

# 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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Monday, April 1, 2013

# The Mystery of Grace

*By grace you have been saved.*

*Ephesians 2:5*

I enjoy reading “whodunits” stories. The story of the resurrection is the greatest mystery story of all. I don’t understand how Jesus could be dead and then made alive. I am part of this story, too, for Jesus died and rose again for me; and now I “have been saved.” What a wonderful mystery!

In that story we find out “who done it.” God did it all, and God did it out of love. That’s what the word *grace* means. God did all that was needed out of unspeakable love for people, including you and me.

Grace is an everyday word. I am alive by God’s grace. I eat, am sheltered and protected by God’s grace. My entire life is a journey from grace to peace. What a glorious mystery!

*Gracious God, I praise you and thank you for your love. I cannot understand why you should love me as you do. Thank you for saving me out of grace. Amen.*

*Call: Call someone today or write a note, just because you love them.*

*Read: Ephesians 2:1-10*

*Eldor Kaiser  
Lenexa, KS*

Tuesday, April 2, 2013

# It Is the Lord

*It is the Lord!*

John 21:7

The pre-dawn hours on the Sea of Galilee found the disciples had fished all night and caught nothing. John the beloved disciple, who leaned close to Jesus at the Last Super and stayed close to him at the crucifixion, was first to recognize the dimly-lit figure on the beach and say in joyous wonder, “It is the Lord!”

Now, as then, it is those who remain close to Christ in love who see him in everything. In the hopelessness of unfulfilled dreams, when, like the disciples, we have “toiled all night and caught nothing,” staying close to our Lord in his Word and Sacrament will help us see that he is there—Immanuel, God with us—beside us to love and help.

Because we love him, we can see him, but we can only love him because he came to us and loved us first.

*Lord, help us never to question your love. Amen.*

*Love: Remembering that love, let us share it by word, deed and prayer with all whose lives we touch.*

*Read: John 21:1-14; John 20:11-18*

*Constance Bretscher  
Valparaiso, IN*

Wednesday, April 3, 2013

# Wrestling with God

*Jacob was alone, and a man wrestled with him until daybreak. Jacob said “I will not let you go unless you bless me.” ... The man said, “You have striven with God and humans, and have prevailed.”*

*Genesis 32:24, 28*

Christians know about wrestling with God. We've been there. This story from Genesis seems to say that Jacob won by forcing a stingy God to bless him. But the real story is Jacob's profound faith that God wanted to bless him.

When Jesus wrestled with his Father in the garden at Gethsemane, his wrestling was grounded in the conviction that even if the Father's will would be different from his request, the Son would still be the winner.

For Jacob the answer was a joyful reunion with his brother. For Jesus it was the way of the cross to take away the sins of the world and to rise on Easter.

So we take heart in our wrestling with God. In Jesus' name, we, too, cannot lose.

*Father, guide us to pray intensely and with confidence in your love for us. Amen.*

*Pray: Pray intensely and by name for another person in need.*

*Read: Luke 22:39-46; Luke 18:1-8*

*Donald Becker  
Oak Park, IL*

Thursday, April 4, 2013

# Planting Seeds

*I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth.*

*1 Corinthians 3:6*

Spring is a time for planting. The soil is warm and waiting for seeds. Water and fertilizer will nurture the young sprouts. Weeds will need to be removed. Stakes may be needed to support weaker plants. And it's all done with the end in sight—the harvest. The job is often too big for one person to accomplish alone.

Paul recognized the teamwork necessary to bring people to faith. One plants. Another waters. The Holy Spirit creates faith and produces growth. Our job is to plant a clear message, nurture the relationship, give responsive care or support the weak in faith. We aren't accountable for the entire process. Act as the Spirit leads, confident that he is responsible for the results.

*Lord, make me a trusting and hope-full witness, as you produce life and growth in faith. Amen.*

*Watch: Watch for fertile soil in people around you, breathe a prayer for wisdom and plant some seeds!*

*Read: Isaiah 55:10-11; Colossians 4:2-6*

*Sharolyn Sander  
Roselle, IL*

Friday, April 5, 2013

# Soon

*“Surely I am coming soon.” Amen. Come, Lord Jesus!*

*Revelation 22:20*

Are you looking forward to anything today? Do you have something planned later in the week? Some days are filled with people and activities and events. Other days are a little more disappointing and have less to offer, if anything.

On a day when you least expect it, something is going to happen beyond anything you can anticipate or imagine. Jesus, your Lord, is coming back! You will stand before the throne of your King and hear him say, “Come, O blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world” (Matthew 25:34). By God’s grace, through faith in Jesus, your sins are forgiven and you are ready for your Lord’s return. When will that great day arrive? We don’t know, but Jesus promised, “Soon.” Look forward to it!

*Amen. Come, Lord Jesus!*

*Visit: Visit someone who doesn’t have much to look forward to today.*

*Read: Revelation 22*

*Carol Geisler  
Manchester, MO*

Saturday, April 6, 2013

# Anchored by Hope

*We have this hope as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure.*

*Hebrews 6:19*

Spring is a season of hope—buds on bare branches, glimpses of green in a brown lawn, crocuses peeking through snow. Hope for new life is in the natural world around us.

What do you hope for? A visit from relatives, a good doctor's report, a new medicine that works, a reminder that someone still needs your advice? A line from the movie *Shawshank Redemption* states, "Hope is a dangerous thing." It's dangerous because hope can disappoint us when people let us down, when spring weather brings tornadoes instead of gentle rains, when the medical report isn't good.

But we have a hope that does not disappoint, that is firm and secure. This hope is founded on Jesus' saving work. Anchored in him, we can face each day with confidence!

*Father, remind me daily of the secure hope I have in Jesus. Amen.*

*Sing: Sing a song of hope today—even "Jesus Loves Me"!*

*Read: Hebrews 10:19-23*

*Diane Bahn  
Cypress, TX*

Sunday, April 7, 2013

# Promises, Promises!

*... whoever comes to me I will never drive away.*

*John 6:37*

I need to hear the Lord saying this to me every day, if not every hour. How about you? Christ is the promise of ALL promises! We will never stop his promise to us to love and forgive and be with us forever! And that is a promise we can rely on because of his death and resurrection.

What does this mean, really? It means:

... when we hear the word *cancer*,

... when our hopes and dreams are shattered,

... when others fail us and we fail others,

... when all our friends seem to be dying,

... when people do not visit us,

... when we even wonder if God is really there,

God's promise in Christ comes to us again and again and affirms "whoever comes to me I will never drive away"! And that is good enough for me!

*Lord, even when we cannot hear, see or feel you, we know you are with us every step of the way, because that is your promise to us! Amen.*

*List: Make a list of times you have sensed the Lord's presence.*

*Read: 2 Corinthians 1:18-22*

*Rich Bimler  
Bloomington, IL*

Monday, April 8, 2013

# Season of Singing

*The flowers appear on the earth, the time of singing has come ...*

*Song of Solomon 2:12*

As I walk around my garden every day, I'm on a search. And when I spy a green sprout pushing toward the sun, I feel as if I've found a great treasure. Spring's been hiding in the garden all winter. It was curled up tightly in every bud and shoot, just waiting to be awakened.

Sometimes our lives are like a winter garden. All the joy and happiness is curled up tightly inside of us, unable to break through the worry, sorrow or fear that we're experiencing. That's when we need to remember how much God cares about us. He offers to take all our troubles on himself. Bask in the warmth of God's love and soon shoots of joy will push through—winter is past.

*Creator God, thank you for being with me in all the seasons of my life. Amen.*

*Enjoy: Enjoy the spring blessings that God sends into your life.*

*Read: Ecclesiastes 3:1-8; Matthew 6:25-34*

*Jeanette Dall  
Batavia, IL*

Tuesday, April 9, 2013

# The Beat Goes On

*We will not hide them from their children, but tell to the coming generation the glorious deeds of the Lord, and his might, and the wonders that he has done.*

*Psalm 78:4*

Passing on the beat of God's own heart for us is a glorious privilege. That beat does not start with us nor can we end it. But we can participate in it. The beat itself had no beginning, and it will have no end. God brought creation into being with the perfect rhythm of his heart. And when our heart beats its last time on this earth, it will, by his grace, pick up the perfect rhythm already experienced by the angels, archangels and all the hosts of heaven!

But in the meantime, because of sin in our world, the beat sometimes loses rhythm. We listen to other beats. We march, sometimes dance to other beats. But the beat of God's own heart, with all of its love for us, goes on.

*Father, we are so grateful that the beat of your love was passed on to us. Amen.*

*Catch the beat: Faithfully watch and listen for the rhythm of God's love—and keep the beat going.*

*Read: Psalm 78:1-7*

*Vernon D. Gundermann  
Kirkwood, MO*

Wednesday, April 10, 2013

# What's Next?

*Do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself.*

*Matthew 6:34*

We spend the first few years of our lives readying ourselves for navigating the world into which we've been born. After adding to and refining these skills, we find ourselves defining the sort of role(s) we will be filling as adults. As years pass, a tapering off occurs. A role of parenting diminishes as children leave the nest to shape nests of their own. Skills are replaced by electronic systems. Successors render our performance to be worn or obsolete. Physical agility diminishes. And we worry about the days ahead.

Then along comes Jesus: "Quit fretting about the future! God will help you deal with whatever hard things come up when the time comes" (Translation by Eugene Peterson in *The Message*).

*Gracious Father, who from our mothers' arms has kept us on our way, remind us of your boundless love you have for us each day; come to my side and stay! Amen.*

*Think: Think of someone you know who is obsessed with worry about his/her future and share/discuss this page with that person.*

*Read: Matthew 6:25-34*

*Karl Lutz  
Valparaiso, IN*

Thursday, April 11, 2013

# God-Breathed

*... the Lord God formed a man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being.*

*Genesis 2:7*

We are not on earth by accident. There is a wonderful washing of grace in that realization. No matter how meaningless one may feel sometimes, and most of us do feel meaningless from time to time, God created us on purpose. As John says in the opening chapter of his gospel account, we “were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God” (1:13).

God breathed into Adam’s nostrils, and he became a living being. God imparts life. God imparts human life. God imparts your life, absolutely on purpose. He looks at you and his words echo from creation’s story: Behold, it is good!

*God of life, breathe life into me and through me today. Amen.*

*Look: Today, look at yourself in the mirror and see God’s on-purpose creation. Trust God’s love, which has so purposefully put you on the earth, in the life of the church, in relationship to so many others.*

*Read: Psalm 139:13-16*

*Don Schatz  
McKinleyville, CA*

Friday, April 12, 2013

# Stop Striving

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

*Psalm 46:10*

There I was, sitting beside my mother in church week after week. I could not sit still. Time and time again my mother would say to me, “Be still!” For me, that meant, “Behave yourself.”

For years I could not understand what God was saying in Psalm 46 where we read, “Be still, and know that I am God.” Recently I learned that the Hebrew word for *still* can also be translated “cease striving.” Now I get it. Let God be God. Behaving myself is not the issue. He is our refuge and strength. He is always there to help us in time of need. No matter what is happening in this world, no matter what struggles I have as I age, God is with me. That’s what the prophet Isaiah reminds us of in his great prophecy about Jesus. He is Immanuel, “God with us” (Isaiah 7:14).

In his dying moments John Wesley confessed, “The best of all is, God is with us.”

