

# HOPE-FULL LIVING

•*Daily Devotions for Living Life to the Fullest*•

January • February • March • 2017

Volume 6 • Number 1

Rich Bimler, Mark Zimmermann, Editors

Carol Geisler, Kasey Nugent, Editorial Assistants

## 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* 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, \$15 (Canada \$20); single copy, \$4.50 (Canada \$6). Canada GST# is 84231 1870RT. Printed in the USA. Customer Service: (855) 325-4673 (HOPE). Website: [www.hopefuldevotions.com](http://www.hopefuldevotions.com)

Cover Design: Jamie Wyatt

Sunday, January 1, 2017

# Father Time

*But I trust in you, O Lord; I say, "You are my God."  
My times are in your hand.*

*Psalm 31:14-15*

We have a close friend whose birthday is January 1. More than fifty years ago we called him the New Year's baby, but now he's more like "Father Time"!

In January of each year we wonder what times the new year will bring ... more times in doctors' offices, happy times as children get married or grandchildren are born (or great-grandchildren?) and perhaps end times with older family and friends.

Isn't it comforting to know that all of our times are in God's hands! He is in control and has a plan for each of us this year. What better place to be than in our heavenly Father's hands!

*Dear God, help us to trust you as we journey through 2017 according to your plans, knowing you walk with us. Amen.*

*Share: Remind other seniors that they are in God's hands, especially during difficult times.*

*Read: Psalm 31:3; Isaiah 41:13; Isaiah 49:16*

*Annette Schumacher  
Muskego, WI*

Monday, January 2, 2017

# Divine Appointments

*Your eyes saw my unformed substance; in your book were written, every one of them, the days that were formed for me, when as yet there was none of them.*

*Psalm 139:16*

I love calendars. Every year I anticipate a new record of appointments and events. Sometimes I list happenings not planned in advance: running into an old acquaintance, making a new friend or the kindness of a stranger. I label these divine appointments.

At the end of the year I trace my life through the pages. Calendars are great for organizing my days, especially when remembering there is one that's been in service since before my birth. God has every day of my life written in his book. He has redeemed me through the death and resurrection of his Son. He has already planned my time and holds it in his hands.

I'm excited to see what God has in store in the coming year. Aren't you?

*Lord, thank you for organizing my days. Remind me to look for and remember special appointments only you can set. Amen.*

*Share: Record your divine appointments. Then share the wonder of God's providence with friends.*

*Read: Proverbs 16:9; Psalm 37:23; Psalm 139:15-16*

*Lynne Waite Chapman  
Fort Wayne, IN*

Tuesday, January 3, 2017

# Time

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

*Ecclesiastes 3:1*

Looking backward I bet you see a lot of fond memories. Perhaps you feel you have lived a full life, one filled with adventure, excitement, love and yes, even heartache. You have had the time of your life, time well spent and used. You have seen it all. No surprises, yet somehow God continues to awaken your faith and show new purposes for you. There is, as Solomon says, “a time for every matter under heaven.”

So what is new for you? What haven't you done or seen? What purposes does God still have in store for you? What was once an adventure in your youth is now a building block for an adventure with God. Now is a great time in your life to discover more about the person God made you to be in Christ and how he continues to shape you for his purposes.

*Lord God, gather me up in your arms of grace and help me to see your purposes for me. Amen.*

*Find: Discover new adventures as you share your faith with your grandkids and friends.*

*Read: Ecclesiastes 3:1-8*

*Cory A. Wielert  
Crown Point, IN*

Wednesday, January 4, 2017

# Hold on to the Railings

*Your hand shall lead me and your right hand shall hold me.*

*Psalm 139:10*

When I walked along the Great Wall of China, rain poured down. I couldn't climb the steep slopes without slipping. I used the railing and pulled myself up hand over hand. We cling to railings to keep ourselves from falling. Banisters on stairways keep us steady when our feet are uncertain.

Isn't God's help something like a railing? We don't know what this new year will bring, but we can cling to God's hand when we're not sure of the way. Jesus said, "I am The way." Like a railing, he will keep us from falling off steep places; like a banister, he will steady us as we climb the stairs of life. Jesus said, "I will be with you always." Whatever this year brings will be no surprise to him. He loves us and will care for us. That's much better than a railing, isn't it?

