the mirror, and we can feel inferior because we've aged. But be assured, God doesn't look on the outward appearance. He looks on your heart. He sees that you trust him for your salvation in Jesus Christ and that you haven't lost the zest to serve him and others in how you live. He loves you for who you are, his child!

*Thank you, dear Father, that I am always your child, even when I'm old. Amen.*

*Do: Honestly compliment others who are aging about their appearance. Take pride in how you look.*

*Read: 1 Sam 16:1-13; Ps 139:1-10*

Luther Strasen

Tuesday, September 11, 2012

# We Knew It

*By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.*

*Jn 13:35*

Edna Simpson (Old Edna, they called her) was not a very good Sunday school teacher. Some of the other teachers tried to work with Edna to improve her classroom skills. They gave up on her and suggested she ought to do something else in the church—quilting, perhaps, or helping with the church cleaning.

Then one Sunday afternoon, Edna had a stroke. The funeral home arranged for a “decent little service,” expecting few, since most of her family was gone. More than two hundred people jammed the little chapel that morning—two hundred of Edna’s former students.

After the service the pastor caught up with a woman he had not seen for years—now a lawyer and important in the state administration. “Why did you come?” he asked her, almost bewildered. She replied, “Because Old Edna loved us and we knew it.”

*Dear Lord, help me to be your present love for others. Amen.*

*Act: Let someone know God’s love through you by a smile, a touch, a helping act.*

*Read: 1 Cor 13*

*Ted Schroeder*

Wednesday, September 12, 2012

# On the Uptake

*Jesus said to him, “Get up, take up your bed, and walk.” And at once the man was healed, and he took up his bed and walked.*

*Jn 5:8-9*

Don't give up—take up. Before Easter many Christians choose something to give up. This year, try taking up. Taking up is the Jesus move. Giving up is about “no” and “don't.” Jesus is about “Yes” and “Do.”

“Yes—see!” he said to the blind man. “Yes—take up your bed and walk!” he said to the lame man. “Yes—live!” he said to dead Lazarus.

Finally, to the hesitant, shuffling band around him he said (and says), “Take up your cross daily and follow me!” In so doing, he gave them the gift of motion and direction. It may have been the sunset of Jesus' life on earth, but he wasn't slowing down or giving up. These are clear clues that this is an active, decisive season signaling readiness for new life.

*Lord, help me to know what I need to put down and what I need to take up so that I can follow you confidently on the way to my Jerusalem. Amen.*

*Contact: Call or visit someone today who is struggling and encourage them.*

*Read: Lk 9:51-62; Gal 6:1-6*

*Mike May*

Thursday, September 13, 2012

# A God Who Keeps Track

*... in your book were written, every one of them, the days that were formed for me ...*

Ps 139:16

Children sometimes feel like nobody knows who they are or cares. Older people can feel that way too. In neither case is that true.

One of the most comforting assurances in Psalm 139 is that God has had an eye on each of us from the moment of our conception until today. We are never out of his sight. He even counts the days until we get home. We are his children. He has us well in hand. To invite everyone conceived and born to be his forever and know that his heavenly door is unlocked and open to them, he sent his Son to seek us, find us and give to us what we do not deserve and cannot earn: a place at his family table throughout eternity. When it's time to come home, he knows where we are. Meanwhile, let's let our faces and actions show we know that.

*Bless us with your Spirit, O Lord, that we may always know and show that you have a plan in place for us to be with you—eternally. Amen.*

*Read: Read all of Psalm 139. Slowly. Underline three of its parts you like. Then read it again tomorrow. Want to underline anything else?*

Charles S. Mueller, Sr.

Friday, September 14, 2012

# Ephemerals

*... the grass withers, and the flower falls, but the word of the Lord endures forever.*

1 Pt 1:24-25

In the woods of Wisconsin, the spring wildflowers that bloom before the leaves block the sun are called ephemerals. They don't last long. Isaiah, whom Peter quotes, suggests that people are like grass or flowers—here today and gone tomorrow.

A child once asked the author Walt Whitman, "What is grass?" He answered, "Perhaps it is God's scented handkerchief dropped deliberately." I like to think of the ephemerals as God's scented handkerchief dropped deliberately so we would notice and start a relationship with God or renew and enrich our relationship.

Flowers and grass fade. People too. What can we cling to? The Word of God, the promise that we have been born again, as Peter says, and will never perish. That Word is sure and so is the promise of eternal life we can depend on when we feel like wilting flowers.