*Lord Jesus, come to me and be all that you promised me. Amen.*

*Practice: Pray Psalm 46 in calm times. It will serve you well in stormy times.*

*Read: Psalm 46*

*Walter M. Schoedel  
Wester Groves, MO*

Saturday, April 13, 2013

# Don't Forget!

*Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits ...*

*Psalm 103:2*

I often find myself saying, “Don’t let me forget ...” If I don’t write it down or have someone remind me, I easily miss important activities. The Psalm writers knew how easy it is for us to forget important things—especially things God has done. Frequently the Psalms urge us to remember God’s acts.

In Psalm 103, David tells us not to forget God’s benefits and then lists them for us: forgiveness, healing, redemption, love, compassion, justice and more! David opens this psalm with praise to God and then gets so caught up listing the many reasons to praise God he can’t help but conclude with more praise, even inviting heavenly hosts to join him!

You may forget something today, but don’t forget this: God loves you and sent his Son to redeem you!

*I praise you, Lord, for all your good gifts to me!  
Amen.*

*List: Make a list of God’s gifts to you.*

*Read: Psalm 103*

*Diane Bahn  
Cypress, TX*

Sunday, April 14, 2013

# Wonderful Servants

*Search me, O God, and know my heart! Try me and know my thoughts! And see if there be any grievous way in me ...*

*Psalms 139:23-24*

A computer is a wonderful servant, but a terrible master! My computer is hardly new, yet when it is tuned up, it enables me to produce work efficiently and communicate widely. When it gets a virus, runs slowly or crashes in the midst of a major project, my work is at its mercy!

God wills to use us, even though “older” models, in kingdom service. In order to remain useful we need regular spiritual tune-ups. We may not even be aware when we are frustrating God’s intentions for our service. When we submit to a scan under God’s Word, problems can be identified and with God’s help remedied. Rebooted in forgiveness and supplied with sanctifying grace, we return to intended usefulness. Master and servant are happy!

*Dear Lord, I desire to be your useful servant. Show me through your Word where my ways frustrate your ways, and heal me! Amen.*

*Reflect: Reflect on what may be hampering your service to God this week.*

*Read: Psalms 139:1-24; 2 Timothy 3:14-17*

*Ted Zimmerman  
Napa, CA*

Monday, April 15, 2013

# Remember Your Baptism

*We are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we would walk in them.*

*Ephesians 2:10*

People used to say that the only certainties in life were death and taxes. Now, I think, we have added a third—change. Change now is a constant, and with every change there are the inherent difficulties, especially as we get older.

Thankfully, in the midst of all the changes we experience there is one constant that never changes for us, and that is what God has done for us in baptism. There God gave us identity—his child; God gave us a place where we belong—his family; and God gave us meaning and purpose—created in Christ Jesus for good works. Nothing in life can ever take those things away from us.

*Dear Father, how blessed I am that you have created me in Christ Jesus to be a good person for you and for those around me. Help me always to cherish my baptism—that I am created for good things in Christ. Amen.*

*Remember: Place the date of your baptism in a prominent place as a daily reminder.*

*Read: Ephesians 2:4-10; 1 Peter 2:9-10*

*Lionel Otto  
Adelaide, Australia*

Tuesday, April 16, 2013

# Opportunity Knocks

*Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you.*

*Matthew 7:7*

My friend Earl suggests that our lives aren't filled with problems, but rather with opportunities. Now Earl isn't saying that we don't have problems in life. After all, we are sinful humans. But it's how we accept those problems that makes all the difference.

Remembering Jesus' promises that if we ask, seek or knock, he will answer, how can we not respond positively? And to respond positively requires us to be in a continually maturing relationship with him. This happens through daily conversations with him and being in the Word.

No matter our age or physical abilities, we encourage others through our Christ-like responses to the "opportunities" of life. So, as opportunity knocks, say, "Yes, Jesus, yes!"

*Good Father, help me see my problems as opportunities to witness to your great love and blessings in my life. Amen.*

*Think: Make a conscious decision to view a problem today as an opportunity.*

*Read: Matthew 5:13-16; Revelation 3:20*

*Louise Schini Weber  
Fort Myers, FL*

Wednesday, April 17, 2013

# A Place in the Quilt

*... be ready for every good work ...*

*Titus 3:1*

The instruction read: "This is 'free style.' Combine squares in a pleasing manner." The packet included 48 10" x 10" precut quilt pieces to be sewn together for a quilt for various groups in need of the quilts. This one contained the leftovers or retired squares. After the quilt is completed, it will be a comfort to someone in need. Do you feel like you have retired from all activities and have lost your usefulness? God has a place for you in his quilt of life. Take a good look around you and there you will find opportunities to serve. With faith, step out into the water. Maybe you can lead a Bible class! God can restore you and give you a willing spirit.

*Holy Spirit, fill my heart with a passion to serve. Let me be a piece in your quilt. Amen.*

*Pray: Take the time to pray earnestly for opportunities to serve. God will open doors you would not have expected.*

*Read: Psalm 51:12; 1 Thessalonians 1:2-3*

*Naomi Weslock  
Lake in the Hills, IL*

Thursday, April 18, 2013

# To Be or Not to Be

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

*Psalm 118:24*

Bored, that is!

*The International Journal of Epidemiology* published an article maintaining that bored people die sooner than those who are excited about life. Britton and Shipley of the University of London did a study of more than 7,500 people, and those who reported they were bored were 2.5 times more likely to die of a heart problem than those who weren't bored.

Of course, there's a possibility that boredom isn't a cause but a concurrent symptom. Still, this finding should encourage us to find some excitement in our lives. Jesus said that he came to give us abundant life, and we're never too old to live that life to his glory!

*Lord, fill me with a sense of urgency for living each day to its fullest. Amen.*

*To do: Volunteering is a great antidote for boredom. Brighten someone else's life today!*

*Read: John 10:10b; 1 Peter 4:10-11*

*Jane P. Wilke  
Woodbury, MN*

Friday, April 19, 2013

# Thought List

*Whatever is true, ... honorable, ... just, ... pure, ... lovely, ... commendable, if there is any excellence, ... anything worthy of praise, think about these things ... and the God of peace will be with you.*

*Philippians 4:8-9*

Do you make lists—grocery lists, wish lists, to-do lists, reminder lists? Have you ever made a gripe list? You know, the one with complaints about poor service, rude drivers, crooked politicians, uncaring relatives, bad weather, lousy food, etc.? What satisfaction do you receive after reciting that list?

A friend of mine was feeling irritable after thinking about her “gripe list.” She decided to take St. Paul’s advice and began listing things that were honorable, lovely and excellent. Thinking about these good gifts from God gave her such peace that others noticed and asked her about it. Might be worth a try for you and me!

*Father, forgive my complaining and help me focus instead on your good gifts. Amen.*

*List: Make a list of good things and thank God for them!*

*Read: Philippians 4:4-9*

*Diane Bahn  
Cypress, TX*

Saturday, April 20, 2013

# God Was in the Fire

*The angel of the Lord appeared to him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush. He looked, and behold, the bush was burning, yet it was not consumed.*

*Exodus 3:2*

The bush is on fire, but the bush is not consumed by the fire. The fire turns out to be the presence of God. The “angel of the Lord” is often used as a pseudonym for God in the Old Testament.

God is a fire that does not consume. The Holy God can approach you and not kill you! He can touch you with his grace and not slay you. He can dwell in you and you are not consumed. You are changed, for sure! We can, as Jesus prayed, be one with him. Yet we are not destroyed in that unity—we are made into God’s son, God’s daughter.

What will be the “fire” in your life today? What will remind you that God is present to you? What role does the burning bush play for you?

*God-in-the-fire-that-does-not-consume, thank you for your many reminders of your presence. Amen.*

*Spend time: Like Moses, spend some time with the Lord today.*

*Read: Psalm 139:11-12*

*Don Schatz  
McKinleyville, CA*

Sunday, April 21, 2013

# Through the Valley

*Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil ...*

*Psalm 23:4*

We all know that “the Lord is my shepherd.” The promises follow: We shall never want—that is, be without what we really need, our shepherd and his love and care. He will smooth the troubled waters of our lives and provide the peace of “still waters,” no matter what. We shall feed on the “green pastures” of his grace and mercy. He points out the “paths of righteousness” where we will follow him, “restoring our souls.”

Then, to each of us comes the “valley of the shadow”—disappointments, the hurts of criticism or loneliness, the challenges of ill health or caretaking.

But what is on the other side? “Surely, goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life.”

*Led by your staff, Lord, teach us to share that goodness and mercy with those we love and with those who need love. Amen.*

*Thank: Greet each day with thanks for that mercy.*

*Read: Psalm 23*

*Constance Bretcher  
Valparaiso, IN*

Monday, April 22, 2013

# I Shall Not Want

*The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want ... He restores my soul.*

*Psalm 23:1, 3*

I don't know about you, but I have some wants. I wish my eyes were better. I wish my body didn't ache.

Some other wants are for things I can very well do without. Some of my wants could be very selfish and even wrong. Thankfully, God knows what is good for me.

Sometimes life feels empty and the world seems dark. We get down. That's part of our "wants," too, because if we need restoration, we must be lacking something. At times like that, I try to remember another promise, "He restores my soul." How does God restore my soul? Through many everyday means like friends, proper rest, food and even counselors or psychiatrists. I have no doubt that it is God who lifts me up.

*Good Shepherd, thank you for the promise of your love and daily care. Thank you for the promise of eternal life with you. Amen.*

*Think: Think about your wants and how God provides them.*

*Read: Psalm 23; John 10:1-21*

*Eldor Kaiser  
Lenexa, KS*

Tuesday, April 23, 2013

# Walk with God

*Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me.*

*Psalm 23:4*

I see this older couple at the gym: she is stylish, high cheek bones and all; he is bent, good looks compromised, a “lost-ness” in his expression.

Placing his feet into the cycle straps, she presses his fingers over the handle bar. He pedals with labor. Moving away to a nearby tread machine, she keeps her eye on him.

We finish our routine about the same time. She goes to him, frees his feet, easing them from cycle to floor. I hold the door for them and we exit.

Facing him, holding his hands in hers, they walk, one step at a time in cadence to her soft, firm command: “Walk. Walk. Walk,” and “Put your head up.”

I say to him: “Man, you’ve got a great trainer!” He beams at me as if to say, “You’ve got that right, brother!” She smiles.

Our faithful God is walking with us. We trust him.

*Lord, walk with me. Amen.*

*Walk: Walk with someone today, with actual steps or in prayer.*

*Read: Ephesians 5:1-2*

*Tom Zehnder  
Baileys Harbor, WI*

Wednesday, April 24, 2013

# Don't Walk Old!

*I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received ... Keep the unity of the Spirit ...*

*Ephesians 4:1-3*

A friend of mine reminds me to not “walk old.” He may be saying be careful as I walk and do not give others the impression that these may be my last steps. However, I sense this advice may also be saying something about my attitude toward life.

Am I seeing things through “grumpy” eyes as I age? Do noise and clatter drive me nuts? Why do people have to talk so softly when they ask me a question? And I won't even mention those hand gestures I now receive from a passing motorist, who happens to be going over the speed limit, by the way!

St. Paul reminds us that we are all in Christ! Young and old, fast and slow, right or wrong. Perhaps “don't walk old” has less to do with how we navigate our bodies and more to do with how we look at life. Remember, we live on “this side” of the Resurrection. We know how it all turns out!

*Lord, whether we walk, run, shuffle or limp, keep us on the path of living a life for you. Amen.*

*Walk: Take a walk today and enjoy the gifts of the Lord on the way. Skip if you are able!*

*Read: Ephesians 5:1-2*

*Rich Bimler  
Bloomington, IL*

Thursday, April 25, 2013

# Shepherd and Shepherdess of the Streets

*When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd.*

*Matthew 9:36*

Retirement poses challenges, yet new horizons. Teachers and pastor's wives seldom have a calling card. Moving into a smaller, hundred-year-old house in center city, our new card reflects ministry from our home: "Shepherd and Shepherdess of the Streets."