*Father, we thank you that we can live each day in confidence and without fear. Keep us from falling into sin and into the pitfalls of life. In Jesus' name. Amen.*

*Hold: When you use a railing, remember how God protects you all the time.*

*Read: Psalm 139:1-10*

*Eldor Kaiser  
Lenexa, KS*

Thursday, January 5, 2017

# Old ... New ... Old ... New

*Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation.*

*2 Corinthians 5:17*

We are in the early days of a new year. You may desire to “sing to the Lord a new song” (Psalm 96:1). Or you may feel like moping with Solomon, “There is nothing new under the sun” (Ecclesiastes 1:9).

Sometimes a new year, a new hobby, a new “do,” a new TV favorite, a new neighbor, a new pastor or a new \_\_\_\_\_ seems to stimulate us. Sometimes our body and soul response is “same old, same old.”

Jesus’ Word focuses on new songs, new mornings, a new spirit, new service and new heavens and a new earth. He focuses on you, his new creation. He gives you his Word, daily prayer and devotions, the taste of sacramental bread and wine, the company of a Christian friend, the contemplation of our baptism. The Spirit of Christ renews us daily.

*Dear Father, thank you for being the Creator who never stops creating. Amen.*

*Focus: To be new, let’s focus on Christ and not ourselves.*

*Read: Psalm 51:10-12; Romans 12:1-2*

*Harry Edenfield  
Brownstown, MI*

Friday, January 6, 2017

# The Savior of All

*The people dwelling in darkness have seen a great light, and for those dwelling in the region and shadow of death, on them a light has dawned.*

*Matthew 4:16*

Growing up, I felt it was very special that my birthday was on Epiphany (the manifestation of Jesus to the Gentiles). Not only did my mother let me choose if I wanted the Christmas tree left up until then, but we also celebrated Epiphany on a special Sunday at church. It is then that we recognize that the Savior born at Bethlehem was revealed for people of all nations and races. He came not for a select few, but for people of all times and places. May we, like the sages from afar, bring our gifts and lay them at our Savior's feet.

*Dear Father, through our mission giving, may millions more come to know their Epiphany Savior. In Jesus' name. Amen.*

*Do: Share Christ with an unchurched neighbor or friend. Reveal what he means to you and what he can mean to them too.*

*Read: Matthew 2:1-12*

*Harriet Stennfeld  
Fort Wayne, IN*

Saturday, January 7, 2017

# Living in the Light

*Let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.*

*Matthew 5:16*

We cannot change the darkness in us to light, but Jesus did that for us through his death and resurrection. Now he says, “You are the light in the world.” We are the light because Jesus the Light lives in us.

In one of the Olympics the theme was “Light the Fire Within.” A young boy skated in on the ice carrying a lighted lantern. He was followed by hundreds of children with lighted lanterns, dispelling the darkness. That is a picture of the Church as a thousand points of light in a darkened world, inviting others to join in the celebration of the Christ, who forgives all sins and makes all things new.

Individually, we can be a light to one or two people who are experiencing darkness in their life. We can share the love of Jesus and give thanks to the Lord, who is Light to us all.

*Lord, banish the darkness in my life. Let your light shine through me to touch others. Amen.*

*Ask: How will you be the light of Christ today?*

*Read: Matthew 5:14-16*

*Leo Symmank  
Seabrook, TX*



Sunday, January 8, 2017

# Short Sentences

*Let the words of my mouth ... be acceptable in your sight.*

*Psalm 19:14*

I love short sentences. Here are a few to ponder as we step into the New Year.

Our eyes are on Jesus.

Lean on Jesus when the night is long.

How we grow older is far more important than how old we grow.

God must love older people. There are so many of us.

Remember Moses. God called him out of retirement.

We have a call to leave a legacy of faith to the next generation.

Walking with Jesus, we take on his thoughts, his ideas, his attitudes.

We are sinners. We need a Savior. We have a Savior, Jesus Christ.

God has gifted us with opportunities to serve.

God's mercies are new every morning.

Our year is in God's hand.

*Lord Jesus, may your thoughts and words flow from my heart as I daily age. Amen.*

*Write: Take time to write short sentences that express your faith.*

*Read: Psalm 19*

*Walter M. Schoedel  
Webster Groves, MO*

Monday, January 9, 2017

# Just in Time

*But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son.*

*Galatians 4:4*

How many times have you given or received a gift that arrived just in time? How many times when bills piled up has an unexpected check come just in time to save the day? In this Epiphany season we rediscover that after many centuries of waiting God sent forth the Christ Child in the fullness of time, according to his saving plan for the world.

