

# HOPE-FULL LIVING

• *Daily Devotions for Christian Seniors* •

October • November • December • 2013

Volume 2 • Number 4

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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."

*Hope-Full Living* (ISSN pending) is published quarterly in January, April, July and October by Creative Communications for the Parish, 1564 Fencorp Drive, Fenton, MO 63026. Subscription rates: 1 year, \$14 (Canada \$16); single copy, \$3.75 (Canada \$5.50). Periodicals postage paid at St. Louis, MO. Canada GST# is 84231 1870RT. Printed in the USA. Individual subscriptions: (855) 325-4673; 5 or more: (800) 325-9414. Website: [www.hope-fulldevos.com](http://www.hope-fulldevos.com)

POSTMASTER: Send individual address changes to *Hope-Full Living*, P.O. Box 291847, Kettering, OH 45429-0847. Send bulk address changes to *Hope-Full Living*, 1564 Fencorp Dr., Fenton, MO 63026-2942.

Cover Design: Paul Berkbigler, Madison, WI

Tuesday, October 1, 2013

# Seasons of Change

*For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven.*

*Ecclesiastes 3:1*

In the Midwest, fall is possibly the season with the most noticeable changes. The weather becomes cooler. The days are shorter, and the leaves change.

Some people don't look forward to these changes: the cooler weather will be followed by winter, the lack of sunlight causes depression and, eventually, all those beautiful leaves will fall to the ground and need to be raked.

Advanced years are often referred to as the "autumn of our life." While there are many things to celebrate about growing older, there are sometimes changes we do not look forward to, such as more aches and pains, less independence, being alone and less mobility.

While we can't go back to being *spring chickens*, we can certainly make the most of the maturity and longevity God has granted us.

*Father, keep us focused on the things we can do, not the things we can't do. Amen.*

*Encourage: Find a way today to be an encourager to someone who is restricted in his or her activities.*

*Read: Psalm 37:25*

Gloria Doty  
Fort Wayne, IN

Wednesday, October 2, 2013

# The Face of Jesus

*For God ... has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.*

2 Corinthians 4:6

The flea market draws thousands! Assigned to the “Art Department,” we urged people to purchase art pieces which included Monet’s *Poppy Fields* and Von Gogh’s *Starry Night*. Such treasures went for much less than \$10! At sale’s end, prices were reduced.

A mom and her two boys stopped. We offered the kids an item of their choice—free! The older boy found something quickly, while the little one, maybe four, took his time. Fixing his eyes on a paint-by-number picture of Jesus, he said, “I want that.” He held it closely. That was Saturday.

Sunday at church I spotted the artist and told him of the little boy and his painting. Tear-filled eyes and a smile indicated the impact it had on him!

The face of Jesus would be with the little boy—and the 91-year-old painter made that possible!

*Lord, assist me to touch the young with your love. Amen.*

*Think: Consider the spiritual impact you bring to a younger generation.*

*Read: Hebrews 12:1-3*

Tom Zehnder  
Oviedo, FL

Thursday, October 3, 2013

# A Neighborhood Walk

*I lift up my eyes to the hills. From where does my help come? My help comes from the Lord, who made heaven and earth.*

*Psalm 121:1-2*

Whether in a park, a building next door or the room down the hall, God provides people to cheer us each day. These seemingly chance meetings fulfill the promise of God in the last verse of Psalm 121: “The Lord will keep your going out and your coming in from this time forth and forevermore.” As we travel along life’s path, Jesus shows up in faces we meet with surprising solace and peace.

When we are tempted to turn in on ourselves with regret and resentment, Jesus comes to us through those we meet and turns our solitary pity party into a fellowship of joy.

*Thank you, God, for surprising us with people who reflect the promises of God to renew us with the joy of Jesus each day. Amen.*

*Lift up: When depression and angst would turn you in on yourself with self-pity and remorse, lift up your eyes to find the Savior’s comfort in those you meet.*

*Read: Psalm 34; Psalm 121; Psalm 133*

*Rodney Otto  
Grand Rapids, MI*

Friday, October 4, 2013

# Prayer Laps

*I thank my God in all my remembrance of you, always in every prayer of mine ...*

*Philemon 1:4*

Each morning when the air temperature is above 60 degrees, my husband and I ride our bikes to the heated, outdoor community pool for lap swimming. As I get limbered up with a few initial laps, I organize my thoughts around my prayer list.

Years ago we began lap swims while working in Hong Kong. Our friend Jim, with whom we often swam, mentioned that he used the laps as a dedicated time to pray. During each lap he remembered a specific family member or friend. Often the number of laps increased as needs grew!

I took Jim's example to heart. It's a wonderful routine that gives me very personal time to bring my petitions of praise and of need to my Abba. And, yes, my prayers do abound on non-swim days, just usually not as delightfully!

*Abba, thanks for making me your child and for continually listening to my prayers. Amen.*

*Think: In what daily routines do prayers "pop" from your heart?*

*Read: Philemon 1:4-6; 2 Timothy 1:3; James 5:13-18; Ephesians 6:18-20*

*Louise Schini Weber  
Fort Myers, FL*

Saturday, October 5, 2013

# World Teachers' Day

*By this time you ought to be teachers.*

*Hebrews 5:12*

Attention, all teachers! Today, October 5 is World Teachers' Day. Remember your favorite teacher? Is there someone who is thinking of you? Every parent and every grandparent is a teacher. It's a hard job being a teacher, but what a blessing it can be!

It is a gift from God to be able to teach someone about Jesus our Savior. You teach with your kind and patient words. You teach with your caring ways. You teach with your actions. It's another gift from God to know that someone has a stronger Christian faith and a closer walk with Jesus because of what you have taught them.

Thank God today for all your teachers, especially the ones who taught you about Jesus. Thank God that there is someone today who is thanking God for you, teacher!

*O Lord, my greatest Teacher, thank you for the ones who taught me and the ones I have taught. Teach me today how I can still share your love with someone. Amen.*

*Write: Write down the name of one of your teachers. Tell someone why that teacher was special.*

*Read: Psalm 1*

*Lonie Eatherton  
Fenton, MO*

Sunday, October 6, 2013

# Food for the Journey

*I am the bread of life.*

*John 6:48*

Familiarity and comfort surround me. I rise from my church pew and walk down the aisle to the altar. The music swells, and I sing beautiful words about bread and the healing in this special gift. I sing of grace and peace given in this cup. Awareness of the Living Bread from heaven wafts over me like a summer breeze. Here I am fed and nourished in body and spirit. I am strengthened and renewed by a gift “given for me” by my Lord.

I know God is always with me, but somehow in THIS moment, I am overflowing with love and thankfulness. I sense Christ’s presence in the faces of his people around me. I leave the table free and certain that the Bread of Life, Jesus, sustains me on both sides of eternity.

*Lord, thank you for all your gifts, but most especially for Holy Communion. Amen.*

*Sing: Sing a favorite hymn sometime today.*

*Read: John 6*

*Lael Hoerger  
Niles, MI*

Monday, October 7, 2013

# Going in Circles?

*I ... appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit—fruit that will last.*

*John 15:16*

We tend to think of time or history as cyclical or circular. We say: “What goes around comes around.” We talk about the cycle of the seasons, and marvel at the “life cycle.” But time is not cyclical or circular. It’s a line. The line of God’s time is not straight, though. By human standards it meanders. But it is directed by God toward the salvation of his people. All of us have a unique and unrepeatable place on that time line.

Before Jesus gave up his spirit on the cross he said, “It is finished” (John 19:30). He was saying, “Mission accomplished.” Every child of God in Christ can leave this life with that confession on his or her lips. Jesus promises that you will not leave this life without having completed what he has called you to do.

*Help me live confidently, Lord, knowing that you will guide me to where you are waiting. Amen.*

*Relax: Pray on these Scriptures below first. Then write your “to-do” list.*

*Read: John 15:1-17*

*Mike May  
Kansas City, KS*



Tuesday, October 8, 2013

# Reminders

*Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow.*

*Matthew 6:28*

The older I get, the more I need reminders. Perhaps that's why I look for, and appreciate, symbols that remind me of God's love and Christ's great work of living, dying and rising again—for me.

Church windows gleam with many Christian symbols. Some include a peacock as a symbol. What does a peacock have to do with Christian faith? Peacocks' tail feathers fall out each year and are replaced by new and more beautiful feathers, so the peacock is a symbol of resurrection and new life. That's a reminder I need.

Every day we see or hear things that cause us to say, "Wow!" There are signs of God's greatness and love that can be found any day in great music, a flower or giant tree, a bee, a baby or a family gathering. Anything that is stunning and awesome can become a reminder—and also a prayer of praise and thanksgiving.

*Dear Lord, help me to see reminders of your love every day and give thanks. Amen.*

*Find: Find three things that remind you of God's great love today.*

*Read: Matthew 6:25-34; Psalm 8*

*Eldor Kaiser  
Sturgeon Bay, WI*

Wednesday, October 9, 2013

# Yea, You!

*I have sent [Tychicus] to you for this very purpose, that you may know how we are, and that he may encourage your hearts.*

*Ephesians 6:22*

Have you ever been cheered for? I had been on the bench all season for my grade school basketball team. In the last game the coach finally put me in. When I got the ball, I took a shot far from the basket. Somehow the ball found its way into the net. The cheerleaders started a cheer with my name in it. Wow! We all need cheerleaders in our lives. There is nothing like a little encouragement to keep us going.

Be encouraged today. By reading these devotions you are showing a desire to grow in your relationship with Christ. I know you may not be all you want to be, or even expect of yourself, but you are on your way. You are striving. You are growing. God is doing amazing things in you. Keep going. Yea, you!

*Thank you, Lord Jesus, for the people you have put in my life as an encouragement. Amen.*

*Encourage: Find someone who needs some encouragement today, and be Tychicus for them.*

*Read: Ephesians 6:21-24*

*Joe Iovino  
Monument, CO*

Thursday, October 10, 2013

# Tomato Plants

*Every branch in me that does not bear fruit he takes away, and every branch that does bear fruit he prunes, that it may bear more fruit.*

*John 15:2*

Tomatoes seem to be the pinnacle of any vegetable garden. Before the luscious red globes appear, the gardener has to deal with mountains of green leaves. If she isn't prudent with her pruning, she may be disappointed to have a massive load of leaves with no tomatoes.

We are like tomato plants in some ways. When we seem to be great Christians, but we just go through the motions so that others see our "leaves," we have a problem. Unless our thoughts and actions come from faith in Jesus, we are not producing "fruit." Good works don't make us Christians, but good works do come from a true faith in our Savior, Jesus Christ.

*Dear God, examine my heart. Help me produce fruits of faith, not showy leaves from selfish motives. Amen.*

*Ask: Ask yourself why you do what you do. Does it flow naturally from your faith?*

*Read: Galatians 5:16-24; Matthew 21:18-22*

*Stephenie Hovland  
Green Bay, WI*

Friday, October 11, 2013

# A Story To Remember

*But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead.*

*1 Corinthians 15:20*

Before the summer of 1960 I was a college student without a job. I didn't want to return to the job I had the summer before. It was a great outdoor experience. I made plenty of money, but I was looking for something different. I asked the dean of students if he had any ideas, and he asked a camp director in another state if he needed help. Fortuitously, he did. I was on my way, hitchhiking across the country to a camp more than 800 miles away. There a whole new world opened up to me—new friends and a new city. It changed my life, for there I began to see life.