The compassion of Jesus flows through sandwiches, cookies, counsel and a helping hand in our diverse community. Whether hiring kids for yard work, ministering to the grieving or offering a ride, it's a ministry from our porch. Slowing down opens doors.

*Lord, as our physical strength wanes, thank you for keeping our hearts filled with your love as we share Good News at our front door. Amen.*

*Consider: Whether our doorway leads to a facility hallway, a country road or a city street, we are the "good Samaritans" of our world.*

*Read: Luke 15:25-37; Matthew 5:1-12*

*Rodney Otto  
Grand Rapids, MI*

Friday, April 26, 2013

# Crumbs

*But she answered him, “Yes, Lord; yet even the dogs under the table eat the children’s crumbs.”*

*Mark 7:28*

Crumbs. That’s all the woman from Sidon asked for. She knew about Jesus and what he was capable of. She knew that a crumb from his hand would be enough to heal her daughter.

Jesus can still use crumbs to do his work. While the woman from Sidon felt she deserved no more because of her ethnicity, we know we deserve no more because of what we do, what we think, what we say. Still, he loves us, forgives us, responds to our needs. He may give us only crumbs, but it is enough.

It is our privilege to share this Good News with others who may feel that they do not even deserve crumbs of mercy and forgiveness from our Lord. In truth, neither we nor they do. Still, trusting in his love, urge them to ask, even if it is just for crumbs. Jesus has a long history of responding by giving crumbs and so much more!

*Thanks, Heavenly Father, for giving us crumbs and so much more! Amen.*

*Point: Point people to the Jesus of the crumbs!*

*Read: Mark 7:24-30*

*Vernon D. Gundermann  
Kirkwood, MO*

Saturday, April 27, 2013

# A Lot Out of a Little

*His master said to him, “Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much.”*

*Matthew 25:23*

A man named Worrall was stricken with rheumatoid arthritis at age fifteen. Thirty years later he was blind and could barely speak—though his words were valuable. He was totally paralyzed, except for one finger. His helper tied a string to that one mobile finger, with which he could turn a tape recorder switch on and off. He wrote for national magazines, authored books and led a happy and influential life—from his bed. It’s not how many gifts we’ve received from God, but what we do with them.

*Lord God, help us not to be blown away by which talents get the most acclaim from the crowd. Rather, may your Spirit enable us to focus on the gifts he has blessed us with, and use them. Amen.*

*Ask: Ask a loved one what your main one or two spiritual gifts are. Within 24 hours, use one of them to help someone—perhaps in a somewhat interesting way.*

*Read: Matthew 10:40-42*

*Deane Schuessler  
Woodbury, MN*

Sunday, April 28, 2013

# You Are What You Eat

*Your words were found, and I ate them, and your words became to me a joy and the delight of my heart ...*

*Jeremiah 15:16*

A young mom shared with me what a picky eater her infant son was. He would only eat carrots. She knew he needed other nutrients, so she mixed other things with the carrots. Mom and Dad rethought that plan when they noticed the bottoms of his feet turning orange. We are what we eat.

The Old Testament prophet Jeremiah often employed powerful imagery to convey God's message to his people. In today's passage, he refers to eating God's Word. Not only did he find the eating enjoyable, it also provided him with all he needed to survive. Jeremiah read, not just to understand or to receive some secondary benefit, but to spend time with God. May we, too, enjoy our Biblical feast so fully that the Word of God shines through us like carrots through that infant's feet.

*O God, may your words be my delight. Amen.*

*Schedule: Find a Bible you can read and understand. Set aside a specific time every day, put it in your day planner if that helps, to read God's Word.*

*Read: Jeremiah 15:15-20*

*Joe Iovino  
Monument, CO*

Monday, April 29, 2013

# An Optimal Life

*[Make] the most of every opportunity ... do not be foolish, but understand what the Lord's will is.*

*Ephesians 5:16-17*

When singer Donna Summer died recently, many people in the media were surprised. "I didn't know she was so sick," I kept hearing repeatedly. I'd seen an interview with her only weeks before her death. She was speaking about her love of the Lord. When asked if she missed the 1980s disco era when she was so popular, she gave an emphatic no! She spoke of her wonderful husband, her children and the rich life she had in Christ. A recent bout of illness has given me an increased admiration for those who smile in the face of adversity. Rejoicing and making the most of every opportunity is not only courageous, it's a testament to one's belief in our Lord.

*In sickness and in health, in everyday living, help me to see my opportunities and be a testament to your will, Lord Jesus. Amen.*

*Compliment: Compliment all the people you see "making the most" in the face of challenges today.*

*Read: Psalm 77; James 1:2-18*

*K.S. Wuertz  
Leslie, MO*

Tuesday, April 30, 2013

# In Stormy Weather

*Immediately Jesus spoke to them, saying, "Take heart; it is I. Do not be afraid."*

*Matthew 14:27*

Remember a time when you were in a storm? One day Jesus' disciples were in a boat crossing the lake of Galilee when a storm arose. They became afraid and woke Jesus. Jesus turned to the storm and said, "Peace! Be still!" The waves and sea obeyed. Another time, the disciples were crossing the same lake in rough weather and thought they saw a ghost. A voice said, "Take heart; it is I. Do not be afraid." It was Jesus who then invited Peter to come to him on the water. Peter did fine until he took his eyes off Jesus and began to sink, but Jesus lifted him up.

There are storms that blow into our lives. The natural response is to focus on the storm. What a sinking feeling that can create! Take your eyes off the storm and look to Jesus. Jesus says to us, "Do not be afraid." He can quiet the storms that come into our lives with a simple word, "Peace. Be still."

*Jesus, when storms blow into my life, help me keep my eyes and my trust focused on you. Amen.*

*Reflect: Is there a storm brewing in your life now? Can you share that concern with a good friend?*

*Read: Psalm 34*

*Leo Symmank  
Seabrook, TX*

Wednesday, May 1, 2013

# Help Wanted: Humble People Apply

*Humble yourselves ... under God's mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time.*

1 Peter 5:6

Are you a start-up or a maintainer? Either way this passage is for you—for us. I'm a start-up person. I always have some new project going on. I love the excitement of planning and creating something new. Where I get humbled is “in due time.” I can be very impatient waiting for the vision God has placed in me to come to fruition. Maintainers, those who stay the course, are just as uncomfortable when God is lifting them up to another realm. We all can be uncomfortable with change, but the “due time” of God making changes in our lives can really freak maintainers out. God needs all kinds of people to begin and maintain his work in the world—all kinds of humble people.

*Humble me with your mighty, loving hand so that I may live to the glory of you, Father. Amen.*

*Serve: Serve someone today to God's glory, feel the joy of humility and the recognition of “due time” coming.*

*Read: Ecclesiastes 3:1-8; Philippians 2:5-11*

K.S. Wuertz  
Leslie, MO

Thursday, May 2, 2013

# Day of Prayer

*I urge, then, first of all, that requests, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for all people.*

*1 Timothy 2:1*

The first Thursday in May has become a National Day of Prayer. We thank God in prayer today for all he has done for us, but we thank God especially that he has made himself known to us in Jesus Christ.

God is not some vague unknown power of the universe. He has made himself known in Jesus. In Jesus we see that the God of all creation is the God of our salvation. God so loved the people of the world that he sent his own Son to give his life to save us from sin, death and hell. Whoever believes and trusts in him shall not perish but have eternal life.

So we offer our prayers “in Jesus’ name.” Through Jesus, we know that the Father always hears our prayers and always answers for our good.

*Father in heaven, hear our prayers for our country, our family, our church, your world and all people in it. In Jesus’ name. Amen.*

*Write: Write out your prayer today. Do not erase and cross out. Write freely. You are talking to your Heavenly Father.*

*Read: Matthew 6:5-15*

*Lonie Eatherton  
Fenton, MO*

Friday, May 3, 2013

# Praying for Others

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

*Ephesians 1:16*

Recently I received a card from some people I did not know. A congregation was praying for the leadership of all the churches around. After their week of prayer, the couple assigned to me sent me the card to let me know about it. It touched my heart that people who did not know me were thanking God for me.

Oftentimes in life we feel powerless. Friends are struggling, children are worrying us or we are concerned for neighbors near and far. It is good to remember to lift them up in prayer. It does not need to be anything complicated. We are simply called to give God thanks for one another.

In his letter to the church in Ephesus, Paul sends along a greeting much like the card I received. He wants this church to know he has been remembering them in prayer. What a blessing when we lift up one another in prayer.

*O God, thank you for this great privilege of bringing others before you in prayer. Amen.*

*Write: Write a note to those for whom you pray to let them know.*

*Read: Ephesians 1:15-23*

*Joe Iovino  
Monument, CO*

Saturday, May 4, 2013

# Patience

*The Lord is good to those who wait for him, to the soul who seeks him.*

*Lamentations 3:25*

I watched a robin carry sticks, grass and string into my pine tree. After a few hundred trips, the nest was finished. Then a windstorm smashed it to the ground. As I looked at the debris, I saw a familiar sight. Mrs. Robin was patiently rebuilding her nest.

We often become impatient when we have to wait for something. Sometimes this impatience carries over into our prayer life. We pray and when God doesn't answer soon, we give up. Just remember that God is very patient with us. He doesn't give up on us the first time we sin—or even the 500th time! God sticks with us all through our life, even into old age. He hears our prayers, loves us and forgives our sins through Jesus.

*Lord, thank you for being patient with me. Help me to be patient with others. Amen.*

*Think: Think about where you need more patience in your life.*

*Read: Psalm 40:1; Colossians 3:12-14*

*Jeanette Dall  
Batavia, IL*

Sunday, May 5, 2013

# Whose Plan?

*For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord ...*

*Jeremiah 29:11*

I was running late for a meeting at church. As I ran out to the car, my neighbor was standing nearby crying. When I asked her if she was all right, she waved away my concern. Then she took a deep breath and said, "I just had a disturbing telephone call."

I knew then what I had to do. Forget the meeting and spend time with my neighbor. She was not a part of my plan for the evening. I had an agenda and my neighbor was not on it. But it was quite obvious that God put me there for a reason.

What a lesson for me: Put people first before projects and plans. God's agenda becomes our agenda. For example, our grandchildren need a helping hand or a listening ear. We stop what we are doing and spend time with them. Jesus put God's plan first. He always made time for people.

*Lord Jesus, help me follow you as you followed your Father's plan. You even went to the cross for me. Amen.*

*Make time: Make time for people around you, even the stranger.*

*Read: Proverbs 29:10-14; 1 John 2:15-17*

*Walter M. Schoedel  
Webster Groves, MO*

Monday, May 6, 2013

## “If I Should Die ...”

*For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain.*

*Philippians 1:21*

My parents taught me this prayer as a child. Perhaps you've prayed it: “Now I lay me down to sleep. I pray thee, Lord, my soul to keep. If I should die before I wake, I pray thee, Lord, my soul to take. If I should live another day, I pray thee, Lord, to guide my way. This I ask for Jesus' sake. Amen.”

Ah, the prayer of a child. I was entrusting my life to Jesus, no matter what. I could not define *soul*. I did not understand death. But I would sleep, and Jesus would keep.

Now, as a chaplain in a retirement community, I live with death every day. And I still pray this prayer every night. I will either wake up and serve Christ, or wake up and be with Christ. As Paul testified to the Philippians, it's a win-win!