The faithful were waiting and praying, but few expected the birth of the Messiah in the little town of Bethlehem during the Roman rule of Caesar Augustus and the cruel reign of King Herod. Paul affirms the saving mission of Jesus, God's only Son, "born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons" (Galatians 4:4-5). Whether facing bills, sickness or loneliness, is there any doubt that Christ is there for you, just in time?

*Lord, thanks for coming in the fullness of time.  
Amen.*

*Seek: Find someone this week who needs Jesus, just in time.*

*Read: Micah 5:2*

*Stephen J. Carter  
Oakville, MO*

Tuesday, January 10, 2017

# Not Another Appeal!

*The whole city was gathered together at the door.  
And [Jesus] healed many.*

*Mark 1:33-34*

This is what I usually find in my mailbox: few letters, some bills, and many appeals from every charity I have ever honored with a donation! I fear “burn-out,” a disease that affects anyone with a caring heart and in a care-giving vocation. How can I ever respond to all the human need!

You can't. You research. You pray. You follow God's leading. You make choices. You can't make a difference in the lives of all. But you can make a big difference for some. Even Jesus, working day and night, could not meet the needs of *all* the hungry, sick, emotionally disturbed and dying in his region. Still, in a way few can fully comprehend, when he hung exhausted, emotionally stressed out on the cross, God extended blessings to the whole world!

*Even so, Lord, bless and multiply that which I am able to give. Amen.*

*Pray: Put appeals in the prayer pile before the circular file.*

*Read: Mark 1:29-39*

*Ted Zimmerman  
Napa, CA*

Wednesday, January 11, 2017

# A Time to Cast Away

*There is ... a time to keep, and a time to cast away.*

*Ecclesiastes 3:1, 6*

The above Bible verse reminds me of a seasonal ritual—deciding what to keep and what to give away or even throw away. Sometimes it is easy but it often takes a bit of discernment. Do I want to keep this? Can I let go of that?

The Bible makes very clear what things to keep and what things to cast away. Let go of anger, bitterness, slander and malice. Get rid of dissension, division and envy. Hold fast to those things that help build up the body of Christ, such as kindness, compassion, love, a forgiving spirit and tenderheartedness.

*Director of our seasons and Holder of our times, guide us by your wisdom to cast off anything that will obstruct our neighbor's view of your love. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.*

*Examine: What needs to be cast away from your life for the sake of the Gospel? It is time.*

*Read: Ephesians 4:17-32; Galatians 5:16-26*

*Terry Weber  
Williamsburg, VA*

Thursday, January 12, 2017

# Wake Up

*Jacob awoke from his sleep and said, "Surely the Lord is in this place, and I did not know it."*

*Genesis 28:16*

Jacob's words could be my own confession. Honestly, there are days when I hardly give a thought to God's presence. I drudge through daily routines numb to ways God is working in my life. On good days, I forget to thank him. In crisis, anxiety clouds my vision of his grace.

The truth is, God's presence is constant, whether we are aware of it or not. God was with Jacob throughout his journey, but when the Lord revealed himself in a dream, Jacob suddenly opened his eyes and offered his praise.

God reveals himself to us too, not in dreams, but through Jesus who promises, "I will be with you always." How blessed we are to know it! So "wake up!" Praise Jesus every day and live confident that he is with you in every step of your journey.

*Jesus, keep me alert to your presence. Let me glorify you each day. Amen.*

*Stretch: Reach out to Jesus in prayer; expand your time in Scripture. See Jesus today!*

*Read: Genesis 28:10-17; Psalm 121; Hebrews 1:1-2*

*Sandi Geis  
St. Louis, MO*

Friday, January 13, 2017

# Help in Time of Need

*Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.*

*Hebrews 4:16*

We often hear statements like these: “Where were you when I needed you?” “You got here just in the nick of time.” There are times when we need help, but no one is around or you call someone and they don’t answer.

When we have bad times, do we think that God doesn’t have time for us? We find the answer from God’s Word. Our gracious God is always ready and able to help in our “time of need.” We will always be in need of something, but as disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ we have the assurance that we will find the help we need. “The salvation of the righteous is from the Lord; he is their stronghold in time of trouble” (Psalm 37:39).

*Thank you, God, that I live each day with confidence that in my time of need, you will provide your help. Amen.*

*Do: Having received God’s help, as you are able, help others in their time of need.*

*Read: Psalm 46:1; Psalm 41:1; Psalm 62:8*

*Ken Holdorf  
Frisco, TX*

Saturday, January 14, 2017

# In the Dark of Night

*Fear not, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God.*

*Isaiah 41:10*

Fear comes easily these days. Terrorists, disturbed people, crank phone calls. It can drive one to despair. Sometimes it's tempting to delay bedtime rather than face darkness.