Jesus' death and resurrection are the events meant to influence all humankind's stories, because history is really HIS-story. These events temper all things, whether disastrous or beneficial. With his mercy he brings a happy conclusion to our story, for it promises us life with him in his eternal kingdom.

*O Jesus, send us your Holy Spirit today that all of our memories may be tempered with your mercy. Amen.*

*Share: Share the story of Jesus' death and resurrection with someone today.*

*Read: 1 Corinthians 15*

*Gordon Beck  
University City, MO*

Saturday, October 12, 2013

# Stepping Out

*The Lord is my light and my salvation—whom shall I fear? The Lord is the stronghold of my life—of whom shall I be afraid?*

*Psalm 27:1*

“Whoa! This is scary!” That is what I said to myself when—timidly and haltingly—I stepped out onto the solid glass floor in the observation deck of the CN Tower in Toronto, Canada, and looked 1800 feet down to the ground. I stepped out. I didn’t fall. The strong, thick glass floor upheld me.

What do you think Moses said to himself at the burning bush? Or Abraham in Ur? Each was called to “step out” with his loving, all-powerful God at his side. Both did and look what happened.

What is God possibly calling you to do at this time in your life? What challenge are you facing? Are you scared or uncomfortable? Possibly. And yet we have these words of comfort. “I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand” (Isaiah 41:10).

*Lord, give me the “want to” to deal with the challenges I am facing right now. Amen.*

*Reflect: How is God helping you now?*

*Read: Matthew 14:22-33*

*Paul H. Eggold  
Greendale, WI*

Sunday, October 13, 2013

# Peace

*The peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.*

*Philippians 4:7*

My father used to smoke a brand of pipe tobacco that had as its slogan: “A Cargo of Contentment in Every Puff.” Whenever I watched him puff, I always wondered how anyone could find contentment in a cloud of smoke that filled the room, to say nothing of one’s lungs. Yet from the look on his face there must have been something to what they said.

Maybe there’s something to what St. Paul says, too, about Jesus being the source of peace and contentment. Life in this world can be quite troubling because of sin that forever seeks to bring a person down; that’s why St. Paul points us toward that one thing that promises peace to weary hearts: Jesus Christ.

*Lord Jesus, let your peace and Spirit fill me that I may be an instrument of your peace to the world today. Amen.*

*Contact: Call or send a card of compassion to someone who needs a good word today.*

*Read: Luke 2:8-14; John 14:27*

*Edward Arle  
St. Charles, MO*

Monday, October 14, 2013

# Grandparents

*I am reminded of your sincere faith, a faith that dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice and now, I am sure, dwells in you ...*

*2 Timothy 1:5*

September is the month in which Americans honor grandparents. Those of us who are grandparents may receive cards, flowers or gifts. That is great. But how about us honoring our own grandparents? They are not living, you say? We can honor them anyway. In the paragraph in which the verse above is found, Paul thanks God for his ancestors.

How can we who are old honor our grandparents? We can recall how our grandparents have influenced our lives. We can think about what we have inherited from them, from physical characteristics to material things to intangibles, including faith, perhaps. I realize that not all grandparents were good, but we can focus on the good and thank God. Gratefully remembering our ancestors is a wonderful way to worship our God.

*Thank you, gracious God, for the gift my ancestors are to me. Amen.*

*Do: Look at pictures and remember your grandparents. Thank God for them.*

*Read: 2 Timothy 1:3-7*

*Eldor Kaiser  
Sturgeon Bay, WI*

Tuesday, October 15, 2013

# “Old and Gray”

*As for me, I am old and gray ...*

1 Samuel 12:2

“Old and gray,” a frequent description of aging. Does that sum up your life? When did you begin to fit the mold of old? When did your hair begin to turn gray (it is a good color!)?

In Samuel’s farewell address (Saul has been anointed Israel’s king), he owns his age and his hair color, adding: “I have been your leader from my youth until this day. Here I stand.”

The veteran spiritual leader will step aside, head held high. Life has been good. His prayerful exhortation was direct: “Do not turn away from the Lord, but serve the Lord with all your heart.”

“Old and gray” does not mean useless or irrelevant. It can mean spiritually wise and steady. Let “old and gray” define your vibrant, colorful self! In the forgiving love of Jesus, life is full of hope and opportunity!

*Jesus, love me for who I am. Amen.*

*Encourage: Encourage a friend to thrive!*

*Read: Titus 2*

*Randy Shields  
Florissant, MO*



Wednesday, October 16, 2013

# Power Within Us

*Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, to him be glory ...*

*Ephesians 3:20-21*

Power? In me? I used to have power to work all day, to run down the block, to lift my three-year-old and comfort him. Not anymore. But God is not talking about that kind of power. He is telling me that I have the power to love, to praise, to lift weary spirits with his Gospel. Furthermore, it is not I who do this, but the power of God within me. We are to ask for that power and to think about how to use it—and we will have it in abundance.

*All-powerful Lord, help me to use the power you have given me so freely to think creatively and act lovingly toward all your children, to speak your love in kind and cheerful words and to witness to your love and forgiveness, especially to those who are hurting. In your strong name we pray. Amen.*

*Meditate: Get re-charged by meditating on your favorite Bible verses.*

*Read: Ephesians 3:20-21; Psalm 68:34-35*

*Contance Bretscher  
Valparaiso, IN*

Thursday, October 17, 2013

# Who'd Have Thought?

*Jesus said, "Leave her alone, so that she may keep it for the day of my burial."*

*John 12:7*

What do you think Mary wanted Jesus to know through such an extravagant gift and undignified action?

Was it simply an expression of great thanks at the raising of her brother, Lazarus? Or was she signaling, in the intimacy of her action, her total devotion to him? Was she modeling that she, rather than Judas of the Twelve, understands that following Jesus involves the posture of a servant, however costly?

Consider what Jesus says about Mary, and share in her surprise. He accepts her and her gift. And he links them to his approaching death, which is his demonstration of love for her and us all. He turns her gift into a blessing she could never have imagined.

That's surprisingly good news for us as well. Just imagine the prospect of Jesus fashioning us and our gifts of love into blessings.

*Lord, keep me focused on you, no matter what the cost. Amen.*

*Look: Look for the blessing as you serve another.*

*Read: John 12:1-8*

*Bill Hoerger  
Niles, MI*

Friday, October 18, 2013

# Grandma Arms

*The eternal God is your dwelling place, and underneath are the everlasting arms.*

*Deuteronomy 33:27*

As I was exercising in the gym, I overheard a nearby conversation. “I’m going to use the arm machine,” one woman said. “I don’t want grandma arms.” I quickly tried to cover my jiggly arms with my shirt sleeves, but they didn’t stretch that far.

My “grandma arms” aren’t toned and muscular, but they are useful in showing God’s love to others. They can cradle a newborn grandbaby or drape around the shoulders of an older grandchild. They can give a welcoming squeeze or offer a comforting hug to a friend.

Jesus’ arms showed the ultimate in love when he stretched them on the cross and died for our sins. Because of Jesus’ death and resurrection, we are forgiven and can look forward to everlasting life in heaven. There we will be held in his loving arms forever.

*Jesus, help me show your love as I interact with others. Amen.*

*Hug: Hug someone who needs some loving.*

*Read: Proverbs 31:17-20; Mark 10:16*

*Jeanette Dall  
Batavia, IL*

Saturday, October 19, 2013

# A Good Routine

*[Jesus said,] “If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples.”*

*John 8:31*

Routines are good. There’s a time to eat, a time to exercise, a time to meet a friend, a time to rest and so it goes.

It’s good to have a Scripture-reading and prayer routine. It’s good to be in the Word daily. It’s like taking a walk with the Lord. It’s one-on-one time with Jesus, the God-man, who sets me free from my sin through the blood of his cross. Carving out time to read the Word is a very good spiritual routine!

Are you reading this as your day begins? Are you taking a coffee break with *Hope-Full Living*? Is your day ending with quiet prayer time? Go with the routine that works best for you. And don’t forget to read the Scripture selections at the bottom of the page—think of them as dessert!

*Jesus, thank you for giving me the time of your life! Amen.*

*Share: Pass Hope-Full Living on to a friend or neighbor.*

*Read: Psalm 19; Colossians 3:1-17*

*Randy Shields  
Florissant, MO*

Sunday, October 20, 2013

# What Is Your Prayer?

*The Lord hears when I call to him.*

*Psalm 4:3*

Through the years I have prayed for many people, and I still pray for many people. The needs for prayer are enormous. Besides praying for people, I pray for such things as world peace, the government, the environment and the Church. The list keeps growing.

Of course, it is important to pray for others, but how often do we pray for ourselves? We usually pray on those occasions when we have special needs with a certain problem or a crisis situation. Every day we should ask God in prayer to guide us, to bless us and to comfort us. As Christians, we put others before ourselves, but we do need to take care of ourselves. Only when we have God's guidance will we be able to effectively pray and care for others. Prayer plays a vital role in our life of service to God. So continue to pray for others and YOURSELF.

*Thank you, Lord, for always hearing our prayers.  
Amen.*

*Ask: Today ask the Lord to bless you, to guide you and always to be first in your life.*

*Read: 1 John 5:14-15; 1 Timothy 2:1*

*Jean Plesko  
Ballwin, MO*

Monday, October 21, 2013

# The Next Generations

*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*

My Aunt Lois impressed a concept on me at my first vacation Bible school: “Each One Win One.” Over the years I’ve come to realize that not every Christian makes that effort and that often God’s people neglect to share their faith with the lost. More and more parents today neglect to share their faith with their children. Often it’s because their own parents had no faith to share with them.

But we must not hide God’s gracious and marvelous deeds from our own children or grandchildren. This past summer our church had over 300 children in vacation Bible school. What an opportunity to reach households and generations with the good news of salvation through Jesus Christ!

*Lord, use me to proclaim your love to the next generations. Amen.*

*Volunteer: Help at vacation Bible school or teach Sunday school children or a class for their parents.*

*Read: Psalm 78*

*Terry Weber  
Williamsburg, VA*

Tuesday, October 22, 2013

# Among the Living

*So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.*

*Romans 6:11*

“Don’t count your chickens before they hatch.” That is an old, well-known farming adage. God’s Word gives us a different piece of advice. Instead of counting chickens, we are told to “Count yourselves dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus.” You are alive to God in Christ Jesus!

When you came to know Jesus, cells of faith began multiplying within you. On that day, the Spirit was fast at work forming new life inside of you.

However, our faith life is not yet fully grown. We are waiting for the day when our new life in Christ will be fully realized at Christ’s return. But, until that time, what do we do? Do we idly sit in our shells, hunker down and wait? No! We who have new life in Christ peck away at sin. With each act of love we slowly expose the new life of Christ Jesus in us!

*Gracious God, use the new life you have given me to peck away at the sin in this world. Amen.*

*Support: Support the cells of faith that are forming in someone around you.*

*Read: Ephesians 2:4-5; Colossians 3:1*

*Trevor Sutton  
East Lansing, MI*

Wednesday, October 23, 2013

# Answer Us

*May he answer us when we call.*

*Psalm 20:9*

Telephones have come a long way! I recently saw an old cookbook that contained the phone numbers of various local vendors in a small Midwestern town. The phone numbers were only two or three digits!

One of the most useful inventions is “Caller ID.” We can now decide whether or not to answer the phone based on who it is that is calling. Who of us has not declined to speak to certain companies or people? We think if it is really important, they will leave a message. Of course, we might feel differently if we knew someone was choosing not to answer our call!