*Jesus, answer this prayer! Amen.*

*Live: Live win-win, like a child!*

*Read: 2 Corinthians 5*

*Randy Shields  
St. Louis, MO*

Tuesday, May 7, 2013

# The Suffering Savior!

*... but this happened so that the works of God might be displayed in him.*

*John 9:2-3*

Suffering is not a riddle to be solved, but rather a mystery to be entrusted to the wisdom of the Lord! It is an exercise in futility if we try to figure all of this out. Relief comes only when we surrender our situation to the Lord, through faith, and trust him to redeem it! Instead of blaming our suffering on “old age” or “bad luck,” we are freed by the Spirit to live in the comfort and hope that our sins have been forgiven, in Christ!

We then become models and mentors, as we cling to the cross of Christ. We have learned through Christ’s suffering that when we “reach the end of our rope,” we cling to the Lord, and we just keep swinging!

*Lord, as we continue to suffer through pain, problems and pressures of life, continue to hold on to us so we can show others that suffering brings endurance and endurance hope, in you. Amen!*

*Consider: Share with a friend some of the pains and problems you are facing. The Lord is at work in both of you!*

*Read: Philippians 2:1-13*

*Rich Bimler  
Bloomington, IL*

Wednesday, May 8, 2013

# Still at Work

*Do not grow weary in doing good.*

*2 Thessalonians 3:13*

You might be enjoying a life of retirement as you travel or engage in long-forgotten hobbies. Then again, you might be retired and not enjoying it at all, shut away from what was once useful and fulfilling work.

You don't get to (or have to) retire from working for Jesus. By God's grace through faith in Jesus, you were created new in Jesus for a life of good works that God prepared for you (Ephesians 2:10). Serving others, praying for them—you really don't even get a day off. When his enemies complained that he healed a man on the Sabbath, Jesus answered, "My Father is working until now, and I am working" (John 5:17). Jesus has much to do and so do you. It's time to get to work.

*Lord Jesus, keep me hard at work in service to you and to others. Amen.*

*Work: Talk to someone about retirement today, and talk about working for Jesus.*

*Read: John 5:1-24*

*Carol Geisler  
Manchester, MO*

Thursday, May 9, 2013

# Where Did He Go?

*The Lord will watch over your coming and going both now and forevermore.*

*Psalm 121:8*

When Jesus ascended, the clouds hid him from sight. “Where did he go?” a child might ask. We ask the question too.

When trials happen, we wonder where God is. It seems like God has left us. We just can’t see him for all the sorrows that cloud him from our sight.

What do you tell a friend who just can’t seem to see the Lord when problems come? What do you tell yourself? The same thing that we tell the children. It’s the same thing that God himself tells us. Remember Jesus’ words, “I am with you always, even to the very end.” God’s promise is sure: “Never will I leave you. Never will I forsake you.”

He loves us and forgives our sins. He watches over us and protects us. He brings us through every trouble of life and finally brings us safely home to heaven.

*Dear ever-present God and Savior, be near me, Lord Jesus. Open my eyes of faith this day to see how you walk beside me always. Amen.*

*Bless: Use that wonderful blessing “God be with you!” when you talk to someone today.*

*Read: Psalm 46*

*Lonie Eatherton  
Fenton, MO*

Friday, May 10, 2013

# Designated Driver

*I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will counsel you with my eye upon you.*

*Psalm 32:8*

Because of my husband's recent disability, I have become the designated driver. Since my driving style is different than my husband's, we sometimes disagree about which road to take or how much time to allow for the trip. Following one of his "shortcuts" hasn't always saved time and often led to the frustration of turning around to get back on the main road.

God could be compared to the designated driver in our lives. He is in charge and knows exactly how we should go. When we try to go our own way and take a shortcut, it often leads to our getting lost. When we follow God's direction and guidance, we will find our way home—our heavenly home. Let God be the designated driver.

*Dear Lord, help me follow your direction for my life. Amen.*

*Think: Think of ways where you can follow God's guidance.*

*Read: Proverbs 3:1-12; Jeremiah 29:11*

*Jeanette Dall  
Batavia, IL*

Saturday, May 11, 2013

# Rearview Mirror

*I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.*

*Philippians 3:14*

In the early 1900s, a book called *The Woman and the Car* encouraged women to carry a small hand mirror to hold up periodically to see what was behind them in traffic. Soon after, the rearview mirror became a fixture in our cars. Today some vehicles are also equipped with a camera in the rear bumper to alert drivers to what is behind them. New drivers quickly learn to glance in the rearview mirror, but to keep their primary focus on where they are going.

Sometimes I can get too focused on life's rearview mirror, longing for my "glory days," or dwelling on old hurts or mistakes I refuse to let go. As in driving, all of this looking backward makes it very hard to move forward. We are encouraged to forget "what lies behind," and to "press on toward the goal" (Philippians 3:13-14). Glance in the rearview mirror from time to time, but remain focused on what lies ahead.

*Lord Jesus, keep my eyes firmly focused on you.  
Amen.*

*Notice: Notice the mirrors you encounter today, and ask God to help you keep the past in the past.*

*Read: Philippians 3:12-21*

*Joe Iovino  
Monument, CO*

Sunday, May 12, 2013

# The Rainbow

*I have set my bow in the cloud, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and the earth.*

*Genesis 9:13*

A mother went in the morning to the site where her twins would later in the day be awarded their high school graduation certificates. She was staking out her place for the outdoor ceremony. As she left, she noted in the sky a beautiful rainbow. It was a positive, hopeful sign for her.

The positive sign for the Christian mother was a reminder of God's unconditional covenant promises. That is a good thing. God's covenant promises do not only include his never destroying the world by a flood again, though we may have deserved it, but also his steadfast love and complete forgiveness for us, though we do not deserve it. For us Christians, the rainbow is a wonderful promise of God's covenant love. May we see a rainbow often!

*Heavenly Father, we praise you for the rainbow and for all of its covenant promises. Amen.*

*Look: Look for and share the covenant promises of the rainbow.*

*Read: Genesis 8:20—9:17*

*Vernon D. Gundermann  
Kirkwood, MO*

Monday, May 13, 2013

# Commanded to Love

*You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart  
and with all your soul and with all your mind ...*

*You shall love your neighbor as yourself.*

*Matthew 22:37-39*

We have often heard it said that love cannot be commanded, that it must be inspired. We can't command our children to love us. And love for our sweetheart is something we fall into. Then how can Jesus command us to love our God and our neighbor?

It's important to understand that God is not commanding us to like our neighbors, but to do love for them, to do acts that praise God for his goodness and that meet our neighbor's needs. Newlyweds soon learn that the essence of love is what they do for each other. It's what keeps the feeling of love alive.

The inspiration and the power for all our love comes from the love that God did for us in Jesus Christ. So we can joyfully celebrate his command to do his love in his world!

*Lord, you do love for us every day. Lead us to do love for others every day. Amen.*

*Do: Do acts of love today.*

*Read: 1 Corinthians 13:13; Colossians 1:3-6*

*Donald Becker  
Oak Park, IL*

Tuesday, May 14, 2013

# Never Means Never

*I will never leave you; I will never forsake you.*

*Deuteronomy 31:8*

Joshua was given a daunting task—not only to lead the fearful, grumbling Israelites, but to encourage them.

Every Christian feels, at some time, that he is forsaken, abandoned, fighting his battles alone. Perhaps you receive minimal contact from friends or family or you are bearing the pain of chronic illness. You think, “Where is God when I need him?”

I quote a translation of our verse by a Hebrew scholar: “There are in this text five negatives which allows us this interpretation: ‘I will never, I will never leave thee, I will never, I will never, I will never forsake thee.’ I know of no other promise of God in which he makes such efforts to assure the Christian of his abiding presence.” He will not let you down. He will stretch out his hand to you and hold you fast.

*Lord, remembering these strong words of promise, help me to face whatever each day may bring. Amen.*

*Be bold: Walk boldly through trials with the five-fold assurance that your loving Lord will be with you all the way.*

*Read: Deuteronomy 31:6, 8; Hebrews 13:5; Matthew 28:20*

*Constance Bretscher  
Valparaiso, IN*

Wednesday, May 15, 2013

# Check Your Display

*It was ... that the works of God might be displayed in him.*

*John 9:3*

John 9 is one of my favorite chapters in the Bible—the story of the man born blind whom Jesus healed. Recently I got “stuck” on verse three, after the disciples asked Jesus whose sin caused the man’s blindness. Jesus said, “It was ... that the works of God might be displayed in him.”

I looked at my own life and what I “display.” When I am hurt or disappointed, do I display Satan’s work of anger, resentment and bitterness, or do I display Jesus’ work of forgiveness and reconciliation? When good things happen, do I claim credit or boast about my “good luck” or do I give glory and thanks to God?

Are your words, attitudes and behavior a testimony to God’s work in your life? Or does your “display” need adjustment?

*Father, let my life display your grace to me. Amen.*

*Think: Consider the impact and witness of your life.*

*Read: John 9:1-7, 24-33; John 4:39-42*

*Diane Bahn  
Cypress, TX*

Thursday, May 16, 2013

# How Do We Look?

*With long life I will satisfy him.*

*Psalm 91:16*

Messages that interrupt our TV programs, articles and ads in the magazines in our mailboxes often are aimed at us “seniors.” They inform us—as if we weren’t already quite aware of this—“You’re getting older!” They offer cosmetic covering of wrinkles. They suggest clothing that will make us look “years younger.” They’ll even help us grow hair to cover our bald spots.

Scriptures don’t provide us with much advice about grooming or fashion. Jesus himself tells us that, during the days and years of our life, the very top of our “to-do list” ought be cultivating and seeking “the kingdom of God” and growing in the grace of being “right with God.” That, of course, occurs as we keep in mind what God has given us in his Son.

God has a word for us on the matter, hidden in the book of Psalms. We’re told about a special way God regards us as day by day our years add up.

*Gracious Lord, help me see how beautiful I am in your eyes. Amen.*

*Do: Talk to at least two people about how we look in God’s eyes.*

*Read: Psalm 91:14-16; Psalm 90*

*Karl Lutze  
Valparaiso, IN*

Friday, May 17, 2013

# A Transformed Mind

*... be transformed by the renewing of your mind ...*

*Romans 12:2*

I don't know who first said, "When you change the way you look at a thing, the thing you look at changes." That's true. As an example of that, before the 1950s most home laundering was done on Monday, by a stay-at-home wife, using a wringer washing machine, then hanging the wash outside to dry. Not much of that is true today. Our 1950s mind about laundry has changed as our view of the who, when and how involved has been altered. Right?

Our spirituality and the life renewal follow much the same pattern. As God dwells in us and changes our minds, we see things differently. That new view leads us to trust what he has done for us and to act more and more like how he wants us to act. That transformation is what happens through the waters of baptism and in our use of his Word. Rejoice in and treasure both.

*O Lord, transform my mind, and help me live the renewed life. Amen.*

*Ponder: How has the Spirit changed your mind over the years? What still needs some work? Is there anything holding that up?*

*Read: 1 John 2:15-17*

*Charles S. Mueller, Sr.  
Bloomington, IL*

Saturday, May 18, 2013

# Encore! Encore!

*We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.*

*Romans 6:4*

Just about everywhere I turn these days, I see aging described as “encore” living. My apologies to whomever first coined that phrase, but what exactly does it mean?

One way to look at an encore is as a repeat performance ... and who wants to live in yesterday and simply repeat the past? Another way to look at an encore is a second achievement that surpasses the first ... and who wants that kind of pressure these days?