*Father, thank you that we know Jesus as our Savior and for your Word which is sure. Amen.*

*Discover: Look for some wildflowers today. Think of them as God's scented handkerchief.*

*Read: 1 Pt 1:22-25; Ps 119:49, 50*

Eldor Kaiser

Saturday, September 15, 2012

# Been There, Done That

*For God did not give us a spirit of fear but of power and love and self-control.*

2 Tm 1:7

When a friend or family member suggests that I go to a certain place or do a certain thing, I think, “Been there, done that.” Same old, same old; but is it really? Am I stuck in a rut, unwilling to try, unwilling to seek something new, especially something new to serve God? Where has my adventurous spirit gone?

A committed Christian continues to share Jesus’ love and that is always an adventure. God does provide new paths for us to serve him. Whenever God opens a new door for us, we should go through it. Trying new things is scary, but don’t be afraid. He will always guide us. That is his promise. “Been there, done that” should not be your usual answer. Give God a chance, and try new opportunities to serve him.

*Dear Lord, I pray that I always accept your will for me. Amen.*

*Try: When a new opportunity comes your way, try it. You might like it!*

*Read: Ps 27:14*

Jean Plesko

Sunday, September 16, 2012

# Clowning for Christ

*Our mouths were filled with laughter, our tongues with songs of joy.*

Ps 126:2

I grew up in a small Indiana town billed “Circus Capital of the World.” Each spring the big top would be raised, and the animals would parade down Main Street. It was so exciting, especially the clowns!

Even as a child, I can’t remember being afraid of clowns. I was given to “belly laughs” at their antics, all done in mime. So much so, that when given a chance as an adult to do Christian clowning, I jumped at it. My persona was “Ishkabeeble,” and my trademark was a red heart on my left cheek. What a delight to make young and old alike smile through the retelling of a Bible story in mime and make-up!

So, clowns of Christ, celebrate as you rise each new day, laugh out loud, knowing our Good Father is in charge, and that you are redeemed!

*Thanks, Lord, for loving and forgiving me, and for all the times today that I can celebrate with laughter! Amen.*

*Laugh: Make someone smile—or laugh—today!*

*Read: 1 Cor 1:18-31*

*Louise Schini Weber*

Monday, September 17, 2012

# No Greater Love

*Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends.*

*Jn 15:13*

I like cats, but I love dogs. At age nine or so, I got a Daisy BB gun. I shot cans, but once a BB ricocheted and bit into my dog's right paw. She yelped and moaned. As I ran to her, she got up and limped my way on three legs—in total trust. I kneeled to see her injury, an injury I had caused, and she licked my tears.

Jesus' love is so great that he laid down his life for you and me: "He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed" (1 Pt 2:24). The older I get, the better I get at sinning. Yet rejoice with me that we have a Savior who wipes away our repentant tears and welcomes us with his forgiving love, time after time.

*Lord Jesus, thank you for the love that caused you to lay down your life for me. Amen.*

*Share: Share Christ's forgiveness with someone struggling with sin.*

*Read: Lk 15:11-24*

*Tom Zehnder*

Tuesday, September 18, 2012

# This Is the Day!

*This is the day the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it.*

Ps 118:24

Canadian fishing buddies gave the novice preacher a framed remembrance of their time together subtitled: “Praise the Lord! Another day above ground!” The resurrection Psalm verse, “This is the day,” proclaims praise for every day no matter what. Today is God’s gift.

Aging brings contentment where broken dreams left an anxious heart in the past. The master’s voice fills the aged ears with unmistakably clear news: “Well done, thou good and faithful servant!”

Come rain, come shine, we rejoice in the hand of the man who stilled the water, but more ... burst from the three-day stay in the tomb. We have life today! Praise the Lord!

*Thanks, Lord, for each moment, each day; empower us by your presence with love, joy and peace, both in the valleys and on the mountaintops. Amen.*

*Practice: Practice mindfulness, living in each moment, letting go of regret and worry. Empty your mind of everything except your best friend, Jesus.*

*Read: Ps 118; Mt 6:25-33*

Rodney Otto

Wednesday, September 19, 2012

# Clay

*O Lord, you are our Father; we are the clay, and you are our potter; we are all the work of your hand.*

*Is 64:8*

We're familiar with the picture of God as a potter who shapes us like clay. A potter's clay, however, may experience rough treatment. Before the potter shapes clay on a wheel, he must knead and pound the clay to break down air bubbles that would cause the finished piece to crack. He must hold the clay gently but firmly so it can't spin off the rapidly turning wheel.