When David prayed, “Answer us when we call,” it was twenty-nine centuries prior to the invention of the telephone. But in light of Caller ID, aren’t you glad that the Lord always answers us when we call him?

*Gracious Lord, thank you for always answering when we call. Amen.*

*Remember: Remember that God is always happy to hear from you!*

*Read: Psalm 20*

*Jim Rogers  
Chesterfield, MO*



Thursday, October 24, 2013

# A Brick in the Wall

*How lovely is your dwelling place, O Lord of hosts!*

*Psalm 84:1*

Some folks who came out to hear John the Baptist thought they would get a free pass because of their famous relatives. He retorted, “God is able from these stones to raise up children to Abraham” (Luke 3:8). Stones in a field are each unique, but they don’t amount to much just lying there, stubbing toes or keeping crops from growing.

“All in all you’re just another brick in the wall,” the rock band Pink Floyd sang, indicting the life of “the masses” as meaningless, each individual an anonymous, identical brick in a vast facade.

As baptized children of God, we know better. We are not just rocks in a field or anonymous clones. Rather, we are people gathered lovingly by the Spirit and “built together into a dwelling place for God” (Ephesians 2:22). You are a valuable part of that lovely dwelling place by which God shelters and gives a home to his people.

*Lord, take me and fit me into the walls of that beautiful dwelling place where you live. Amen.*

*Be comforted: Reflect on the place God has given you in his habitation.*

*Read: Luke 3:7-9; Ephesians 2:17-22; Psalm 84*

*Mike May  
Kansas City, KS*

Friday, October 25, 2013

# Almost Invisible

*He put another parable before them, saying, "The kingdom of heaven is like a grain of mustard seed that a man took and sowed in his field."*

*Matthew 13:31*

I was taught acorns are the seeds from which an oak tree would grow. It was (and is) difficult to wrap my brain around how the huge oak tree in which we had our "fort" came from such a small source.

Jesus used a similar analogy to describe the Kingdom of God. One of the smallest of all seeds, the mustard seed, will one day become a mustard plant, "the greatest of shrubs." All the strength of the tree is somehow contained in that seed. This parable reminds us that even when we don't notice it, God is at work in our lives and in the world. The seed of the Kingdom is growing among us and within us. It is almost invisible. But it is there. Let's not miss it.

*Almighty God, grant me the grace to notice and trust your strength, even when it appears as a mustard seed. Amen.*

*Find: Find some seeds, or pictures of seeds, and reflect on how great things come from that which is almost invisible.*

*Read: Matthew 13:31-32*

*Joe Iovino  
Monument, CO*

Saturday, October 26, 2013

# Just the Facts

*And [Jesus] asked them, "How many loaves do you have?" They said, "Seven."*

*Mark 8:5*

Mark's gospel gets right to the point. In Mark 8, we read of Jesus teaching a large crowd and of his compassion because they had no food. Mark states the situation very succinctly. While the disciples begin brainstorming on where to get bread, Jesus simply asks them how much they have.

Just the facts: hungry people, no food to purchase nearby, seven loaves available. Out of the seven loaves and a few fish, Jesus provides enough for everyone with seven basketfuls left over.

What needs do we see? What do we have? We may not be able to change a situation, but we can offer a smile, act in kindness and pray. The fact is, we have Jesus!

*Lord Jesus, open my eyes to the needs of others and help me to use what I have with your blessing. Amen.*

*Do: Look for a person in need today, and offer whatever you have.*

*Read: Mark 8:1-8; Matthew 10:42*

*Diane Bahn  
Cypress, TX*

Sunday, October 27, 2013

# Trust God For Answers

*For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares the Lord.*

*Isaiah 55:8*

Given the rational minds we have been given, we human beings naturally question and want to know and find answers, the ancient Greek thinker Aristotle said. Such questioning has led to many answers and solutions to problems for which former generations had no answers.

Apply such thinking to the mysteries of God, however, and we're in trouble, for God cannot be understood by our rational minds. Yet the one who trusts, as a child does of her parents, understands that the world is filled with the seemingly improbable goodness of God. When we put aside our need to rationalize, and trust in such a simple way instead, we, too, begin to understand more about the world that God the Father holds firmly in his loving hands.

*O Lord Jesus, prompt in us the trust that only the Holy Spirit can give. Amen.*

*Ask: Ask God to open your eyes to the wonders of his love.*

*Read: Isaiah 55:6-13*

*Gordon Beck  
University City, MO*

Monday, October 28, 2013

# Don't Fall!

*Though he may stumble, he will not fall ...*

*Psalm 37:24*

Remember when your children were small, just learning to walk? You would sometimes take hold of their hand so they would not stumble and fall.

How times have changed! Now your son or daughter, or even grandson or granddaughter may be taking hold of your hand or arm so you will not stumble and fall. Maybe you depend on a cane or a walker to make sure you remain upright. The fear of falling is a real one for many.

In Psalm 37 David wrote, "If the Lord delights in a man's way, he makes his steps firm; though he stumble, he will not fall, for the Lord upholds him with his hand." The Lord may not always prevent you from physically falling (let your walker or your grandson take care of that), but he will keep you spiritually upright and prevent you from falling away from him.

*Lord, keep me spiritually and physically upright, lest I fall. Amen.*

*Do: Permit those who offer a hand or an arm to assist you in staying upright.*

*Read: Psalm 37:23-26*

*Jim Rogers  
Chesterfield, MO*

Tuesday, October 29, 2013

# No Need to Fear

*Jesus immediately said to them, “Take courage! It is I. Don’t be afraid.”*

*Matthew 14:27*

What are your fears? A very common fear is being left on our own when friends and family members pass on. Many seniors may fear that their savings will not outlast their years. Health concerns may also become nightmarish as we continue to grow older.

Jesus’ disciples were gripped with sudden terror one night when they thought they were seeing a ghost before them on the sea. But the Master calmed them by saying simply, “It is I.” His actual words in Greek were *Ego eimi*, which mean “I am.” In reality Jesus was connecting himself with the ever-present and all-powerful God of their ancestors, whose name is “I Am Who I Am.”

The Savior’s assuring presence brings us calm and peace as well. In times of great fear or even terror, we can rest in his comforting promise: “I AM with you always” (Matthew 28:20, emphasis added).

*O Lord, in your arms I rest myself. Foes who would hurt me cannot reach me there. Amen.*

*Cast: Cast all your cares and fears on him who cares for you.*

*Read: Psalm 73:21-28*

*Don Hoeferkamp  
St. Louis, MO*

Wednesday, October 30, 2013

# What Scares You?

*The Spirit of Life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death.*

Romans 8:2

As Halloween peeks around the corner, do scary thoughts creep into your mind? Skeletons, ghosts and RIP signs are not too frightening at this stage in life, but there are plenty of scary possibilities in our world today. What scares you? Terrorism, finances, health, family concerns, social changes ... the list could go on and on.

What *should* produce a healthy scare is the condition of our hearts and minds! I have to confess with St. Paul, "I have the desire to do what is right, but not the ability to carry it out." It is only by God's grace that he takes me back again and again, dressing me in a clean garment of forgiveness, rather than the scary costume of my own self-righteousness. We do not dread a death mask, but look forward to a crown of life! We can live confidently, knowing God is in control.

*We thank and praise you, God, for daily forgiveness, protection and the promise of heaven. Amen.*

*Ask: Ask others what scares them. Offer a response filled with God's love and assurance.*

*Read: Romans 8*

Sharolyn Sander  
Roselle, IL

Thursday, October 31, 2013

# Halloween Be ...

*When you pray, say, “Father, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come.”*

*Luke 11:2*

Four-year-old Freddy had a wonderful way with words! He would force his family to listen intently to him by sometimes mixing up a phrase or two, like praying “Halloween be thy name!” Let us thank the Lord for little children who help us to think about and see our faith through their eyes!

Perhaps Fred’s wording can help us connect the trick-or-treat culture with the core values of our Christian faith. The Freds of our lives can help us see the Reformation as a “Reframe-ation” of our walk with the Lord. Perhaps his prayer will trigger us to even proclaim “Hallow—Wheeee!” as we celebrate a Lord who makes us holy through his life, death and resurrection!

Listen today to those little Resurrection Resources, called children, whom the Lord has placed around us.

*Lord, teach us through little children, and help us pray, “Give us today our daily Freds.” Amen.*

*Listen: Listen to God’s gift of children today, and give thanks, in your own words!*

*Read: Luke 11:1-3*

*Rich Bimler  
Bloomington, IL*



Friday, November 1, 2013

# Singing for the Saints!

*Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders.*

*Hebrews 12:1*

Reflect on these words from an old hymn: “We sing for all the unsung saints, that countless, nameless throng, who kept the faith and passed it on with hope steadfast and strong.”

Who was an unsung saint in your life, someone who taught you and shared with you God’s love in the Lord when you were growing up?

What a joy to know that in the years ahead, people will be remembering you and me and will be recalling our witness to those around us! Whether we are remembered by name or not, it really doesn’t matter, because they will remember the love we shared with others, in the name of Jesus! Now that is something to sing about!

*Lord, thank you for the unsung saints in my life, and make me one of them for others. Amen!*

*Tell: Greet people today by saying, “Hello, you are a saint in the Lord!” And then explain and proclaim it!*

*Read: Hebrews 12:1-2*

*Rich Bimler  
Bloomington, IL*

Saturday, November 2, 2013

# Remember

*Has God forgotten to be gracious?*

*Psalm 77:9*

The psalmist complains that he cannot sleep. He is worried and fearful. Has God's love for him ceased? Have God's promises ended forever? The psalmist finds the answer to his questions in remembering. He remembers everything God did for his people in the past, and that past gives promise and hope for the future.

When you are sleepless and worried and wondering about the love of God, spend some time remembering. Remember that God sent his Son to die on the cross for you. Remember that Jesus rose from the dead. Remember that your sins are forgiven and that eternal life is yours in Christ Jesus. God keeps his promises. The love that sent Jesus to be your Savior never ends. Remember that.

*Heavenly Father, when I am worried, teach me to remember your love and grace in Jesus. Amen.*

*Remind: Remind someone—and remind yourself once again—of God's mighty deeds.*

*Read: Psalm 77; Romans 8:31-39*

*Carol Geisler  
Manchester, MO*

Sunday, November 3, 2013

# Keep the Old, Embrace the New

*Therefore every scribe who has been trained for the kingdom of heaven is like a master of a house, who brings out of his treasure what is new and what is old.*

*Matthew 13:52*

“Make new friends, but keep the old; one is silver and the other is gold.” I thought of that children’s ditty the other day while sorting through boxes in the garage, preparing for a yard sale.

It is a delight to open up our memory boxes from time to time, pull out treasures and relish them. But it would be a mistake to fixate on old memories to the point that we don’t make room for new ones. Embrace new experiences, make new friends and visit new places. These promote personal growth and are also God’s gifts for renewed living!

*Lord, thanks for the memories! But help me to embrace opportunities to freshen my life with the new people and experiences you send my way. Amen.*

*Reach out: Touch base today with an old friend. Also make a plan to reach out to some new acquaintance and build a friendship.*

*Read: Philippians 1:3-11; Isaiah 43:16-21*

*Ted Zimmerman  
Napa, CA*

Monday, November 4, 2013

# In All Circumstances

*Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances.*

*1 Thessalonians 5:16-18*

Paul seems to be setting the bar too high here. If these words were a command, none of us could do them. But they aren't a command. They are an invitation to take hold of the blessings that are already ours and carry them into every circumstance of life.