Encore living is only possible because of Jesus. When he died on Good Friday and rose on Easter, that was the ultimate encore, and by faith I am made new. Encore! Encore!

*Lord, thank you for your saving love, mercy and grace. Help me live each day to your glory. Amen.*

*Enjoy: Give God a standing ovation today as you bask in the goodness of his grace!*

*Read: Ephesians 4:20-24; Colossians 3:12*

*Jane P. Wilke  
Woodbury, MN*

Sunday, May 19, 2013

# A Circle of Friends

*Let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another ...*

*Hebrews 10:24-25*

In our youth some of us sang, “It only takes a spark to get a fire going ... That’s how it is with God’s love. Once you have experienced it, you want to pass it on.” Both the fire and the wind that fans its flame are symbols of the Holy Spirit.

Remove a coal away from the other coals and its glow soon dies out. When a person removes himself from the community that is sharing God’s good news, his faith is in danger of dying. As we speak to each other of Christ’s love and forgiveness, God’s holy breath fans our flame of love for Jesus and others. We are the glowing embers around which others, frostbitten by the wintry winds of woe, can warm their hearts and rejoice with us in a gracious Savior. Each of us is an important coal in God’s caring community. His love is so great we want to pass it on.

*O gracious Spirit, blow gently into my heart as I listen again to the good news of your love. Amen.*

*Visit: Visit someone who seems to have few friends. Take someone along with you.*

*Read: 1 Thessalonians 4:9-12*

*Leo Symmank  
Seabrook, TX*

Monday, May 20, 2013

# A Taste of Heaven

*Taste and see that the Lord is good!*

*Psalm 34:8*

As we drive to visit family, my aunt is getting everything ready to make homemade ice cream. We beat the eggs, add sugar, milk products and vanilla. It's heated, put aside until curdled and finally hand-cranked. We add ice and rock salt to help it "set." Talk about hope-full! Hope springs eternal that it will set. And it does! My mouth waters; my taste buds explode at the season's first spoonful.

As I enjoy this "taste of heaven," I'm reminded of the taste of heaven we receive through bread and wine during Holy Communion. When my aunt makes ice cream, it's a gift of love to our family. Our Savior continues to gift us with his love and presence. In his Supper, we receive forgiveness of sins, life and salvation. Ice cream lasts only a short time, but his Supper unites us for an eternity with him.

*Good Father, keep me united with you through Word and Sacrament. Amen.*

*Think: About the times when you celebrated with family or friends around a particular food.*

*Read: Psalm 34; Matthew 26:26-28; Mark 14:22-24; Luke 22:19, 20; 1 Corinthians 11: 23-26*

*Louise Schini Weber  
Fort Myers, FL*

Tuesday, May 21, 2013

# The Icebox

*Your love, Lord, reaches to the heavens, your faithfulness to the skies.*

*Psalm 36:5*

My grandmother's icebox sat in the corner of her kitchen. It was a box with two doors, the top one where you put the food to be kept cold and the bottom door where the ice was kept. It had a container under it to catch the water from the melting ice. Eventually my grandmother was able to purchase an electric refrigerator. It was a positive change for her as she no longer had to purchase ice or empty the heavy buckets of melted ice water. Her food was kept safely at a cooler and even temperature.

Throughout our lives there have been so many inventions and improvements to make our lives easier and more comfortable. The one area of our lives that does not need improvement is God's love for us. The proof for this is Jesus Christ, God's Son, who lived and died for us. God's love is perfect!

*Father, thank you for your eternal love. Amen.*

*Remember: Remember how God's grace has made your life enjoyable through the years.*

*Read: John 3:16-17*

*Jean Plesko  
Ballwin, MO*

Wednesday, May 22, 2013

# Trust, Even When Dark

*Let him who walks in darkness and has no light trust in the name of the Lord and rely on his God.*

*Isaiah 50:10*

The Cherokees had a rite of passage: When a boy was of age his father would take him out into the forest, blindfold him and have him sit on a stump where he was to stay until the dawning sun shone through his blindfold. Once he survived the night, he would be a man. He cannot tell anyone of his experience. The boy is naturally terrified. There are noises in the night, and the night is long. Finally the sun comes up, and he removes his blindfold to discover his father sitting on a stump very near. His father has been there all night.

You and I may feel alone and in complete darkness. We are stumped. We stumble, worry and fret. But we are not alone. Our God is there! We can rely on God and walk in the light. Like a Cherokee lad, we must learn to trust, not in our own strength and fortitude, but in our God, who is always there.

*Gracious Lord, teach us to trust in you, especially when all seems dark, and we are afraid. Amen.*

*Sit: Sit in a dark room, or close your eyes, and picture Jesus sitting beside you.*

*Read: Isaiah 50:10-11; John 3:16-21*

*Eldor Kaiser  
Lenexa, KS*

Thursday, May 23, 2013

# Weariness

*My bones waste away.*

*Psalm 31:10*

Your bones ache in cold weather or maybe they ache all the time. You may be cautious when you walk, fearing a fall that could result in a broken hip. The cry of the psalmist strikes close to home, “My bones waste away!”

Your Lord knows what you experience. The same psalm describes Jesus’ life: “I hear the whispering of many ... as they plot to take my life.” Jesus’ enemies plotted successfully to take his life, and he went willingly to the cross for you and rose from the dead. By God’s grace through faith in Jesus, forgiveness and eternal life are yours. In the psalm we hear Jesus’ prayer from the cross: “Into your hand I commit my spirit.” Weary or strong, commit yourself into God’s hands. You are safe there.

*Lord Jesus, when I am weary, lead me to trust in you. Amen.*

*Help: If you can, help someone today who needs assistance in walking. If you cannot help physically, support them in prayer.*

*Read: Psalm 31*

*Carol Geisler  
Manchester, MO*

Friday, May 24, 2013

# Your Party of Choice?

*I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances.*

*Philippians 4:11*

The party invitations are out there. You have a choice.

There's The Pity Party. "Feel sorry for me!" "You think you've got it bad? I've got it so much worse!!"

There's The Chew 'Em Up & Spit 'Em Out Party. "Did you hear what he did?" "I can't stand to be around her." "I wish they would move out."

There's The Anxiety Party. "I'm so afraid of what the doctor's going to say." "A severe storm warning has been issued—it scares me to death!"

There's The Contentment Party. "Day by day with the Lord Jesus." "My life—his gift." "Life's not about me—it's about his love for me!"

Your options are: "Woe is me," "Attack and destroy," "Worry breeds worry" or "I have learned to be content." The choice is clear.

There is security in the Christ of Scripture, the teacher of contentment!

*Jesus, thank you for the blessing of contentment.  
Amen.*

*Be: Become a "party crasher." Live contentment!*

*Read: 1 Timothy 6:3-21*

*Randy Shields  
St. Louis, MO*

Saturday, May 25, 2013

# Rescuer

*Why are you afraid, O you of little faith?*

*Matthew 8:26*

The Twelve knew how frightening the storms on the Sea of Galilee could be. This was an unusually ugly storm. Water was coming over the side of the boat. Jesus, was in deep sleep through it all. The Twelve didn't want to disturb him, but they were desperate. "Save us, Lord; we are perishing," they cried.

We know the story. Jesus stands up and commands the winds: "Stop your storming!" As suddenly as the tempest had begun, the waters became calm.

Do you suppose the men applauded Christ's performance, expecting him in return to bow in triumph—or to accept in modesty the recognition these disciples were bestowing on him? Jesus turns away from any suggestion of showmanship to teach all his followers that even in our most life-threatening encounters, the Christ who experienced the horrors of Good Friday stands near, strong to save.

*Help me, Lord, as I face the storms of life, to be aware of your nearness. Amen.*

*Talk: Discuss Psalm 107:23-37 with someone, asking them if they've been frightened by a brush with death. Does the Psalm speak to that experience?*

*Read: Psalm 107:23-32; Matthew 8:23-27*

*Karl Lutze  
Valparaiso, IN*

Sunday, May 26, 2013

# Living Selflessly

*If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.*

*Matthew 16:24*

You won't find today's verse preached in the many "God-loves-you-be-happy" churches that dot our land. Jesus doesn't promise us a life of blissful ease. He hands us a cross. But in taking that cross and losing our life, we find eternal life. When Jesus calls us to deny ourselves and follow him, he describes the complete conversion God's Holy Spirit works in our hearts as we turn away from sin and embrace Christ. We will bear crosses in this life, but Christ walks beside us, helping us carry the burden. As much as we love family and friends, we love Christ even more, because he gave himself to win an impossibly glorious eternal life for us and everyone we love. Take up your cross and willingly follow Jesus on the road to eternal life.

*Jesus, when the burdens I carry weigh me down, thanks for helping me carry the load. Amen.*

*Do: Is someone you know carrying a heavy cross right now? Do something to ease that person's burden—take them a meal, call or e-mail them, remind them you are praying for them.*

*Read: Matthew 16:24-28; Luke 14:25-27*

*Ruth Geisler  
Aliso Viejo, CA*

Monday, May 27, 2013

# Humble Hero

*He commanded our fathers to teach to their children, that the next generation might know them ... and arise and tell them to their children ...*

*Psalm 78:5-6*

All heroes are either very talented, well-known or extremely brave. I had a different kind of hero in my life—my dad. What made him a hero to me was his great love for his family and for God. Dad lived out his Christian faith and taught us kids to always be aware that we're part of God's family.

Family devotions, prayer, church attendance and helping others were a big part of growing up. We taught the same values and beliefs to our children, and they're now teaching them to their children. Because of Dad's Christian life and the work of the Holy Spirit, three generations have learned about God and the forgiveness he offers us through Jesus' death and resurrection.

*Lord, help me to tell the younger generation of your love and forgiveness. Amen.*

*Tell: Tell your favorite Bible story to a young child.*

*Read: Deuteronomy 6:4-9; 2 Timothy 3:14-15*

*Jeanette Dall  
Batavia, IL*

Tuesday, May 28, 2013

# Immigrants

*But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.*

*Philippians 3:13-14*

As we grow older, we are sometimes like immigrants going into a new land. The normal aging process changes us and puts us into entirely new situations. Our bodies may be altered and do not respond to our needs or desires. As immigrants into this new land of aging, we have to develop ways of managing a new environment.

As God's plan for our lives leads us into growing older, we must rely on him to guide and strengthen us. When we pray for and receive his grace, we are able to survive and even thrive in this new land of aging. Praising God and accepting life's changes enable us to continue to live in service to him.

*Thank you, Lord, for your blessings as I continue to adjust to this new land of aging. Amen.*

*Help: Help others to navigate through all the challenges in the new land of aging by providing a sympathetic listening ear.*

*Read: Philippians 4:11-13; Psalm 51:12*

*Jean Plesko  
Ballwin, MO*

Wednesday, May 29, 2013

# A Labor of Love

*I thank my God every time I remember you. In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now, being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion, until the day of Christ Jesus.*

*Philippians 1:3-6*

Preparing for Evelyn's celebration of life service, the family organized photo albums and heirlooms for family to see and choose ... a true labor of love. Each closet, cabinet or album we opened flooded us with memories, bringing tears of sorrow and of joy. There were a gazillion photos, 1942 bridal shower and wedding items, trip scrapbooks, handwritten diaries. All were devoured and celebrated!

What a blessing Evelyn was in our lives! What a role model of encouragement to love and serve our neighbors as ourselves! And what a wonderful reminder to each of us that all we do, we do because our Good Father first loved us.