God carefully formed you, using good and bad life experiences to "knead" you into shape as his child (and you've probably resisted that shaping more often than you like to admit). The Bible says, "We are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works" (Eph 2:10). God forgives your sins and creates you anew in Christ Jesus. He continues gently but firmly to form you in love.

*Lord, continue to shape me as your child. Amen.*

*Thank: Give thanks to God for your life-shaping experiences.*

*Read: Eph 2:8-10; Rom 8:28-39*

*Carol Geisler*

Thursday, September 20, 2012

# Put My Hands in His

*... according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being ...*

*Eph 3:16*

When I put on my glasses to read, when my bones creak because of a change in the weather, when I need a cane or the arm of a chair to get to my feet, I know that my body is not what it used to be. At the same time though, I know God has something for me to do today with this body that I have.

Teresa of Avila, a 16th-century Spanish Christian, put it this way, “Christ has no body now on earth but yours, no hands but yours, no feet but yours. Yours are the eyes through which Christ’s compassion is to look out to the world, yours are the feet by which he is to go about doing good and yours are the hands by which God is to bless people now.”

*Show me, O God, what you would have me do for you today. Amen.*

*Reflect: Look at your hands. Reflect on the stories they could tell. Consider ways you can offer them to Jesus today.*

*Read: Eph 3:14-19; Heb 11:8-12*

*Joe Iovino*

Friday, September 21, 2012

# Spring in Each Step

*And leaping up he stood and began to walk, and entered the temple with them, walking and leaping and praising God.*

*Acts 3:8*

After years of sitting by the healing pool, the beggar at the Beautiful Gate had aching joints. Peter saw him and responded with physical and spiritual healing words the man desperately needed. Instead of answering with a simple thank you, the beggar did something else. He walked, jumped and praised the Lord throughout the temple courts.

As we age, we also feel aches and pains. Sometimes we get irritated or frustrated with others. Yet God in his mercy heals us too. He gives us the physical and spiritual relief that we need. Every time we fall, God picks us up and redirects us toward joyful living. Now that's a great reason to jump, leap and praise him.

*Lord, make me jump and leap for joy in you, just like the beggar. Help me spread this joy to others. Amen.*

*Jump: "Jump" for joy today by serving a friend or neighbor.*

*Read: Acts 3:1-8; Mal 4:2*

*Allison Lewis*

Saturday, September 22, 2012

# Sight and Insight

*The free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

Rom 6:23

My left eye's milky vision grew worse, and the ophthalmologist diagnosed it as "corneal dystrophy." But the grim-sounding announcement was followed by a "Gospel" word: "We can fix that." During the procedure, I heard the doctor say, "Now I will get the cornea." Two months later the vision in my left eye was almost perfect. But where did the doctor get that cornea?

The awesome truth is that I am seeing more clearly today because of a selfless gift. An even more awesome truth is that the greatest gifts we have—forgiveness, life and salvation—have come to us through the death and resurrection of Christ Jesus. Our earthly eyesight may grow dim and fail, but our vision of the future is clear—a vision of the heavenly realm, with its unspeakable glory and beauty. What a sight to behold, and it is ours because of Jesus, who donated his life to save us.

*Jesus, help me to keep focused on you. Amen.*

*Thank: Give thanks for those who give of themselves to save others.*

*Read: Heb 12:1-2*

Tom Zehnder

Sunday, September 23, 2012

# The Wild Things

*... for every animal of the forest is mine, and the cattle on a thousand hills. I know every bird in the mountains, and the insects in the fields are mine.*

*Ps 50:10-11*

Wherever we live, there are wild things to watch. In a city, it might be a bird or squirrel. Here in a wooded suburb, there are chipmunks, rabbits and deer. In the spring, we first see the proud hens with their broods of chicks. Those hens take good care to watch the little ones, so that none gets left behind as they stroll. Gradually, the babies grow larger, and we see parades of adults using the familiar paths.

What's special about watching wild animals or birds? It is so good to know that not everything in this overly artificial world is under the control of people. These wise birds don't look to people to care for them. They rely on their instinct and depend on God to feed and water them. What a lesson for us. Looking to God and depending on him is the best path to follow as we make our way in his world.

*Lord, help us to learn from the wild things in your world to depend on you for what we need. Amen.*

*Observe: Observe the wild things in your own neighborhood. What can you learn from them?*

*Read: Gn 1:20-31; Ps 23*

*Alice J. Schuman*

Monday, September 24, 2012

# Children As Teachers

*You have hidden these things from the wise and understanding and revealed them to little children.*

*Lk 10:21*

Jesus loved children! He welcomed them, blessed them and spoke highly of them. Those of us enjoying our “second childhood” can learn from their example. Their enthusiasm and hope are contagious.