By virtue of our faith, joy is already ours. The invitation is to wallow in it. It will carry us during hard times. God made an unbreakable connection with us when he placed his name on us in baptism. Jesus renews it every time he offers himself to us in Holy Communion. Prayer is when we take the initiative to keep the connection strong.

There is no burden so heavy, no problem so intractable that our joy of giving thanks has to be suspended until the crisis is over. To rejoice, pray and give thanks in all circumstances then becomes itself the blessing.

*Father, inspire us to rejoice, pray and give thanks without ceasing. Amen.*

*Do: Recall a time when, during great sadness, you were still able to rejoice and give thanks.*

*Read: Philippians 1:3-11*

Donald Becker  
Oak Park, IL

Tuesday, November 5, 2013

# The Guardian of Love

*Every good and perfect gift is from above.*

*James 1:17*

When my grandson was four, he proudly presented me with a wonderful gift of love. It was a teddy bear with a paper-plate stomach covered with strands of brown yarn. The bear's body was brown construction paper, attached to the back of the plate. His head is magnificently crayoned with round black eyes, a pink nose and a broad smile from ear to ear in bright red.

“Put this on the wall, by your bed, Grandma,” he suggested. “I made it especially for you. He will help God protect you while you sleep and let you start your day with a smile.”

Now 14 years later I still wake up every morning greeted by the friendly bear. I smile back, say a prayer and rise to meet the day.

*Lord, thank you for your unfailing love throughout the years. You have truly blessed me with my children's and grandchildren's love. They are my biggest earthly reward. Amen.*

*Treasure: Treasure a special gift you received from a loved one by putting it in a special place.*

*Read: 1 Corinthians 13:13; Galatians 5:22-23*

*Edna Jakobsky  
Ft. Myers, FL*

Wednesday, November 6, 2013

# Doing God's Will

*Give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.*

*1 Thessalonians 5:18*

In some ways, doing God's will is an old-fashioned idea. But when I was young, God's will was my primary motivation. I was urged daily to seek it out, meditate on it, read about it, pray about it and then do it. I'm not sure all these years later if I ever really knew exactly what God's will was. And yet, the question still stirs my heart: what does God want of me? As a young woman, I focused on what God wanted me to do. Now as I approach my 70s, I am able to focus more on what God wants me to be. St. Paul says that God's will is "to give thanks in all circumstances." I want to become this kind of person, giving thanks and praise in all I do.

*O loving God, now that I have more time to be with you in prayer, help me actually make this part of my daily schedule. Amen.*

*Practice: Try to build time for prayer into your daily schedule. Start with ten minutes, with your mind and heart open to what God wants to say to you, and afterwards give thanks that you still have this precious time.*

*Read: 1 Thessalonians 5*

*Gwen Costello  
Providence Forge, VA*

Thursday, November 7, 2013

# Imitation Living

*Therefore be imitators of God.*

*Ephesians 5:1*

What does it mean to be an imitator of Christ? Jesus' greatest act of love was to give his own life on the cross to pay the price for our sins. So a Christ-imitator leads a life of sacrificial love. You might have a large family or a grown family, or you might be a family of one. No member of God's family is ever alone. We have a loving Father who chose us to be his own, and we are surrounded by members of our Christian family, related or not. My parents taught me to be a Christ-imitator. I thank God when his Spirit leads me to proclaim the Gospel like my dad did or live in servanthood as my mom did. No matter what your family life has been or is now, you are an imitator of Christ. Radiate his loving words and actions to everyone around you.

*Father, let me imitate your love so that everyone around me can come to know you. Amen.*

*Do: What good habits in your life seem to be imitations of the way people dear to you lived? If those people are still around, thank them. If not, thank God for them.*

*Read: Ephesians 5:1-2; John 13:14-15*

*Ruth Geisler  
Aliso Viejo, CA*

Friday, November 8, 2013

# Talking with God

*Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in your sight, O Lord, my rock and my redeemer.*

*Psalm 19:14*

Praying the Psalms has become for me an excellent companion for my life's journey in these retirement years. They speak of human feelings and experiences. They are marked by candor, concreteness, telling it like it is. They have much to say to me, about my pilgrim journey. They let the psalmist's experiences touch my experiences. They help me talk with God about my own cares and hopes.

The early church father St. Augustine, living in the 4th century, writes, "Attune your heart to the Psalms. If the Psalm prays, pray; if it mourns, mourn; if it hopes, hope; if it fears, fear. Everything in the Psalter is the looking glass of the soul."

*Thanks, Father, for giving us the Book of Psalms, to help us talk with you. In Jesus' name. Amen.*

*Pause: Pause each day to pray with the psalmist as a resource for your prayer life.*

*Read: Psalm 19; Psalm 25*

*Walter M. Schoedel  
Webster Groves, MO*



Saturday, November 9, 2013

# Wanted!

*[The Father] chose us in [Christ] before the creation of the world ...*

*Ephesians 1:4*

When you were younger, did you ever play the game Needle's Eye? All stood in a circle singing a special song while the leader started threading in and out. At the end of the song, the leader took the hand of a favored person at the words "because I wanted you." The game continued until all were chosen.

Isn't it great to be wanted? Not if your face is on a poster, of course. But it's a primal urge to be wanted, desired and loved by others.

The most stupendous fact of life is that God wants us. He wants you and me to be with him forever. St. Paul says that God chose us—elected us—before the world was here!

When I feel down and out, forgotten, unloved or unwanted, it's so uplifting to think that the Lord of all wants me and chose me from eternity to be his own.

*Thanks, dear Father, for wanting me and electing even me. Amen.*

*Recall: Recall a game when someone made you happy by choosing you. Apply that to God.*

*Read: Ephesians 1:1-14*

*Don Hoeferkamp  
St. Louis, MO*

Sunday, November 10, 2013

# A Life-giving Message

*What I tell you in the dark, say in the light, and what you hear whispered, proclaim on the housetops.*

*Matthew 10:27*

The army has a division known as the Signal Corps. Their job is to facilitate all forms of military communication from backpack radios all the way to massive multi-operator control towers. The messages delivered by the Signal Corps are no trivial matter; these are messages that determine whether or not a young soldier makes it back home alive.

Jesus Christ knew well the importance of communicating a serious message. Jesus sent out his disciples with a message of life-and-death importance: “What I tell you in the dark, say in the light, and what you hear whispered, proclaim on the housetops.”

Far from being classified information, the message of Jesus is for everyone. The Gospel is a message of eternal life in Christ that is given for all!

*Gracious God, use me to proclaim the life-giving message of Jesus. Amen.*

*Pray: Pray for someone you know who needs to hear the life-giving message of Jesus.*

*Read: Psalm 19:1-3; 1 Timothy 2:1-4*

*Trevor Sutton  
East Lansing, MI*

Monday, November 11, 2013

# Freed To Be Free

*Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom.*

*2 Corinthians 3:17*

Military aircraft are noisy and even deafening, especially if you live near a base. A sign at the Marine Corps Air Station in Jacksonville, North Carolina, reads: "Pardon the noise. It's the sound of freedom." Today active military men and women continue to follow in the footsteps of our veterans to protect our freedom. Many have given their lives so that we may live in the "land of the free and home of the brave."

*Thank you, Lord, for brave men and women who have faithfully served in the military in the past. Help us to preserve our freedom by supporting those who served us and those who are actively serving now. Amen.*

*Remember: When you see an American flag, remember the veterans who served to protect our freedoms.*

*Read: Psalm 33:12, Psalm 29:11*

*Naomi Weslock  
Lake in the Hills, IL*

Tuesday, November 12, 2013

# Smucker's Jar Witness

*Teach us to number our days that we may get a heart of wisdom.*

*Psalm 90:12*

Many mornings my husband and I watch *The Today Show* as we eat our breakfast. One of the joyful segments is seeing the Smucker's jar logo appear with the name of someone celebrating a 100th birthday or higher! Commentator Willard Scott tells a bit about the birthday "boy" or "girl." Quite often these celebrants are still living independently and enjoying life among family and friends. Often Mr. Scott also notes that the person is still active in his or her church.

A simple jam jar and the occasion of a birthday—what a witness! No bells and whistles needed, just the simple reminder that these birthday celebrants are still actively HIS heart, hands and feet, regardless of their ages. May you be the "jam" in your family or community today!

*Good Father, fill me with your love so I may continually be your heart, hands and feet. Amen.*

*Think: How will you witness for him today?*

*Read: Luke 2:25-38; Psalm 90*

*Louise Schini Weber  
Fort Myers, FL*

Wednesday, November 13, 2013

# To-Do List

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

*Psalms 46:10*

Most retirees agree: If you thought you were busy before, just wait until you retire! All the honey-do lists pile up. Every volunteer opportunity jumps in your face. It seems like everyone around you thinks you might die of boredom if he or she doesn't give you something to do.

Are you so busy doing that you haven't taken time to be still? When is the last time you took a deep breath and enjoyed God's good creation? When did you take the time to read a whole chapter of the Bible at a leisurely speed, exploring the meaning of God's Word in your life? Have you been able to talk to God in prayer without being constantly interrupted?

This is the season of your life to dwell with God, to sit in his holiness and just be his child.

*Heavenly Father, take me in your arms as your child. Help me take time to sit and be with you. Amen.*

*Be still: Take time out of each day this next week and be still for a while. Just breathe, and be with God.*

*Read: Luke 10:38-42; Psalm 23*

*Stephenie Hovland  
Green Bay, WI*

Thursday, November 14, 2013

# The Three M's

*With my song I give thanks to him.*

*Psalm 28:7*

During her hospice days, my wife would sing hymns and listen to recorded music. Throughout her life she didn't hesitate to sing songs of faith, confession, hope and joy. She witnessed to those around her with her songs where the music, the message and the memories enriched her life.

Maybe you have had the same experiences. Singing "Holy, Holy, Holy" floods your heart with memories; singing "Christ the Lord Is Risen Today" reminds you of the festivities of Easter; singing "What a Friend We Have in Jesus" rehearses your prayer life; singing "A Mighty Fortress Is Our God" reveals the richness of the music, its message and the memories where you stood with fellow believers confessing your faith.

*Lord Jesus, whether we sing with every note on pitch or not, or hum the tune, move us always to thank you. Amen.*

*Spend time: Spend time singing or humming your favorite hymn, reflecting on the music, the message and the memories.*

*Read: Psalm 26:6-9; Colossians 3:15-17*

*Walter M. Schoedel  
Webster Groves, MO*

Friday, November 15, 2013

# Forget It

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

*Jeremiah 31:34*

Isn't memory amazing? You can't remember why you came into the kitchen, but you remember all too well unkind words or actions that occurred years ago. And those unforgotten words and actions remain unforgiven. Refusing to forgive is like poisoning yourself to kill someone else.

Thank God that he doesn't remember our sins the way we remember the sins of others. He sent his Son to earth and punished him in our place. Because of Jesus' death and resurrection, God forgives and forgets all the wrongs we have done. He remembers only Jesus' sacrifice on our behalf. If our holy God can do this for us, can't we do the same for each other?