*Good Father, thanks for giving us family and friends who keep us focused on you. Amen.*

*Ponder: Remember special family members.*

*Read: 1 Thessalonians 3:6-13, 1 Corinthians 15:55-58*

*Louise Schini Weber  
Fort Myers, FL*

Thursday, May 30, 2013

# Lay It on—Thick

*I have derived much joy and comfort from your love.*

*Philemon 1:7*

I remember when someone “laying it on” meant they were offering exaggerated praise. But “laying it on” has a positive side too. It could be something said as an encouragement to a teenager facing a testing moment or anyone needing a little push to deal with a challenge.

St. Paul could be a master at “laying it on” and showed it many times by pressing his friend Philemon to do something contrary to the way most people would react in his day. So Paul wrote Philemon a short letter and laid it on—thick. No wonder early Christians included this remarkable correspondence in the New Testament. It helped a runaway slave named Onesimus. It can help us deal with someone who is teetering on the edge of doing what’s right and needs encouragement. Do you know anyone like that? Maybe the person in the mirror?

*Lord, help me to be as encouraging to others as you are always encouraging to me. Amen.*

*Consider: Who needs your encouraging word? Will they get it?*

*Read: Philemon 1:1-25*

*Charles S. Mueller, Sr.  
Bloomington, IL*

Friday, May 31, 2013

# We Are Missionaries

*If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation.*

*2 Corinthians 5:17*

I remember the day I asked my first grade Sunday school students what careers they might choose when they grew up. One little boy raised his hand and said in a rather disgruntled voice, “I thought we all had to be missionaries.”

It’s nice to know some of my teaching takes hold. Yes, we all have to be missionaries. We might be firemen, soldiers, astronauts and other professions enamored by first graders. We might be on disability or retired, but we are missionaries as well. No matter our profession or stage in life, we are Christ’s new creatures, called to a ministry of reconciliation. If people offend us, we speak to them with words of love. If family members and caregivers drive us to distraction, we remind ourselves that they are God’s gift. If we despair over our own failings, God reminds us that those failing are gone. He has made us new, with a new life and a new ministry.

*Jesus, help me to live out my ministry of reconciliation with everyone I meet. Amen.*

*Do: Who needs to hear words of Christ’s love from you today? Write that person a note or talk to them.*

*Read: 2 Corinthians 5:16-21; Ephesians 2:8-10*

*Ruth Geisler  
Aliso Viejo, CA*

Saturday, June 1, 2013

# All For One!

*All the believers were together and had everything in common.*

*Acts 2:44*

This past summer, I met a woman who grew up in China and immigrated to the United States as a college student. As we've shared our lives, we've told our stories of faith to each other. She came to Christ as an adult; I was raised a Christian. Her life growing up in China was very different than mine growing up in central Iowa. Still, we keep coming back to how much we have in common. In a recent conversation, we talked about how discovering someone is a Christian instantly offers shared commonality. As individual Christians, we can be a diverse lot. My new friend and I can learn from each other's differences. But really, we have everything in common. It's something to think about—maybe during the next church committee meeting?

*Help me to build cohesiveness, Lord. Amen.*

*Connect: Get on the phone, write a note or invite someone to lunch.*

*Read: John 15:1-17; Romans 12:3-8*

*K.S. Wuertz  
Leslie, MO*

Sunday, June 2, 2013

# Aging Eyes and Light

*When Jesus spoke again to the people he said, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life."*

*John 8:12*

It is normal for our eyes to change as we age. The eyes' response to varying light conditions dramatically changes. The ability to control the amount of light entering the eye makes us more sensitive to light and darkness, and it takes longer to adapt to changing light conditions. For example, glaring light at night almost blinds us for an instant. Bright sunlight can be painful and cause us to squint. It is harder to navigate in darkened areas, making us more vulnerable to falls.

There is light, the light of the world that creates only good for us. Jesus is that light; he offers us love, care and mercy. His light gives us the vision to see, really see, everything that is important. The light that he provides guides us throughout life and toward eternal salvation.

*Lord, guide me to show others your light. Amen.*

*Share: Share the light of the world with someone today.*

*Read: John 9:39; Matthew 5:14-16*

*Jean Plesko  
Ballwin, MO*

Monday, June 3, 2013

# Closing the Door

*There is a time for everything ... a time to plant and a time to uproot ...*

*Ecclesiastes 3:1-2*

Close a church; uproot lives. Sounds painful, yet God may have a new plan as he closes the church doors and opens new ones.

Redeemer Lutheran Church closed when Michigan utilities exceeded offerings. Helping the congregation move through the door for the last time was difficult, yet fulfilling. People found new church homes and transitioned to new ministries.

How many times have we resisted walking through the door of loss and pain, only to find a new and more fulfilling life on the other side. Aging closes doors, yet the new opportunities arise.

*Lord of the ages, help us walk through the doors of loss and pain, anticipating new life, whether here on earth or in heaven. Amen.*

*Reminisce: Reminisce about closed doors in your life and thank God for those he opened. Rest in the promise of green pastures now and forever.*

*Read: Ecclesiastes 3:1-14; Psalm 23*

Rodney Otto  
Grand Rapids, MI

Tuesday, June 4, 2013

# The Best Is Yet to Come

*He who was seated on the throne said, "Behold, I am making all things new."*

*Revelation 21:5*

The best is yet to come! I think those are among the most hope-filled words that can ever be spoken. No matter what the circumstances, to know that it is only going to get better renews our spirits and gladdens our hearts.

We need good news. As we get older, we can think we do not have much to look forward to in life. Our aches and pains can dominate the present. But the best is yet to come. Jesus, our risen and ascended Lord and Savior, speaks to us from the other side of death and tells us, "Behold, I am making all things new!" Jesus holds before us the vision of himself already there in eternity, calling us to the new creation that he is preparing for us. "I am making all things new!" he assures us. How good is that!

*Dear Father, lift up my heart, my eyes, my hopes, beyond my daily struggles, to the joy, the wonder of your new creation. Gladden my spirit with the vision of all that awaits me in your eternity. Amen.*

*Discuss: Share with those close to you your hope, your vision of life forever with Christ.*

*Read: Revelation 21:1-7*

*Lionel Otto  
Adelaide, Australia*

Wednesday, June 5, 2013

# Purified by Adversity

*It is good for me that I was afflicted, that I might learn your statutes.*

*Psalm 119:71*

Depression has typically been my first response to the fires of adversity. Unpleasant words and actions sear deeply into my soul, leaving painful scars. Even when the flames of adversity roar about me, I know that God is still actively present, caring for me in all circumstances and allowing the upheaval in my life to accomplish a greater purpose. When I suffer the consequences of my own sinful choices, I know that God is lovingly permitting the winds of adversity to burn away my imperfections and supply a quality I lack so that I can become spiritually mature, purified for his purposes. As I renew my intimacy with God, I trust his promise to never leave me or forsake me.

*Dear Father, when the fires of adversity cause upheaval in my life, strengthen my faith in your good purposes and renew my trust in your promises. In Jesus' name. Amen.*

*Consider: Consider your own response to adversity. Does it draw you into greater intimacy with God?*

*Read: James 1:2-4*

*Kathy Graumann  
Tomball, TX*

Thursday, June 6, 2013

# Living for Christ

*I am the vine, you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit ...*

*John 15:5*

A few years ago I lived next door to a young girl from Hong Kong. When Sheeping looked into my yard, where fruit trees, evergreen trees, and rose bushes grew, she talked to me in halting English about planting things in her yard. I looked across the fence the next day and saw a sad little red flower planted in the hard clay soil. By the second day its bright head had bent over in despair. I talked to Sheeping about planting hardier plants, digging deep holes, and filling them with water. Within months a sturdy grape vine began happily bearing fruit on a trellis in her yard.

Jesus chooses us. He plants faith in us. He guarantees us a joy that cannot be dimmed in hard soil or times of drought. Our good fruit springs naturally from the faith God's Holy Spirit planted in us. Grow happily, surrounded by Jesus' love.

*Jesus, help me bear fruit for you. Amen.*

*Do: Buy a new plant for your home.*

*Read: John 15:5-17; John 14:12-14*

*Ruth Geisler  
Aliso Viejo, CA*

Friday, June 7, 2013

# Retiring Well!

*Making the best use of time ...*

*Ephesians 5:16*

When you plan to retire, prepare yourself. Most retirees today will be spending one-third of their life in retirement. The challenge of retiring well should be taken seriously, but not with fear and trepidation. Preparation is very important. The art of living well and aging well sets the stage for retiring well. You make good use of the time that God gives you.

Here are some valuable tips that provide invaluable insights for your retirement years:

1. Spend time with the Lord in prayer, devotion and worship.
2. Learn to cope with stress. Practice meditation, go for walks, exercise, join a support group.
3. Have regular mental activities, socialize, reach out in service opportunities.

Be proactive in your retirement days. Think of them as being “repositioned.”

*Lord Jesus, help me see retirement as the best years of my life. Amen.*

*Enjoy: Spend time with other retirees, remembering, reframing and rejoicing in this new stage of living.*

*Read: Ephesians 5:15-21; Colossians 3:12-17*

*Walter M. Schoedel  
Webster Groves, MO*

Saturday, June 8, 2013

# Complete with Nails

*But he was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his wounds we are healed.*

*Isaiah 53:5*

My granddaughter brought me a crucifix. “Look, Grandpa,” she said, cradling the cross in her hands, “they forgot the nails.” Indeed, the stylized figure gave no evidence of nails.

A quick trip to the open tomb without going by way of the cross (complete with nails) may create an artistic impression of a caring God, but has little to do with resurrection.

The story of Jesus’ passion drags us kicking and screaming down the way of the cross to the scandal of Calvary and the cosmic depression of that Friday death—so that Easter can overwhelm us with the truth that death has indeed lost its sting and the grave its victory (1 Corinthians 15:55).

*Lord, lead us on the journey to the joy of the empty tomb by way of the cross. Amen.*

*Find: Find someone who is enduring the nails of suffering and share with them the giving love of the risen Christ.*

*Read: Mark 14:1-15:47; Isaiah 53*

*Ted Schroeder  
Maple Grove, MN*

Sunday, June 9, 2013

# Keeping Promises

*I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.*

*Jeremiah 31:34*

Most of us have promised God never again to commit a certain wrong, only to commit it again. Some say, “God, I swear I will never do it again.” All this stakes our hope on the strength of our promises to God. We may have already learned that this often leads to frustration and causes us to be indifferent. “Why try when you cannot do it anyway?”

God offers us a better way. He invites us to build our lives not on our promise to him, but on his promise to us. God promises to forgive all who confess their sins and trust in Jesus as their Savior. There is more. He promises to raise us from the dead just as he raised his Son, Jesus.

God keeps all his promises without fail. For that reason, we can build on them with confidence. All the promises of God find their yes and amen in Christ Jesus, our Lord.

*Father, help me build my life on your promises.  
Amen.*

*Reflect: What can I joyfully do today as my acts of thanksgiving to my Lord?*

*Read: Hebrews 10:11-25*

*Leo Symmank  
Seabrook, TX*

Monday, June 10, 2013

# Batten Down

*But I received mercy ... and the grace of our Lord overflowed for me with faith and love that are in Christ Jesus.*

*1 Timothy 1:13-14*

Sailors on a boat being blasted by howling, rain-filled winds shout to each other: “Batten down the hatches.” In many places God’s Word urges us to firm up the two vital factors that make up our spiritual stability, faith and love, both in normal as well as in crisis times.