Children receive seeds of faith, planted by the Holy Spirit in Word and Sacrament, with wonder, openness and joy. They are willing to be dependent and trust him, with sincerity and humility. The prayers and praise of a child are wise in their simplicity. Kids never stop asking for what is really needed. Words of genuine thanks come quickly and easily because they recognize their own inabilities.

Children love to tell Jesus’ story and their daily experiences of his love. Share your faith stories with children, but be sure you also listen. Catch the JOY of knowing Jesus through the eyes of a child. After all, we are Just Older Youth!

*Lord, enable me to trust and love you with child-like faith. Amen.*

*Sing: Ask a child to sing songs about Jesus. Sing along!*

*Read: Mt 19:14; Jn 1:12*

*Sharolyn Sander*

Tuesday, September 25, 2012

# Reflecting God's Glory

*Let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.*

Mt 5:16

Two stained glass windows depict the resurrection near the altar of St. Paul, Aurelia, Iowa, and high on the back wall of Redeemer, Grand Rapids, Michigan, in sunglow hues.

Morning sun sends chills down worshipping spines from mosaic colors of church windows around the world. Each ray adds luster to the Gospel message. No one church or culture or style is adequate. The windows and their diversity are a foretaste of heaven. Each church, each worshipper adds flavor to the banquet feast of salvation offered to a hungry world.

The solitary saint is but one tiny bit of the mosaic; yet all God's people together bring light to the darkness of this world.

*Your Word, O Lord, is for all times and all places and all cultures and all nations. Inspire each of us to reflect the truth of the Gospel in our little corner of the world to the people we know. Amen.*

*Work: Work at reflecting the joy of salvation in the smiles you share with others today.*

*Read: Mt 5:1-16; Is 61:1-3*

Rodney Otto

Wednesday, September 26, 2012

# Listen to His Voice

*My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. No one will snatch them out of my hand.*

*Jn 10:27-28*

I was the type of child who believed everything adults told me. Though I loved my Christian day school teachers, some of them scared me to death. “It’s easy to live your faith now,” they often said. “But wait until you get to high school. Then you will be surrounded by temptations to fall away.” I spent most of my middle grade years fearing I would fall from faith the moment I stepped into public high school.

My eighth grade teacher challenged us to read the Bible straight through. Naturally, I did it, but was much too shy to tell him I had done it. But let me tell you, the night I read John 10:27-28 was the happiest night of my life. No one and no thing could take me away from Jesus—ever.

When Satan pulls at you, through whatever perversion he might attempt, tell him, “I know my Shepherd’s voice. No one can snatch me from his hand.”

*Jesus, thank you for promising to keep me in your hand forever. In your name. Amen.*

*Hold: Hold someone’s hand today.*

*Read: 1 Jn 2:25-29; Jn 11:25-27*

*Ruth Geisler*

Thursday, September 27, 2012

## God Is Like ...

*Let me dwell in your tent forever! Let me take refuge under the shelter of your wings!*

*Ps 61:4*

On the pond behind our house, some walkers inadvertently herded a mother duck and her six chicks into some netting protecting underwater plants. The hen escaped, but her chicks were trapped. The walkers waded in and tried to free the chicks. Meanwhile, the hen flew at the would-be rescuers, trying to protect her brood. Finally, the chicks emerged. They immediately herded around the mother, and she led them across the pond to safety.

Images of God abound. Some (Father, Creator) become fixed—perhaps too fixed. The Psalmist sees God as a hovering mother eagle, protecting her chicks from the burning sun. Today we might think on another image—the lost chick peeping in panic, just inches from the latest net of danger or despair. Our God is like an absurdly brave hen who will not give up on her chicks until they are safe again.

*Shelter me, Lord, when fears overwhelm. Help me rest in the shadow of your wings. Amen.*

*Look: Look for and share the images of God you see all around you.*

*Read: Ps 61; Ps 23*

*Ted Schroeder*

Friday, September 28, 2012

# Walking With God

*Enoch walked with God, and he was not, for God took him.*

Gn 5:24

Adam and Eve *ran from* God. Enoch *walked with* God. There's a difference. Have you ever run from God? When? Why? For how long? Enoch *walked with* God. He enjoyed living as a child of God. He knew that God's way was the best possible way to live. Enoch trusted God. It showed in his walk.