*Lord, help me to forgive and forget the wrongs of others, as you have forgiven me for Jesus' sake. Amen.*

*Do: Do you remember someone who hurt you? Forgive and forget, as God has forgiven you.*

*Read: Matthew 18:23-35*

*Eileen Ritter  
Grand Haven, MI*

Saturday, November 16, 2013

# We're All One Family

*God settles the solitary in a home.*

*Psalm 68:6*

Mrs. Hamilton had hundreds of grandchildren. They engulfed her with hugs on Sunday. It was strange because Mrs. Hamilton didn't have any children of her own. My pastor suggested that I visit Mrs. Hamilton. She was a retired teacher, and we had much in common. I left my first visit with her promise to come and listen to my first-grade students read. Mrs. Hamilton kept that promise for the rest of her life. She told her friends at church, "Working with the first-graders was the first reason I had to get out of bed in the morning after my husband died."

Now I find myself in the position of being a retired teacher. On Tuesdays, I get out of bed to help the young children at my church's day school with their reading. Saturdays I get out of bed to take Ryan—a former first grader with many behavioral disabilities—out for a cheeseburger. He is now 16, and we've been buddies for ten years.

*Father, help me reach out to lonely people who need a family's love. In Jesus' name. Amen.*

*Do: Is there someone that you can help God set into a family? Perhaps into your family?*

*Read: Psalm 68; Isaiah 61:1-3*

*Ruth Geisler  
Aliso Viejo, CA*



Sunday, November 17, 2013

# On Praying

*Whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it.*

Mark 10:15

There's a story about a Dust Bowl community, in the midst of terrible drought, that gathered to "pray for rain." One little girl interrupted the praying when she arrived late. She had gone back home to get an umbrella. No one else thought to bring one.

But what can one expect from a child? Children don't know how to be practical—how to calculate the probability of a return. They don't know how to be realistic and hide their umbrellas.

As we get older, we learn. We learn to expect what is likely, to protect ourselves. After all, how can you really know what will happen if you pray for rain? You might just end up drier than before. Certainly that's realistic—and adult.

You have to be a little foolish, a little childlike, to expect that prayer might get you all wet—that a prayer could turn into a miracle.

*Lord, help us be the children in faith who pray expectantly from a childlike heart. Amen.*

*Fetch: Go fetch your umbrella before you pray.*

*Read: John 14:8-14; Matthew 7:7-12*

Ted Schroeder  
Maple Grove, MN

Monday, November 18, 2013

# History

*Out of the depths I cry to you, O Lord! O Lord, hear my voice! Let your ears be attentive to the voice of my pleas for mercy!*

*Psalm 130:1-2*

Recently I traveled to Washington, D.C., a wonderful place of history. I especially love our nation's history. There is so much richness to the Founding Fathers and their vision for our freedom. One of those freedoms is the right to exercise religion. It is a freedom for which I am thankful, and a freedom I praise God for daily.

When we consider other countries and places in the world, we are very fortunate. Granted, our country seems to be in turmoil from time to time as we are all human, but we still have it good overall. Though there are areas in which we may be seeing some silencing, we are still afforded the great freedom to worship Christ. We are able to celebrate HIS-story.

*Lord, grant us wisdom to see our story wrapped up in your story. Amen.*

*Pray: Pray for our nation, for our leaders and for our military men and women.*

*Read: Psalm 130*

*Cory A. Wielert  
Crown Point, IN*

Tuesday, November 19, 2013

# A Message From Above

*The eyes of the Lord are toward the righteous and his ears toward their cry.*

*Psalm 34:15*

God gets his message across in mysterious ways. Sometimes I try to run my life my way, not his. A couple of months ago I had an unexpected expense. In figuring my budget, I discovered that my Social Security check would only cover my monthly bills. I was feeling overwhelmed and searched for the answer on my own. How could I solve the problem?

God sent the answer where I least expected it. I was walking the dog when I passed a truck with a bumper sticker on it. In large black letters it read, "Relax, God is in charge."

And he was. The next day I received a surprise in the mail. It was a check made out to me for the exact amount to cover the bill.

*God, help me remember to go to you first to solve my problems. Forgive me for trying to run my own life. I know your way is always the best way. Amen.*

*Relax: Take a moment to just relax today.*

*Read: Psalm 37:23-24; Philippians 4:4-9, 13*

*Edna Jakobsky  
Ft. Myers, FL*

Wednesday, November 20, 2013

# The Power of Prayer

*The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working.*

James 5:16

There was a soft knock at my office door. It was one of my senior parishioners who came to discuss the building effort with me. Maria wanted to know exactly where the new buildings would be located. I took her to the site. She had me mark off the dimensions of the building so she could walk the perimeter while praying.

Maria took prayer seriously, and the evidence was that God took her prayers seriously too. I was tempted to offer Maria a construction hard hat, just in case God decided to rain down the needed building blocks early! By the way, God answered Maria's prayers (and the prayers of the congregation she inspired). The building stands and still serves the congregation.

*Father, you are always far more willing to listen than we are to pray, and far more willing to answer than we are to ask. Move us, then, to pray more boldly. Amen.*

*Schedule: Determine today to increase time devoted for personal and intercessory prayer.*

*Read: James 5:13-18*

Ted Zimmerman  
Napa, CA

Thursday, November 21, 2013

# God at Work

*I am with you always.*

*Matthew 28:20*

The promise of Jesus to be with us tells us that God is alive and is at work in our lives and in our world. At the close of the day, we have the opportunity to reflect on how God has been at work through the hours of the day.

I saw God at work in the beautiful sunrise. I saw God at work in the gentle rain upon parched soil. I saw God at work through the support of my wife, children and grandchildren. I saw God in the caring ways of my neighbor. I saw God at work calming my troubled heart. I saw God at work in the fun we had as a family. I saw God at work forgiving my errant ways.

*Lord Jesus, wrap your arms around me and open my eyes to see you at work in me and through me and around me. Amen.*

*Share: Share with someone how you experience God at work in your life today.*

*Read: Psalm 104:24-35; Philippians 1:6*

*Walter M. Schoedel  
Webster Groves, MO*

Friday, November 22, 2013

# Mismatch

*But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.*

*Romans 5:8*

I got a call from my wife to check my shoes to see if I had the same type on each foot. I said, “I do. Why?” She said, “Because Silas has two different shoes on, and you put them on his feet.” Apparently he was excited about the mismatch, though. I wouldn’t have been if it were my feet.

How about you? What sort of mismatches are happening in your life right now? When mismatches happen, we have to turn and look at the greatest mismatch of them all—why would God who is perfect want to save us sinners?

It is a mismatch to us, but a match made in heaven to God. He loves us so much. When we sit down and read the many stories in the Bible and how the whole plan comes together, seeing that he has enfolded us into that plan, we can only be thankful. It is an amazing match—one of forgiveness, life and salvation.

*Heavenly Father, thank you for taking a mismatch and making us a match in Jesus. Amen.*

*Match: Welcome someone into your heart today, taking a mismatch and making it a match.*

*Read: Romans 5:1-21*

*Cory A. Wielert  
Crown Point, IN*

Saturday, November 23, 2013

# Welcome

*Therefore welcome one another as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God.*

*Romans 15:7*

You may at times have visitors. If people do drop by, remember that in Christ, the visit is as much for them as it is for you. God tells us, “Let each of us please his neighbor for his good, to build him up” (Romans 15:2). The visitor may be coming to build you up, but you have the opportunity to build up that visitor in God’s love.

You may have no visitors, or very few. Your only visitors may be caregivers who come to help you. Whether visitors come or not, you can still welcome others into the presence of God in prayer. As Christ welcomes you before his Father, welcome others there, too, “for the glory of God.”

*Lord Jesus, help me to welcome others as you have welcomed me. Amen.*

*Welcome: Welcome those who visit you and try to build them up in Christ.*

*Read: Romans 15:1-7*

*Carol Geisler  
Manchester, MO*

Sunday, November 24, 2013

# Let the Trumpet Sound

*For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first.*

*1 Thessalonians 4:16*

I have a good imagination. Even so, I can't imagine what the last day of the world will be like, when the angel's trumpet sounds and everyone who ever lived will be brought to judgment.

Just the thought is stunning. The sound of a trumpet cuts through everything and forces attention. So it will be on the Last Day when God's call to eternity sounds.

Then it will be too late to repent. Now is the time, on a daily basis, to ask God's forgiveness. But Jesus has met the call for us; he has answered and sacrificed himself so that anyone who believes in him will have eternal life

*Thank you, Lord, for dying for my sins so that I can spend eternity in your presence. Amen.*

*Imagine: Try to picture what your first view of heaven will be like.*

*Read: Use a Bible concordance to find and read at least fifteen verses that relate to God's promise of heaven.*

*David W. Eggebrecht  
Grafton, WI*



Monday, November 25, 2013

# Celebrate the Harvest

*... and every branch that does bear fruit he prunes, that it may bear more fruit.*

*John 15:2*

When spring arrives, we marvel again at the beauty of fruit trees in full bloom and the sweet fragrance of blossoms. By fall the blossoms of spring have been mostly forgotten. The showy beauty of a blooming fruit tree is often far more appreciated than the humble tree of fall losing its leaves and bending under the load of fruit.

If you are in the fall season of life, remember you are also in the season of proving the great Vinedresser's work invested earlier in your life. The truth of the matter is that it is not until fall when the vinedresser sees the results of the pruning done previously. Now he can measure the outcome of that pruning. This is the season when the Master Gardener, Jesus, gets to reap. While we plant and water, the Lord causes the increase. Enjoy this season of faithful fruit bearing. The Lord is.

*Lord, remind me of the fruit you have brought to bear in this season of my life. Amen.*

*Recall: Remember to enjoy and celebrate the Lord's harvest in your life.*

*Read: John 15:1-5*

*Peter Ward  
Ottawa, IL*

Tuesday, November 26, 2013

# Benefits

*Forget not all his benefits ...*

*Psalm 103:2*

Most of you who are reading this receive a monthly benefit from Social Security. Some of you also receive a retirement benefit from a former employer. We are grateful for those benefits and look forward to receiving them each month. Of course, these benefits do not come automatically. We all remember those many years when we paid into Social Security, whether we were employees or self-employed. And retirement benefits from a former employer come only as a result of working for that employer for who knows how many years. These benefits are “beneficial.” They may or may not meet all our needs.

In Psalm 103 David writes, “Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits.” Unlike the benefits described above, the benefits we receive from the Lord do meet all our needs. As David goes on to list the benefits, first on the list is that he “forgives all [our] iniquity.” And what could be more beneficial than that?

*Lord, we give thanks for your benefits. Amen.*

*Review: Review the other benefits David mentions in this psalm.*

*Read: Psalm 103*

*Jim Rogers  
Chesterfield, MO*

Wednesday, November 27, 2013

# It's So Good to See You

*Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.*

*Matthew 11:28*

Our annual trip to visit the grandparents in the country was a great joy for our children. They could run free, ride the go-kart and play all over the barnyard. But the best part for us as parents was the stop at Great-grandmother's.

After all the children were seated, she would approach each one, put her hands up to caress their face and with the greatest smile and much joy she would say, "It's so good to see you!" And, indeed, everything about her convinced you that this was true. Then she would share much food and drink to refresh our famished kids. And most important of all, she would remind every one of them of the boundless love our Lord has for every heart and every life!

That experience was a taste of heaven!