Faith and love are the “nuts and bolts” of our Christian life. Graphically imagine fastening two pieces of wood at right angles. The vertical piece reminds us of faith, as we relate to God through Christ Jesus, while the horizontal piece is our love for people in Jesus’ name, regardless of whether they agree with us or not.

Christ was pinned to the cross pieces for us. Ron Hutchcraft said on the radio: “Jesus would rather die than lose us.” Nothing can “wrench” us away from God’s limitless love for us.

*Lord, fasten together again our trust in you. Amen.*

*Imagine: Imagine yourself grasping onto God’s promises and holding on tight.*

*Read: 2 Timothy 3:10; Jude 1:20*

*Deane Schuessler  
Woodbury, MN*

Tuesday, June 11, 2013

# The Dreams of Age

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

*Joel 2:28*

In Luke 2:22-40, Simeon and Anna remind us that the clearest, sharpest and most hopeful vision of the future is almost always the province of the aged. The vision of just who this Jesus (here still an infant) was to be and what he was to do was not found in his parents, and certainly not in the religious leaders. Even the wise men seemed to be unsure just who and what this star-crossed child might be. Simeon and Anna knew. With a wisdom born of years of faith, they focused not on the past but on the future.

Too often we look to the aged for reflections of the past. We ask them about how it used to be. We make them congregational historians. We bring them in to lend the weight of hindsight to our planning. But if it is true that the “young have visions,” then it is also true that the “old dream dreams.”

*Lord, give us the wisdom of age that fires our eyes of hope. Amen.*

*Encourage: Offer words of encouragement and hope based on faith.*

*Read: Luke 2:22-40; Romans 5:1-5*

*Ted Schroeder  
Maple Grove, MN*

Wednesday, June 12, 2013

# Our Gift to the Future

*So even to old age and gray hairs, O God, do not forsake me, until I proclaim your might to another generation, your power to all those to come.*

*Psalm 71:18*

This past summer my wife and I, together with her three siblings and their spouses, traveled to Sweden. Our goal was to connect with the villages, churches and childhood homes associated with my wife's Swedish grandparents.

The grandparents had left Sweden during tough times to come to America in hopes of building better lives. They left behind family, friends, familiar customs and language. One thing they did not leave behind was their faith. They took it with them, helped establish churches and put their faith into practice while facing new challenges. They intentionally transmitted their faith to their children—who, in turn, transmitted it to us. Praise God!

*Thank you, Lord, for our Christian heritage. Help us to effectively pass on our faith to others. Amen.*

*Reach out: Reach out to a younger person within the sphere of your influence. Give that person a word of encouragement for living the Christian faith and life.*

*Read: Psalm 71; 1 Timothy 1:3-8*

*Ted Zimmerman  
Napa, CA*

Thursday, June 13, 2013

# Reason for the Season

*Jesus said ... “I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die.”*

*John 11:25*

The Easter season has drawn to a close for many in our culture. It is, however, a never-ending celebration for those who know Jesus. We will continue singing hymns and celebrating the resurrection, not only for the Easter season, but every day in the year. The reason for this season goes far beyond bunnies, candy and your new spring clothes!

The resurrection is an exclamation point on the transforming reality of our salvation, won by Christ’s perfect life and death on the cross! Easter means that Jesus lives—today and forever! He continues to love us, change us and give us a new testimony each day. Tell everyone what God is doing in your life right now! Love, forgive and bless others by his power. Jesus is the reason for every season.

*Lord, open my lips to tell of your glory today!  
Amen.*

*Tell: Practice telling others what God is doing in your life each day.*

*Read: 1 Peter 3:15*

*Sharolyn Sander  
Roselle, IL*

Friday, June 14, 2013

# Good Advice

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

*Acts 27:11*

The facts laid out in Acts 27 are quite simple. St. Paul was being shipped under guard to Rome. It was late in the sailing season and there were signs they ought to ride out the winter in the port where they had paused. But it was only halfway to their goal. The owner of the ship and his sailing master wanted to keep going. The army officer in charge of Paul and of the ship was uncertain. Paul advised them to wait where they were until spring. His advice was ignored and the result was disastrous.

One thing this shows is the importance of both receiving and accepting good advice in life. The same goes for the abundance of advice God offers us in the Bible not only about how to be with him eternally, but how to make the most of our life here. But good advice is not of much use unless it is recognized and followed.

*Help me to seek, recognize and heed your guidance, O Lord. Amen.*

*Ask: What was the best advice you ever got?*

*Read: Acts 27:1-44—a great story worth reading in its entirety.*

*Charles S. Mueller, Sr.  
Bloomington, IL*

Saturday, June 15, 2013

# Worship by Doing

*Let them praise the name of the Lord, for his name alone is exalted; his majesty is above earth and heaven.*

*Psalm 148:13*

Sometimes I wonder how much use I am to God. I don't always know the right words, make the right gestures, feel the right things. Sometimes I am not physically able to do what I think needs to be done. I want to worship God, so I am tempted to imitate religious people I know. But worship is not about doing religious things. A mountain cannot do anything religious, nor can cattle or water. They praise God by being what God created them to be. We, too, praise God when we use the gifts and abilities we have received to the glory of God.

*When I am tempted to “fake it,” remind me, God, that you simply call me to be the person you created, redeemed and called. Amen.*

*Reflect:* Reflect on the gifts and opportunities God has given you and how you might use them to be the person God created.

*Read:* Psalm 148

*Joe Iovino  
Monument, CO*

Sunday, June 16, 2013

# Developing Character

*But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self control.*

*Galatians 5:22-23*

In every story, some character faces some kind of hurdle or trial. Some grow. Some go bad. That's character development. We are all writing the stories of our lives and face situations that change us. God is interested in our character development. He wants us to develop into Christlike characters.

Sometimes that's difficult. We pray for comfort, peace, happiness, health and wealth, but don't always receive it. Remember, God is more interested in developing our Christlike characteristics than in our happiness. Just as children don't become strong and moral by being given everything they want, we must face hard realities to grow to be more like Jesus.

It is easy for us sinful characters to become bitter over hardships instead of learning to love and forgive from them. Can you think of hurdles and hardships as opportunities to be more like Jesus?

*Gracious God, make us more like Jesus each day.  
Amen.*

*Thank: Thank God for your growth in character.*

*Read: Ephesians 4:11-16*

*Eldor Kaiser  
Lenexa, KS*

Monday, June 17, 2013

# My Hymnal

*Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God.*

*Colossians 3:16*

Do you know where your old hymnbook is? We never use a hymnbook at church anymore. Now everything is read from a screen in the front of the church. It is easier than juggling a lot of books, but it almost made me forget just what a treasure I have in my old hymnbook.

Right there in the front are psalms and prayers and liturgical orders. And with the hymns it is an incredible resource for just about every circumstance in life. When we go back to those hymns that are hardly ever sung anymore, it is like meeting up with an old friend. It is almost like reading a diary of my life. They tell me over and over again how much God enfolds me within his grace and loves me as his child in Christ.

*Lord, thank you for the way hymns and psalms and spiritual songs have graced my life. Amen.*

*List: List the memories as you page through your hymnbook.*

*Read: Colossians 3:12-17*

*Lionel Otto  
Adelaide, Australia*

Tuesday, June 18, 2013

# Clothes Do Make a Statement

*I will greatly rejoice in the Lord; my soul shall exult in my God, for he has clothed me with the garments of salvation; he has covered me with the robe of righteousness ...*

*Isaiah 61:10*

Hub was in his 90s. He was an unofficial greeter at our congregation. He was always nattily dressed. What impressed me was that each year he bought a new suit, shirts and ties. In contrast with many senior men, he didn't allow his dress to grow old with him.

Clothes do not make a person. They can, however, be indicators of an attitude. Hub wasn't waiting to die. He was embracing life and continued to fully participate in ministry. He exercised his gift of hospitality. He dressed for his role. He treated himself as special even as he helped others to feel special.

*Lord, through your Son you clothed me with the garments of salvation. Through your Spirit clothe my life with the robe of righteous behavior as well. Amen.*

*Go through your closet: Replace some "tired" items of your wardrobe this week.*

*Read: Isaiah 61:1-11; Colossians 3:12-17*

*Ted Zimmerman  
Napa, CA*

Wednesday, June 19, 2013

# Knowing God's Will

*Be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God ...*

*Romans 12:2*

Many times we struggle with trying to discern God's will for our lives. But that struggle actually puts the cart before the horse. St. Paul tells us to "present our bodies as a living sacrifice" to God. God's Holy Spirit transforms and renews us to live in God's perfect will. God planned our life's journey before we were born. As we struggle with health issues, retirement issues, relationships with loved ones, God speaks to us in his Word and through his Holy Supper. He reminds us that we have died with Christ and now live as his child—a child who can walk confidently in his Father's will.

*Father, when I struggle with how to follow your will, remind me of the way you have transformed me in Christ. Show me clearly how to walk in your path. In Jesus' name. Amen.*

*Do: What life decisions are you struggling with right now? Put them in God's hands, knowing you are living within his perfect will.*

*Read: Romans 12:1-2; Ephesians 5:1-2*

*Ruth Geisler  
Aliso Viejo, CA*

Thursday, June 20, 2013

# Knowing His Peace

*Do not be anxious about anything ... the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.*

*Philippians 4:6-7*

“Grandma’s in ICU and unresponsive. Call home.” Many of you have experienced such a call. With a short prayer for strength and mercy, we called home. Grandma, age 93, had worked a volunteer shift on Friday morning. On Saturday, she told her daughter that she wasn’t feeling well. On Sunday, all was different. Talk about bittersweet! We’d said goodbye to her only five short days before, and said our final goodbyes just eight days later.

Throughout the calls to arrange transportation and to answer the “what-if” questions, we recalled the words of St. Paul to the Philippians. Reading those words, we really knew God’s peace as we put all the necessary decisions into his loving hands. It truly is a peace that passes ALL understanding!

*Good Father, thanks for giving me peace in my heart and life. Amen.*

*Think: Recall a time you felt God’s peace.*

*Read: John 16:29-33; Hebrews 13:20, 21*

*Louise Schini Weber  
Fort Myers, FL*

Friday, June 21, 2013

# The Longest Day

*Fixing our eyes on Jesus ... for the joy set before him  
he endured the cross ...*

*Hebrews 12:2*

June 21 is the longest day of the year. But we know that the length of the day is not always calculated by the hours of sunlight. A lot depends on what you are doing and have to endure.

What was the longest day of your life? Was it sitting in a hospital anxiously waiting for word about a loved one? Was it that day you had to drive your child home from college? Have you ever wondered what was the longest day of Jesus' life? I think it must have been the day he suffered and died for us. We can only imagine his agony and pain. Every moment of suffering for the sins of the world must have seemed like an eternity to our Lord. Indeed, every moment of his suffering did win eternity for us. Jesus didn't just hang on the cross wishing it all could be over. Instead, he thought of us, and "for the joy that was set before him he endured the cross" for us and all people.

*Lord Jesus, when days are long, help us to follow  
you in our love for others. Amen.*

*Share: Share some time with someone.*

*Read: Hebrews 12:1-14*

*Lonie Eatherton  
Fenton, MO*

Saturday, June 22, 2013

# Change

*I trust in your unfailing love; my heart rejoices in your salvation.*

*Psalm 13:5*

Change is a constant in life. Seasons change; weather shifts a little each day. Sometimes we are thankful, as when an illness changes to health or enmity changes to peace. Sometimes it is painful, as when we must confess wrongdoing or change an unhealthy habit.