A person's walk says something. What does a "trudge" tell you? A "heads down dejected" walk? How about skipping? Can you tell a "cocky" walk? An arrogant walk? A shy walk? A lost person? A confused person? What does your walk say about you?

"Enoch walked with God" is a metaphor for living a godly life. It is also a reminder that God walks with us. Walking with God shows in the way we "walk through" life. Today walk with purpose, with pleasure, with power, with a spiritual perspective. Today walk on purpose with God.

*Lord God, I'm ready for my day, indeed my all-day walk, with you. Amen.*

*Look: Observe how others walk. Do they need to know God walks with them?*

*Read: Ps 116:1-9*

Don Schatz

Saturday, September 29, 2012

## Where Is It?

*And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.*

*Rom 8:28*

I put stuff away in special places so I can find it when I want it. Then when I want a particular item, I can't locate it. I look and look to no avail and finally give up searching in frustration. Then some time later the item suddenly appears, as if by magic, in a place I forgot to look.

There are some things in our lives that we never lose, because they are always readily available to us. Favorite Bible verses may be in our memories, but if not, they are available in our well-marked Bible. God has given us all we need to know or will ever need to know in one place, the Holy Bible. God's Word is never lost; it guides us forever.

*Father, thank you for my Holy Bible. It is my light and comfort. Amen.*

*Praise: Praise the Lord today for the gift of the Holy Bible.*

*Read: Ps 33:4; Mk 13:31*

*Jean Plesko*

Sunday, September 30, 2012

# The Blessing of Sleep

*When I lie down I say, "When shall I arise?" But the night is long, and I am full of tossing till the dawn.*

*Job 7:4*

With national elections approaching, we are up to our eyebrows in rants about the nation's ills. The Old Testament Job himself might commiserate with retirees' worries about their pensions, investments and health insurance. Concerns about the nation's welfare motivate us to inform ourselves before voting. Perhaps we will volunteer to work the polling places or donate to candidates.

Don't let over-agitated, ratings-seeking punsters and alarmist acquaintances push you into an overwrought state so that like Job you lose sleep. Jesus has told us to observe the lilies of the field. He assured us that if we set our hearts on his Kingdom first and on God's saving justice "all these other things will be given to (us) as well" (Mt 6:33). He chides us for being worrywarts.

*God, help me trust in your help. Wipe worry from my nights and bless me with healthy sleep. Amen.*

*Do: In your night prayers put your worries in God's hands, then breathe deeply, unwind and get a good night's sleep.*

*Read: Mt 6:28-36; Lk 12:27-28; Job 7:1-4, 6-7*

*Patricia Rice*

# HOLY HABITS for **HOPE-FULL HEALTH**

*A Hope-Full and Healthy Prayer is:*

1. A gift from God.
2. Not so much what we do, but it is much more what the Lord is doing through us as we pray.
3. A bunch of words, offered up to the Lord, in hope that they find meaning.
4. A way God comes down to us and brings us back up to him.
5. Like love: it must be expressed in action and not only in words.
6. A way to bring health and hope to ourselves and to those around us, through Jesus Christ.
7. Keeping connected to our lifeline and the “hope that is within us!”
8. Not a way to get something, but a way to be with someone.
9. Not a way to change God, but a way that God changes us.
10. Knowing that we are never alone in this sometimes lonely world!

A Healthy and Hope-Full Prayer is healthy and hope-full because the Lord is at work in and through us as we pray! And so we pray, “Come, Lord Jesus, every day, to bless and guide us on our way.”

What else is there left to say, but “Amen”?

# Hope-Full Praying

## *For Rest and Relaxation*

I am ready for some rest and relaxation, Lord. It has been one of those days. Focus me again on your promise of being with my every breath! Without you, I get so entangled with the frustrations of life that I feel separated from your forgiveness and care. Let me rest in knowing, always, that even when it does not feel like you are with me, you are indeed in my every thought and action, through Jesus Christ. Amen.

## *For Helpful People*

Lord, you are all around me today in the lives and hearts of people! You care for me through the love of family members, through the phone calls of friends, through the service of wait persons and through the checkers at the grocery store. Thanks, Lord, for these visible reminders that you care for me in so many, many ways. Let me see you in those people who help and assist me this day. Amen!

## *For Memories*

We pray with the Psalmist in Psalm 25, “According to your love, remember me, O Lord.” When we do not remember your love and forgiveness, help us to remember that you never forget us. We thank you for memories that are forever etched in our lives—memories of your gracious hand through family and friends and opportunities and celebrations. Thanks for the memories, Lord! Amen.

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