*Father, lead me to those who need a welcome touch, a refreshing respite from the troubles of the day. Amen.*

*Invite: Greet your grandchildren or a friend with: "Oh, it's so good to see you!" Then, find ways to show it.*

*Read: Matthew 25:34-40*

*David P. Schmidt  
St. Louis, MO*

Thursday, November 28, 2013

# Thanks

*Give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.*

*1 Thessalonians 5:18*

Surprise your family with this unusual thanksgiving prayer. “Dear God, thank you for dirty dishes, piles of laundry and dusty floors and furniture.”

After they’ve lowered their eyebrows and before they think you’ve gone over the edge, give this explanation: Dirty dishes mean that you have food to eat, piles of laundry show that you have clothes to wear and dusty floors and furniture come from having a place to live.

Every day God showers us with many material blessings, and sometimes we take them for granted. But even more important than these material blessings are the amazing spiritual blessings we receive daily through God’s grace. We are forgiven and granted eternal life because of Jesus’ death and resurrection.

What can be more wonderful than that!

*Heavenly Father, thank you for all the blessings you give me each day. Amen.*

*Thank: Thank God for the special people that he has placed in your life.*

*Read: Psalm 95*

*Jeanette Dall  
Batavia, IL*

Friday, November 29, 2013

# Thanksgiving Recipe

*Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good; his steadfast love endures forever.*

*Psalms 118:1*

Thanksgiving is traditionally a time of the year when family and friends gather together and celebrate the holiday with a homemade meal. We often open our family cookbooks or recipe boxes and choose to prepare dishes that have some significance in our lives. Maybe it's a recipe that has been handed down for generations in your family or one that you recently saw in a cookbook. Whatever the case may be, we use a recipe to achieve an end result.

God has given us many recipes for life through the gift of his Word, the Bible. It provides us with all that we need to know to create the best recipe for life.

*Heavenly Father, thank you for all you have given me. Help me to be a blessing to those in my community. Amen.*

*Show: Demonstrate your gratitude for God's blessings in your actions toward others.*

*Read: Psalms 118; Philemon 1:4*

*Betsy Becker Niedringhaus  
Chesterfield, MO*

Saturday, November 30, 2013

# Blessings

*Good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap.*

*Luke 6:38*

As I list all the blessings I have received from the Lord's gracious hand, I'm sure to remember the many good things. I was sheltered from the rain, fed nutritious foods (even if I had to cook them myself) and remembered by friends and family with encouraging words by letter, phone or e-mail.

Some of the days' happenings, however, I have not classified as blessings. Perhaps God, who sees the bigger picture, was leading me through trials or stress that were not relieved. The blessing revealed later was that he was drawing me closer, strengthening my faith. We must remember that all things, good or bad, come to us from the hand of our God who loves us. We must be careful with our blessing list, to be alert to blessings that may be in disguise.

*Thank you, Lord, that your hand is leading and your love supporting us—always. Keep me strong, uncomplaining. Amen.*

*List: Make a list of your blessings.*

*Read: Psalm 103*

*Constance Bretscher  
Valparaiso, IN*

Sunday, December 1, 2013

# Happy Holidays!

*In your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect.*

*1 Peter 3:15*

“Happy holidays!” Does this secular greeting grate on your “Merry Christmas” nerves? A little research on the word *holiday* may bring peace to your heart. It’s “a holy day, set apart for devotion to God, the celebration of something specific.” Jesus is our Savior! That’s specific. God himself became one of us! That’s worthy of celebration. How can my witness set this day apart?

Pharisees often challenged Jesus with tricky comments or questions. He sometimes gave unexpected answers, making people think. Perhaps a surprising response will do the same this Advent season.

With gentleness and a smile, I might try responding to that generic holiday greeting by saying, “And a happy holy day to you too!”

*Lord, give me courage, inspiration and the words I need to express my faith in you. Amen.*

*Greet: Come up with your own original Christmas greeting.*

*Read: Joshua 1:9; Colossians 4:2-6*

*Sharolyn Sander  
Roselle, IL*

Monday, December 2, 2013

# The Light of Life

*In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind. The light shines in the darkness ...*

*John 1:4-5*

Light is an important element in our lives. It illuminates our paths and prevents us from stumbling. It also is essential in the growth of crops that we all eventually consume. Sunlight also assists in the production of vitamin D in our bodies. A lack of sunlight can cause a vitamin deficiency which can lead to health problems. Light is needed in our lives.

God's light directs our paths in life through the gift of his Son, Jesus. Without him, we would be lost forever in the darkness of this world and wandering aimlessly. His light is important to our spiritual health.

*Heavenly Father, thank you for your gift of light, in your Son, Jesus. Help me to spread the Good News of your light to others. Amen.*

*Share: Share God's Good News of the gift of his Son, Jesus, with someone today.*

*Read: John 1:4-5*

*Betsy Becker Niedringhaus  
Chesterfield, MO*



Tuesday, December 3, 2013

# Snowy White

*Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.*

*Psalm 51:7*

Everything outside my window was drab and dreary. The trees were bare, the muddy ground was frozen and last summer's flowers were dead stalks. I closed the blinds on that gray world. When I opened the blinds the next morning, I was dazzled by a fairy-tale world. Snow covered everything in sight, and the shining sun made everything sparkle. What a change—from ugly to beautiful!

Sometimes our lives can seem like a dreary winter landscape. We are sinful people that fret and worry instead of trusting in God's love and care. God sent his Son, Jesus, to be born, to die for our sins and give us eternal life. We can trust God in all areas of our lives because "he [washed] me and I [am] whiter than snow."

*Jesus, thank you for being my Savior and for cleansing me from all my sins. Amen.*

*Walk: Enjoy a walk in the snow and marvel at God's beautiful world.*

*Read: Psalm 51*

*Jeanette Dall  
Batavia, IL*

Wednesday, December 4, 2013

# Wait

*Wait for the Lord.*

*Psalm 27:14*

Recently, I've done a lot of waiting: for test results, doctors' opinions, surgery dates, clearances to resume normal activities, etc. I don't wait well. I agree with St. Augustine who said something like "Give me patience and give it now."

A lot of us aren't good at waiting. Yet, in life, we wait for things and people every day. And then Scripture says we're also to wait on God?! Waiting for God is different than waiting for earthly things (including people). We must wait for earthly things with a sense of possibility. We can wait for God with a sense of certainty. That's why the psalmist can also tell us to wait with strength and courage, the kind of waiting we can ONLY do while waiting for our Lord! Because we know from prior experience that God always acts on our eternal behalf. We ask; we wait; we pass our time with the absolute knowledge that God will come through for us!

He always has. He always will. Just wait and see ...

*Lord, grant me strength and courage to wait for you even when it's hard. Amen.*

*Practice: Practice waiting (we have to anyway).*

*Read: Psalm 27*

*Al Schenk  
Jennings, MO*

Thursday, December 5, 2013

# Called for How Long?

*... one body in Christ, and individually members one of another.*

*Romans 12:5*

One Sunday the lady behind me sang with an angelic alto voice, making my worship experience so special. After the service I talked to her and added, "You belong up front in the choir." She confessed, "I know, but I am here for only a short time every winter." I looked into her eyes and told her, "God has given you a gift. It does not matter if you are here for a short time. God wants you to use it now." She promised me she would call the choir director. She needed encouragement to remain active as a member of Christ's Body. How many retirees have retired in their service to the Lord and need encouragement?

*O Holy Spirit, keep us steadfast in our service to the Lord. Amen.*

*Encourage: Be an encourager to others. Tap someone on the shoulder, and remind him or her of the gifts that can be shared as a member of Christ's Body.*

*Read: Romans 12:4-5; 1 Corinthians 12:12-20*

*Naomi Weslock  
Lake in the Hills, IL*

Friday, December 6, 2013

# Listen To My Voice

*My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me.*

*John 10:27*

Every time a certain pastor friend of mine comes to visit, I know who it is before he arrives at my office door. I can tell it is him by the click of his shoes and the cadence of sound he makes coming across the chapel floor. In fact, many of my colleagues that come through the chapel have distinct walking patterns that are given away by the click of their shoes against the floor. I know their cadence and sound and can tell who it is typically without even looking up.

Can you tell who is coming by the sound of their shoes or the pattern of someone's walk? Try it sometime. Listen.

Jesus says he is the Shepherd, and that his sheep hear his voice and follow. We can do so without even looking up. We can do so, because we hear the sound of his voice through Scripture, through Holy Communion and Baptism.

*Lord, help us to listen to your voice and follow you. Amen.*

*Discover: Discover God in the little things of life, and hear how his voice is calling you.*

*Read: John 10:22-42*

*Cory A. Wielert  
Crown Point, IN*

Saturday, December 7, 2013

# Eyes on the Good News

*What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man imagined, what God has prepared for those who love him.*

*1 Corinthians 2:9-10*

With age we learn that we rarely can change the entire world and certainly can't force it to bend to our will. Prayer and donations can help. Follow the wisdom of the late PBS's Mr. Rogers, an ordained Presbyterian minister, and rejoice in the goodness of helpers who aid victims.

In the midst of rants, we can take heart by reading aloud Jesus' promises of undeserved wonders awaiting those who have faith in God. If friends become agitated over the latest crime news, we can informally share our confidence in God's preparations for eternity for many of the victims.

*Lord, help me to keep my eyes on your promises and tell others of your promises. Amen.*

*Switch off: Switch off your electronic communication for a half hour and read slowly the 1 Corinthians verse above. Talk about it with others distressed over calamity.*

*Read: Isaiah 65:17-25; 1 Chronicles 29:10-15*

*Patricia Rice  
St. Louis, MO*

Sunday, December 8, 2013

# What's Now?

*I tell you, now is the time of God's favor, now is the day of salvation.*

2 Corinthians 6:2

Christ is always NOW! His promises, love and forgiveness are with us each day, even when we sometimes live in the past or in the future. I remember someone once saying to me, "You have a great future behind you!" Yes, at times we tend to reminisce about "What was" rather than dealing with "What is." Or we get too concerned about "What will be" and miss the opportunities to live a vibrant, grace-filled life right now.

St. Paul reminds us that NOW is the day of salvation. The Lord is working in and through us now. Of course, he has blessed us in the past and will continue to lead us in the future, but remember we are empowered to share his love right now with others. With the Lord it is never "What were you?" or even "What's next?" but it is always "What's now?"

*Lord, help us to remember the past, look forward to the future and always live in the now. Amen.*

*Plan: What can you do today—NOW—to bring love and joy to someone?*

*Read: 2 Corinthians 6:1-13*

Rich Bimler  
Bloomington, IL

Monday, December 9, 2013

# Circle of Love

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

*John 3:16*

For years the Advent wreath was the center of “Jesus Time” in my classroom from the first Monday in Advent to the last day of class before Christmas. We would first light one candle, then two, then three and finally four.

Because I taught four- and five-year-olds, I opted for a metal wreath so that I could avoid any prickly ends of evergreen branches. One day I looked over and saw two preschoolers picking up the wreath to inspect it more closely. I then heard one of them excitedly say, “Look, it’s a circle. That must make it God’s never-ending circle of love!”

I couldn’t have said it better myself. When was the last time you found yourself embraced by God’s never-ending circle of love?

*Heavenly Father, as we journey through Advent, turn our focus to the hope, peace, love and joy that is ours through Christ. In his name we pray. Amen.*

*Light: Light a candle and remember God’s love.*

*Read: John 1:1-18*

*Jane P. Wilke  
Woodbury, MN*

Tuesday, December 10, 2013

# Driving in the Dark

*As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world.*

*John 9:5*

I like to drive; I always have. But I find that I no longer like to drive at night or in the dark. The oncoming lights seem extra bright, the lines are indistinct and I lose all sense of direction.