In the midst of daily changes, God's love and mercy are reassuringly constant and sure. Hebrews 13:8 reminds us, "Jesus is the same yesterday, today and forever!" We can count on his constant forgiveness, love and presence in our lives.

The best changes of all lie ahead in our heavenly future. We will dwell with God himself in new and glorious bodies. We will no longer experience mourning, crying or pain. God will "wipe away every tear ... and death will be no more" (Revelation 21:4). That's a change to look forward to!

*Lord, open my eyes to see your goodness and love in the changes of my life. Amen.*

*Talk: Talk with a friend about the changes in your life.*

*Read: Revelation 21:1-7; Hebrews 13:8*

*Sharolyn Sander  
Roselle, IL*

Sunday, June 23, 2013

# Bless the Lord!

*Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me,  
bless his holy name!*

*Psalm 103:1*

In the language of the Old Testament, one way of blessing anything is by “bending the knee,” kneeling or bowing before someone as a sign of respect and honor. Bend away before God!

The Psalmist also says that we “bless the Lord” by remembering things he has done for us, and he then starts a list. The top four are that: 1) he forgives all our sins; 2) he heals all our diseases; 3) he gives life a purpose; and 4) he crowns us with goodness and mercy. Based on your experiences, what would you add to that list?

As you add to the list, bend your knee and bless the Lord!

*When you died on the cross for us, Lord Jesus, you took us into your eternal family. With joy I add that to my list and bless you for it. Amen.*

*Help: Help someone recognize the benefits they have received from God and say in their heart, “Bless the Lord!”*

*Read: Psalm 103; Psalm 23*

*Charles S. Mueller, Sr.  
Bloomington, IL*

Monday, June 24, 2013

# Age Is No Barrier

*Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me—put it into practice.*

*Philippians 4:9*

Talking to friends and cohorts I hear many reasons why they don't continue actively serving God as they have aged. There are reasons such as "I have done my time," "Let somebody else take over" or "I just don't have the energy."

What if Jesus had decided to quit his mission during his time here on earth? He didn't have someone else to do his work even though he was tired and discouraged at times. Jesus did his Father's will by going to the cross. As a result of his perseverance and love for us, he saves us from our sins. God knows our limitations and accepts us as we are, but we need that same kind of perseverance. It is true we may have less energy as we age, but we do have some, and we need to continue serving him. With God's help we can and will spend time working for God's kingdom.

*Dear Lord, show me what I can do today to further your kingdom. Amen.*

*Call: Call someone today and tell them how Jesus is a role model for your life.*

*Read: John 10:11-18*

*Jean Plesko  
Ballwin, MO*

Tuesday, June 25, 2013

# Glass Angel

*You have shaken the land and torn it open; mend its fractures, for it is quaking.*

*Psalm 60:2*

On a recent trip to Bethlehem, Palestine, I was immersed in a land full of brokenness, hopelessness and barriers. Surrounded each day by a 25-foot concrete wall and seeing the struggles of older adults because of various restrictions, I indeed felt fractured and torn. And I do not even live there!

And then an older woman brought me an angel that she had made out of some of the broken glass strewn throughout the city. This was an angel of hope in the midst of the torn and rumbled city. While I was focused on the squalor of the situation, this woman instead focused on the message of this glass Angel of the Lord, who came so many years ago to that “little town” and now, miraculously, still comes to me and to you, from the hope and healing which the Lord brings to us, through other angels, young and old, all around us.

*Lord, help me to be an agent of hope to someone this day. Amen.*

*Ponder: Can you be a “glass angel” today to someone struggling with hurt and hopelessness?*

*Read: Hebrews 13:1-2*

*Rich Bimler  
Bloomington, IL*

Wednesday, June 26, 2013

# The Glow of Gratitude

*This service that you perform is not only supplying the needs of the Lord's people but is also overflowing in many expressions of thanks to God.*

*2 Corinthians 9:12*

In Bing Crosby's lilting song, "In the Cool, Cool, Cool of the Evening," there's a phrase set in a party: "When the party's getting a glow on, tell them I'll be there." St. Paul, in the passage above, changes the setting: Christian friends serving friends so well that they "overflow in many expressions of thanks to God." It's an unmistakable glow of gratitude.

Joy in Christ bubbles and beams in your body language. In Ephesians 5:18b-20 Paul paints a picture of Christian believers gathering socially. He encourages us: when we're together with brothers and sisters in the faith, let our fellowship be "filled with the Spirit, singing and making melody to the Lord with our heart ... in the name of our Lord Jesus ..." The grateful joy of our salvation in our hearts shows up well on our faces and in our words and music.

*Dear Lord God, thanks for your gifts of lively grace, enjoyed in community. Amen.*

*Recall this song: "If you're happy and you know it, then your face will surely show it."*

*Read: 1 John 1:1-4*

*Deane Schuessler  
Woodbury, MN*

Thursday, June 27, 2013

# Are You a Shining Star?

*... shine like stars in the universe as you hold out the word of life.*

*Philippians 2:15, 16*

It's been said, referencing age: "Don't grow old, if you can help it" and "Whoever said these are the golden years needs to have their head examined." Yes, we move slower, see the doctor more frequently, and take more pills. Few would say, "I'm in the prime of my life."

But we are still alive. More than just alive, we are alive in Christ! He made us, saved us and will come again for us. Until he comes, or calls us home, let's not punch out on the time clock.

Paul's encouraging words to the Philippians sparkle with possibilities. The truth and love you have received in Christ are for living and sharing every day. Make a difference. Shine like stars. Children and grandchildren need to hear our faith story. Keep giving—it's real living!

*Jesus, let your love shine through me. Amen*

*Help out: Lend a hand or an ear; share a smile or wipe a tear.*

*Read: Philippians 4*

*Randy Shields  
St. Louis, MO*

Friday, June 28, 2013

# A Season of Renewal

*I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser ... every branch that does bear fruit he prunes, that it may bear more fruit.*

*John 15:1-2*

I am blessed to live in Napa Valley, a “Grape Place to Live.” Each season in the vineyards has its own beauty. Spring: yellow mustard and promising buds on dark stumps. Summer: lush leaves and clusters of grapes. Fall: autumnal colors and the aroma of fermentation. Winter seems a bit melancholy as vines are pruned and stumps rest. Yet this stage is important as vines are recharged for a new season of fruitfulness.

As seniors (especially if retired), we may think we are in the dormant season and past the time of fruitfulness. But think of it as the time of renewal instead. Rested and pruned, we are given the opportunity to find new ways to be fruitful.

*Lord, thank you for gifts of rest and renewal, and guide me into a new season of fruitfulness. Amen.*

*Ask: Ask how God is pruning you today for new fruitfulness tomorrow.*

*Read: John 15:1-17; Romans 12:1-21*

*Ted Zimmerman  
Napa, CA*

Saturday, June 29, 2013

# Where Will You Be?

*Behold, a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation ... standing before the throne and before the Lamb.*

*Revelation 7:9*

Where will you be in a year? Where will you be tomorrow? You may have some idea, but in reality—even though you make plans—you don't know what will happen the next day or even in the next few minutes!

You can be certain of one thing. You don't know when you will be standing there, but in Jesus you know for sure that you will be in the "great multitude" standing before God's throne, joining in praise, "Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!" (Revelation 7:10). You will be there because salvation is not yours to earn. Salvation belongs to your God and it is a gift to you for the sake of the Lamb, whose praise you sing.

*Jesus, Lamb of God, my future is secure in you.  
Amen.*

*Comfort: Comfort someone who is worried about tomorrow.*

*Read: Revelation 7:9-17*

*Carol Geisler  
Manchester, MO*

Sunday, June 30, 2013

# Reunion of the Blessed

*That they may rest from their labors, for their deeds follow them.*

*Revelation 14:13*

Summer 2012: Sixty-three first cousins gathered in Cleveland, Ohio, for a first-ever reunion. The celebration began at the cemetery where George and Anna Zehnder, the progenitors of these 63, are at rest. Milling about the grounds, we looked, took pictures and talked, unraveling who was who. Our commonality, George and Anna, gave us life and made us family! We blessed their memory!

You, your children and grandchildren have brought good gifts to the world's scene! Who knows how many readers of these devotions have been blessed by other readers (you!) and their (your!) descendants. We are here to bless one another, to bring God's hope to one another. And we live expectantly awaiting that day when our family will have a reunion like no other!

*Lord Jesus, I look forward to the day when I will be united with my loved ones and with you. Amen.*

*Give thanks: Today, give special thanks to God for your family!*

*Read: Revelation 14:12-13*

*Tom Zehnder  
Baileys Harbor, WI*

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

*Seven Significant Steps to Spring into Summer  
through Special Celebrations and Surprises!*

1. Make a list of all special occasions on your April through June calendar, like birthdays, anniversaries, graduations, confirmations, even the starting date of your favorite baseball team!
2. Pray for those people on your list who will be celebrating special events these months.
3. Think of someone who is not on your list. Is this someone who needs a phone call, e-mail, card, or at least a smile and hug the next time you see her?
4. Surprise one or more of your friends by sending or giving them a special card or by making a contribution to a favorite ministry in honor of them or by taking them out for coffee or tea.
5. Think of ways that you can help others make those necessary adjustments—ask someone to help in your garden, offer to help a friend to do some “spring cleaning,” or take your winter clothes to a neighborhood shelter.
6. Volunteer to watch a child or two in your neighborhood so parents can do their spring cleaning or go shopping. Play “catch” or read or tell riddles with those little tots!
7. Take advantage of the many opportunities provided by your church and community—a concert, a confirmation event, a neighborhood party.

# Hope-Full Praying

## *For Special Celebrations*

We thank you, Lord, for the weddings, confirmations, graduations, and anniversaries that you enable your people to celebrate these days. Thank you for families who care, for friends who support, for opportunities to serve, and for memories that will last forever. May all of these special days help us to remember that you are the Lord and Author of all celebrations, in Christ Jesus. Amen.

## *For the Power and Promise of Pentecost*

Lord, because of your resurrection, we are ready and able to receive the gift of your Spirit in the Promise and Power of Pentecost! May this day be a day of celebrating your presence among us so that we can bring a word of wit to someone, a hug of hope to someone else, and a dash of discipleship to still another. Ignite our lives, Lord, to shine out the Promise that is ours in you, in the name of the Prince of Peace and the Power of Pentecost. Amen.

## *For Health and Hope*

Lord, as you bring more green grass and brightly-colored flowers to adorn our surroundings, may we also grow in the knowledge that you are the Author of who we are and what we do. Keep our eyes open so we blossom in your Baptismal waters as we plant and sow joy and peace in others. Amen.

### *For Caretakers*

Heavenly Father, bless the family members, nurses, and volunteers who care for others, and especially those who care for me. Fill them with courage and peace as they carry out their own daily work and take on the added work of caring for others. As they shoulder this burden of love, they walk in the footsteps of Jesus our Lord, who gave his life for us all. Hear my prayer in Jesus' name. Amen.

### *For Those Nearing Death*

Lord Jesus, Good Shepherd, you have promised that no one can snatch us from your hand and nothing can separate us from your love. Stand close beside those who are nearing death. Assure these saints and their families that to fall asleep in your name is to stand with joy in your presence. Comfort them with the knowledge that as you were raised from death, they too will one day be raised up in glory. Amen.

### *For Prayer Life*

Jesus taught us to pray, "Our Father." Heavenly Father, teach me to speak the words of that prayer often and to come before your throne with my own prayers at any time and at all times. Let the Spirit pray on my behalf when I am weak and do not know the right words to say. In your mercy, hear and answer my prayers for the sake of Jesus my Savior, in whose name I pray. Amen.

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