Recently, as I was on a nighttime errand, I realized this is true in my daily life also. If I stay in the daylight of God's will and his Word, everything is clearer. There is not the risk of taking wrong turns or the confusion about what lane I am in that I encounter when I am living in the dark, away from God.

*Lord, keep me always in the light of your will.  
Amen.*

*Drive: If you are able to drive (even only in daylight!), offer to drive someone on errands or to an appointment.*

*Read: John 11:8-10; Philippians 2:14-15*

*Gloria Doty  
Fort Wayne, IN*



Wednesday, December 11, 2013

# Hitherto

*Hitherto the Lord has helped us.*

1 Samuel 7:12

Our congregation just celebrated its 144<sup>th</sup> anniversary! Our theme was “The Lord has helped us hitherto!” *Hitherto* isn’t a word we use much. It means “right up to this very moment.” God helps each of us *hitherto*.

I appreciate that fact more each year, as my *hitherto* gets further away from *whence*! It’s both comforting and strengthening to look back over an increasingly long life and see how God has helped me through so many things—good and bad—and brought me, by his grace, right up to this present moment.

While everyone can rejoice that God looks after them *hitherto*, I think we have a better perspective on that than youngsters; we have so much more history, so much more of life behind us and, therefore, so much more proof that God helps us day by day. It is my aim to share my *hitherto* with the younger folks in my life, and I pray it is your aim as well.

*Lord, thank you for my hitherto. Amen.*

*Share: Share your hitherto with someone.*

*Read: 1 Samuel 7*

Al Schenk  
Jennings, MO

Thursday, December 12, 2013

# A Different Take

*Get Mark and bring him with you, for he is very useful to me for ministry.*

*2 Timothy 4:11*

Thomas Jefferson was one of the Founding Fathers of our country, but his record in religious matters isn't quite as well thought of.

So I was surprised to read a prayer he wrote on March 4, 1801, which includes these words: "Almighty God, who has given us this good land for our heritage, we humbly beseech thee that we may always prove ourselves a people mindful of thy favor and glad to do thy will."

It's helpful, from time to time, to reassess our opinion of others, including historical figures like Jefferson. This can help us avoid becoming too set in our thinking, suffering from "hardening of the attitudes." And, in the context of our role as parents or grandparents, to be open to alter our views of others, if we discover new information about them.

*Help us, gracious God, to be open to grow. Amen.*

*Recall: Recall a particular person who changed his or her attitude toward you.*

*Read: Acts 15:36-41*

*Deane Schuessler  
Woodbury, MN*

Friday, December 13, 2013

# Refrigerator Gospel

*These commandments that I give you today are to be on your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home ... Write them on the doorframes of your houses ...*

*Deuteronomy 6:6-9*

So what do you have hanging on your refrigerator door? If yours resembles ours, you might say grand-kid photos and customized artwork, emergency contact information, a “joke of the day,” a “Go Valpo” magnet, plus calendars, shopping lists and other items.

What we have on our refrigerator doors say a lot about our priorities in life, and this is what Deuteronomy is talking about. Continue to celebrate and share God’s love with your family and friends, through what you say and what you do, and also by what you put on your fridge!

*Lord, keep nudging me to do and tell the message of your love and joy for us, even by what is placed on my refrigerator door. Amen.*

*Do: Consider items that could be added to your refrigerator to show God’s love for all!*

*Read: Deuteronomy 6:4-9*

*Rich Bimler  
Bloomington, IL*

Saturday, December 14, 2013

# The Plan

*Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me. In my Father's house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also.*

*John 14:1-3*

The older we get, the more we are concerned and even consumed with planning issues. Have we planned properly for the future? Will we have sufficient resources to care for our loved one? How will we take care of each other if we are no longer strong enough?

It is a relief when you have a plan in mind and a place to move to in answer to those questions. What an even greater relief it is when you know your Lord and Savior has his plan and place all arranged for you so that your future for now and forever is secure.

*Lord, calm our fears and strengthen our confidence in your plan for us. Amen.*

*Help: Help a friend or relative who needs to plan for his or her retirement care.*

*Read: Jeremiah 29:11-13; Isaiah 14:24; Psalm 40:1-5; 1 Timothy 2:4*

*David P. Schmidt  
St. Louis, MO*

Sunday, December 15, 2013

# From East To West

*As far as the east is from the west, so far does he remove our transgressions from us.*

*Psalm 103:12*

Measuring the distance from east to west is difficult. If you strike out going east toward where the sun rises and keep going, you will never reach west. Or if you head west by following the setting sun, you will never arrive at east. The poet Rudyard Kipling, using east and west in another sense, concluded, "... never the twain shall meet ..."

Our text agrees. Through the forgiveness earned and offered to us in Jesus Christ, God has separated us as far from our sin as possible. That's what happens when we are led by his Spirit to accept the full forgiveness he offers. The degree of separation is not just miles but light years of light years on toward infinity. When God forgives he really, really, really forgives.

*Lord, I am so glad you have separated me from my sin, making and keeping my heart as yours. Keep doing it in Jesus' name. Amen.*

*Explain: The next time you talk with those who seem overwhelmed by what they have done or not done, explain to them how far east is from west.*

*Read: Isaiah 43:25; 1 John 1:7*

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

Monday, December 16, 2013

# Change

*Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change.*

*James 1:17*

My quick trip to the store took twice as long as it should have. The management rearranged the content of the aisles and had me wandering up and down to find what I needed. I don't like changes, but life is a series of them. With each change, the security of the familiar and comfortable is ripped away.

I'm told that God causes change to create growth and maturity. We step into each change with his help. There is one constant. Jesus is the same yesterday, today and forever. His love never changes. That is true security.

*Thank you, Jesus, for being the one constant in life and for being the strength that I need to navigate a changing world. Amen.*

*Act: Think about the uncomfortable changes in life. Ask God to help you step bravely into them. Learn something new today.*

*Read: Isaiah 42:9, 43:19; 2 Corinthians 5:17*

*Lynne Waite Chapman  
Fort Wayne, IN*

Tuesday, December 17, 2013

# Lifted Up

*When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you.*

*Isaiah 43:2*

As I look back on the many trips we've been blessed to take, I'd have to say that one of my favorites was the cruise through the Panama Canal. I'm not talking about the lush, tropical rainforests we saw on our excursions or basking in the warmth of the sun. The experience I remember most was going through the canal itself.

It wasn't really very glamorous—the ship was only inches away from the concrete walls as we passed through the locks. Looking forward, we could see the higher level of water waiting ahead. I was amazed at how this huge ship was being lifted up by the water, and I couldn't even feel it.

That's when it struck me: By the power of the Holy Spirit and through the waters of baptism, I, too, am lifted up.

*According to your steadfast love, lift me up, O Lord. Amen.*

*Remember: Reflect upon the many times the Lord has lifted you above your circumstances.*

*Read: Lamentations 3:40-42; Psalm 121:1*

*Jane P. Wilke  
Woodbury, MN*

Wednesday, December 18, 2013

# Spiritual Transformation

*Then the Spirit of the Lord will rush upon you, and you will prophesy with them and be turned into another man.*

1 Samuel 10:6

In Old Testament times, God's Spirit—more commonly known as the Spirit of the Lord—came upon someone swiftly to allow that person to serve the interests of God's people. Unlike an outward sign or symbol, the Lord's Spirit changed the heart and disposition. People who encountered God's Spirit were suddenly filled with divine expertise, knowledge and insight.

By his prophesying, Saul confirmed that he had received new spiritual gifts. He showed that he was spiritually transformed.

The Spirit of the Lord is our secret weapon. Despite outward signs that show us as frail or incapable, all we need is the Lord's Spirit. Zechariah 4:6 says it best, "Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit ..."

*Dearest Lord, may your spirit fill my heart and strengthen me from within. Amen.*

*Identify: Discover the spiritual gifts the Lord has established within you.*

*Read: Judges 3:7-11; 2 Samuel 23:2-4*

Darla Panabaker  
Breezy Point, MN



Thursday, December 19, 2013

# Please Pass the Salt!

*You are the salt of the earth, but if salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything except to be thrown out and trampled under people's feet.*

*Matthew 5:13*

Jesus says, “You are the salt of the earth.” Salt always makes a difference. Do we? How does his love, his forgiveness, his warmth, his care touch the lives of others through us? Have we lost our saltiness? I have always been puzzled by how salt could lose its saltiness. It is an element—one of God’s building blocks of the creation. It cannot be changed, so how does it lose its saltiness? An elderly worker in the salt mines of Detroit explained it so simply. He said when they reach the end of the salt vein the mining machine gets into the dirt. When salt gets so dirty and polluted, it cannot be cleaned, so it is worthless and they use it as a roadway to block the dust. Wow! How often in our sinfulness do we become so polluted with the sin and dirt all around us that we can no longer make a difference?

*Good Lord, help us with your forgiveness to become salty again. Amen.*

*Love: Pepper your life with words of love.*

*Read: the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5-7.*

*John Herzog  
Chesterfield Township, MI*

Friday, December 20, 2013

# Let Your Words Be Few

*God is in heaven, and you are on earth. Therefore let your words be few.*

*Ecclesiastes 5:2*

“Let your words be few” reminded me of an important lesson I learned long ago—that less than twenty percent of our communication happens through words. Body language, tone of voice and so many other things influence the message.

I think about that a lot as I think about the way God communicates with us. God doesn't just speak. He doesn't just give us his written word. God came in person to us in Jesus, an actual human being.

As we seek to witness to others around us these are good things to remember. We want to be filled with words as we seek to help others to know Jesus. But just maybe, if we enter their life situation with love and compassion, we may be saying far more to them about Jesus than all of our words could ever communicate. And Jesus can influence their lives far more through us, than we could ever imagine.

*Lord Jesus, teach me when to speak and when to keep silent. Amen.*

*Listen: Be there for someone else today, and listen for the opportunities God gives you to speak.*

*Read: 1 Peter 3:13-17*

*Lionel Otto  
Adelaide, Australia*

Saturday, December 21, 2013

# What Does This Mean?

*He has filled the hungry with good things, but has sent the rich away empty.*

*Luke 1:53*

This is part of Mary's *Magnificat*, her song of praise to God. Mary was singing of how in God's Kingdom things would be very different than in any kingdom in which people rule. Where people rule, the rich get richer and don't always care that the poor get poorer. Children are homeless; war is always breaking out somewhere; someone is always afraid. It is easy to get left behind.

In God's Kingdom, the last are first and the first, last. When God rules, those who have less are always the concern of those who have more. Where God rules, the Church is a family; fear is banished in the power of the Gospel of life; no one is left behind because we walk together in love and compassion.

You are God's child. Wherever your day takes you, everyone will encounter someone the Gospel has claimed, has changed, has gifted to the world.

*Lord Jesus, thank you for your Kingdom. Amen.*

*Thank: Give thanks for your life in God's Kingdom.*

*Read: Luke 1:46-55*

*Don Schatz  
McKinleyville, CA*

Sunday, December 22, 2013

# Presents or Presence?

*In your presence there is fullness of joy.*

*Psalm 16:11*

There's no doubt that the prevailing focus at Christmas seems to be on presents. I've come to the conclusion, though, that the older I get, the less I need "presents" and the more I need "presence."

To be truthful, I receive more joy from the presence of family and friends than from presents under the tree. The presence of the baby Jesus is revealed through every word in Luke 2 and felt in every verse of "Silent Night." It is in Jesus that I find comfort and peace.

When you stop to think about it, it's only because of the "presence" of Jesus on earth as God Made Flesh that we are able to receive the "presents" of peace, love and forgiveness.

*Be near me, Lord Jesus, I ask thee to stay close by me forever and love me, I pray. Bless all the dear children in thy tender care, and take us to heaven to live with thee there. Amen.*

*Do: Close your eyes as you sing your favorite Christmas hymns. Give thanks for his presence.*

*Read: Isaiah 9*

*Jane P. Wilke  
Woodbury, MN*

Monday, December 23, 2013

# Anticipation

*And then they will see the Son of Man coming in clouds with great power and glory.*

Mark 13:26

Waiting for Christmas was almost painful. My parents would close off the front room of our house, and my sister and I believed we could hear the elves in there making our presents. How powerful the feelings aroused by having to wait for a truly happy event! And we would prepare by behaving particularly well as part of that anticipation.

This is true of earthly events, but how much more powerful is our anticipation for Jesus' Second Coming, and how should that affect our behavior here on earth? Eternity in the presence of Jesus—that is what we have to look forward to. Good behavior will not get us to that goal, but it reflects our anticipation. While we cannot be sinless as Jesus was, we know our sins are forgiven because of God's magnificent love for us, and so we keep on trying, and anticipating.

*Lord God, help me to obey your commandments, and forgive my failures in doing so. Amen.*

*Pray: Pray for a peaceful mind as you reflect on God's ultimate promise.*

*Read: Matthew 16:21-28*

David W. Eggebrecht  
Grafton, WI

Tuesday, December 24, 2013

# The Way in the Manger

*I am the way, and the truth, and the life.*

John 14:6

In the days of St. Paul and St. Luke, followers of Jesus were called “disciples of the Way” (Acts 9:2; Acts 24:14). At Christmas we sing, “Away in the Manger.” Mary’s Son was the Way that lay in the manger. He was not *a* way. He was *the* Way. Some thirty years later he said it himself, “I am the Way” and “no one comes to the Father but by me.” Are you worried about the future? Hear him say, “I am your Way through every tomorrow.” Do past sins trouble you? All your past sins have been buried in Christ’s forgiveness. It is the devil that keeps unearthing them, seeking to rob you of Christmas joy. Jesus’ forgiveness is daily. It is simply his Way.

As disciples of the Way, we walk the *way* of forgiveness, forgiving others as we have been forgiven by our newborn King. It is the only *way* to live. We go on our *way*, rejoicing through Christmas and beyond.

*O Jesus, walk with me along the way. When I fall, lift me up. When I am weak, strengthen me. Amen.*

*Organize: Organize a group of people to go Christmas caroling in your community.*

*Read: John 1*

Leo Symmank  
Seabrook, TX

Wednesday, December 25, 2013

# Christmas Cards

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

*Ephesians 1:16*

Isn't it a special delight to empty the mailbox during the Christmas season? I eagerly open the mailed cards and even those sent digitally. I read the messages from family and friends and can't help but smile. But, all too soon, Christmas is here. So, what to do with the cards? Recycle, of course!

But may I encourage you to think outside the box and consider another way to recycle these cards? Instead of dropping them in the paper box immediately, recycle them to your prayer list.

A couple of years ago one couple with whom we exchange cards wrote that they were remembering us in prayer throughout the year. During their daily devotional time, they would take a Christmas card and include the names of those from whom the card was sent as they prayed. What a wonderful way to bless family and friends throughout the year!

*Good Father, thank you for the blessing of Christmas cards! Help us to remember these family and friends daily in our prayers. Amen.*

*Pray: Prayer for family and friends today.*

*Read: Philippians 1:3-4; Matthew 21:22*

*Louise Schini Weber  
Fort Myers, FL*

Thursday, December 26, 2013

# Walk With Ease

*Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me.*

*Psalm 23:4*

Painful, arthritic feet, an unfamiliar room in deep darkness, the constant experience of dizziness, situations of hostility, lingering, terminal illness—so many circumstances we face in life make it difficult for us to walk with ease.

Sometimes it seems nothing can change those outward circumstances for us. Yet, there is one thing that can make a difference. It is what King David had come to know and that he expresses in this beautiful psalm. The Lord is with him.

The truth of our lives now is that Jesus, the Lord of life and death, is with us. He is not far removed, but he surrounds us and envelops us into his presence. He walks our lives with us. That embracing presence of Jesus changes our walk and enables us to walk with ease—even through the deepest of darknesses.

*Lord Jesus, make your presence with me so real that I may always walk with ease, because you are with me. Amen.*

*Remember: No matter your circumstance, remember Jesus holds you in his presence.*

*Read: Psalm 23*

*Lionel Otto  
Adelaide, Australia*



Friday, December 27, 2013

# Full of Years

*Abraham breathed his last and died in a good old age, an old man and full of years.*

*Genesis 25:8*

How many years constitute a life “full of years”? Start with how many you have lived! “Full” is an interesting concept. What fills you up may not do it for me. But when we speak in spiritual terms, we are likely to be on the same page. In Christ, life is full and overflowing.

How many years has God given you? Why do you think the Lord gave you a life full of all those years? God is filling your life day after day, with life as his daughter or son. Fill today with your love of the Lord, with trusting in him, with serving him, with living as he would live. Live love. Live servanthood. Live grace. Live mercy. Live peace. Live thanks. Live on purpose. Live for the Lord. Live as light and salt. Live this way as if your life depended on it. Tomorrow, do it again. And so on.

*Good God, help me to live fully today and again tomorrow. Amen.*

*Live: Live fully in the love of Christ today.*

*Read: John 10:7-10*

*Don Schatz  
McKinleyville, CA*

Saturday, December 28, 2013

# God's Time

*There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under heaven.*

*Ecclesiastes 3:1*

I live in a part of the country that usually receives many inches of snow each winter. I have a two-stage snow thrower. The motor turns the wheels and moves the machine as well as throwing the snow in any direction I choose. However, I have caught myself pushing the machine while clearing the driveway. I want the machine to go at my pace. In reality, all I have to do is let the machine do its job while I walk behind.

At times I wonder about the effects of my time spent meditating and praying. Is my praying doing any good? "God, can't you please work a little faster?" Then I read, "Be still and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth" (Psalm 46:10). Martin Luther said we should work like it all depends on us, and at the same time pray like it is all up to God.

*Lord, make me patient to let you work in me and people around me. Amen.*

*Pray: Pray for people you know who are in need of help and healing.*

*Read: Ecclesiastes 3*

*Paul Eggold  
Greendale, WI*

Sunday, December 29, 2013

# No More Sea

*Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more.*

*Revelation 21:1*

I grew up near the beach spending days in the water and nights on the sand. I vividly recall the sound of crashing waves, the taste of salt in the air and the feel of sand between my toes. The ocean reminds me of home. So when I used to read about a time when there will be no more sea, I was disappointed. It is hard to imagine the Kingdom of God without a beach.

This vision is the promise of a day when evil and chaos, represented by the sea, will be conquered forever. This is the great promise of Scripture. The work that God has begun in us will one day be complete. We long for the day when God's home and our home will be one, when death, grief, crying and pain will be no more. This is the vision in which we hope and toward which we live.

*Thank you, Lord Jesus, for this glorious vision of heaven. Amen.*

*Think: Think about those who have experienced devastation from hurricanes, tsunamis and the like.*

*Read: Revelation 21:1-8*

*Joe Iovino  
Monument, CO*

Monday, December 30, 2013

# In the Meanwhile

*God is our refuge and strength.*

*Psalm 46:1*

How often have you said, “When I feel better, I will ...” We can fill in the blanks. I am named God’s child in baptism and will be called home when my time on earth is finished. But, in the meanwhile, what is my role? Some days I feel all used up. Surely God is not finished with me yet. I can still offer intercessory prayers for my loved ones, for my church, for my country and its leaders; I can still be thankful for God’s bountiful grace and show that thankfulness with a cheerful attitude and with words of comfort and even joy for all who are in need of God’s love.

With God’s strength in me I don’t have to sit by passively, waiting for things to change, but I learn to wait because of who God is, even when things do not change.

*Lord, bless my life, just as it is. Give me your promised strength and guidance to be a source of cheer and assurance to all whom my life touches. Amen.*

*Act: Do something you have been wanting to do for a long time.*

*Read: Psalm 18:1-3,6*

*Constance Bretscher  
Valparaiso, IN*

Tuesday, December 31, 2013

# Marking Time

*My times are in your hand.*

*Psalm 31:15*

We have an 8-day clock at home. It's a clock that my parents gave us. It chimes a different set of notes every fifteen minutes as it winds its way to the top of the hour, when it will ring out its melodic celebration of the correct hour of the day or night. The problem is that if we forget to wind it, it goes silent, and the chimes are lost in our neglect.

Imagine that life is like that clock. The difference is God is the timekeeper who never fails to breathe the music of life into us through his love, his Word and his Son, Jesus. Someone said, "It's not the years of your life that make the difference, it's the life in your years that matter." In faith we might add: what matters most is the Lord who holds our times in his hands.

*Lord Jesus, you lived out your life for me; let me live my life for you. Amen.*

*Pray and praise: Put more prayer and praise into the hours of your day.*

*Read: Ephesians 5:15-21*

*Edward Arle  
St. Charles, MO*

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

## *From Generation to Generation*

Remember the TV show *Kids Say the Darndest Things*? This month I want to introduce you to 21-year-old Rachel who continues to share some “darndest” things as the Lord works in and through her. Listen to her reflections on life, and then think what you would say to capture your “core values.” This exercise would be a great discussion piece around a table with family and friends, young and old alike!

- There will be good days and bad days. Either way, there is ALWAYS something to be thankful for.
- Keep your head held high and moving forward.
- You can't change others and you can't fix them. Focus on fixing yourself.
- Your parents love you more than you realize. Hug them. Love them. They won't be here forever.
- Beauty on the outside has nothing to do with beauty on the inside.
- Remember the past, but do not let it hinder your future.
- There is so much to learn; there is so much to be thankful for.
- God has a plan for you, even on the days that it makes no sense at all.
- Live, laugh, love ... and be thankful!

Thanks, Rachel, for helping to put into words what life in the Lord is all about!

# Hope-Full Praying

## *For Those Who Are Ill*

Healing Lord, bring health and hope and wholeness to those who are sick and dying. Especially today we remember \_\_\_\_\_. Comfort them, through us. Heal them, through the doctors and nurses. Bring hope to them, through the Scriptures and those who minister. And remind them and us, Lord, that you are always with us, in sickness and in health, through your cross and resurrection. Amen.

## *Family Gatherings*

Families are such wonderful blessings, Lord. Thank you for mine, whether near or far. Bring us closer together through your Word. Give us opportunities to laugh and cry, to serve and celebrate, to listen and to tell stories of your love for us and our love for one another. As families gather during these holy days, may we see you as the Host of all of our celebrations. Amen.

## *For a Positive Attitude*

Give us an attitude of gratitude, Lord! Help us to look at life through your cross and resurrection so that we remember you are with us, through good times and bad. Show us how to laugh at our mistakes, to forgive those around us, and to know that after every Good Friday in our lives there is always an Easter! Amen.

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