Twenty years ago I learned a new custom—the singing of hymns at bedtime. I had not grown up doing this; I learned this from my husband and we enjoyed sharing it for years. The hymns are memorized. “Now the Light Has Gone Away” is my favorite.

Now I am alone at night and fears can come. Then I remember the hymns and I sing, and I am not alone. Often I am asleep before the end of the hymns!

If this has not been your custom, give it a try. Do not be dismayed, for God is with you!

*Dear Lord, thank you for being with me through my fears in the dark of the night. Amen.*

*Learn: Memorize hymns to chase away fear.*

*Read: Colossians 3:16-17*

*Gail Lutze  
Valparaiso, IN*

Sunday, January 15, 2017

# January Joys

*Make a joyful noise to the Lord, all the earth; break forth into joyous song and sing praises ... make a joyful noise before the King, the Lord!*

*Psalm 98:4, 6*

A person walked up to a grandma the other day, looked at her darling granddaughter, and remarked, “What a cute granddaughter! Is she really yours?”

Now that calls for a lot of January joy and laughter. What a great way to start a new year by laughing at ourselves and with others. “Joyful noises” are not only heard in church buildings. They are being shouted out in all of life. I suggest that we keep looking for and making January joys through this month, and even throughout the whole year. After all, the Lord Jesus Christ has brought “Joy to the World” and he brings joy to others through us.

*Lord, you have made us joy-filled people. Help us to shout out joyfully the message of joy to an often joyless world. Amen.*

*List: Make a list of January joys that you can share and discuss with your joyful and not-so-joyful friends.*

*Read: Psalm 98*

*Rich Bimler  
Bloomington, IL*



Monday, January 16, 2017

# House Cleaning

*The blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin.*

*1 John 1:7*

While eating breakfast this morning, I observed the morning sun streaming in through the kitchen window. I hadn't seen the sun for several days because of cloudy and rainy weather. However, I also noticed something else: spots on the window that I hadn't noticed on the cloudy days. I noticed spots on the kitchen floor that needed to be wiped up. They didn't show up either during the past days.

How quickly I ignore and forget my past mistakes and sinful behavior! Reading Scripture or helpful devotional material, or hearing a fitting sermon wakes me up to the reality of the condition of my spiritual life and my connection to my Savior Jesus Christ. Through the gracious words of the Gospel, words of forgiveness, I know my sins are washed away and I am filled with the light of the Son.

*Lord Jesus, I thank you for the gracious words of forgiveness that you extend to me every day. Amen.*

*Wash: As you clean (and wash windows!), remember that your sins are washed away in Jesus' blood.*

*Read: Psalm 51*

*Paul Eggold  
Greendale, WI*

Tuesday, January 17, 2017

# Cold Snap

*He hurls down his crystals of ice like crumbs; who can stand before his cold? He sends out his word, and melts them.*

*Psalm 147:17-18*

What's winter like where you live? Unless you live in a balmy climate, you're probably coping with winter's triple threat—cold, snow and ice. Oh, the joys of cranking up the heat, shoveling snow and driving on icy roads (or relying on others to assist).

God sends his Word, with the power to melt ice and conquer cold. The prophet delivers a similar message in Jeremiah 23:29, “Is not my word like fire, declares the Lord.” In Luke 24:32, two men exclaim after conversing with Jesus, “Did not our hearts burn within us while he talked to us on the road, while he opened to us the Scriptures?”

Wrap yourself in God's Word this winter. His Word has the power to warm your heart as it delivers the good news of God's love and salvation through Jesus.

*Dear God, guide me into your Word, keep me warm in your love and help me share it with others. Amen.*

*Remember: Winter and cold are part of God's loving promise to Noah and his offspring, including us.*

*Read: Genesis 8:22; Isaiah 55:10-13*

*Marj Maynard  
Billings, MO*

Wednesday, January 18, 2017

# Letting in the Light

*We should love one another.*

1 John 3:11

A woman in my dad's nursing home walked into every room every morning and opened the residents' drapes. As she let in the light, she wished them a good day in the light of Christ. Every evening she repeated the cycle, this time closing drapes and wishing residents a good sleep wrapped in God's protective arms. She would say, "It is just something I can do."

Is there "just something" you can do to make someone's life a little easier, a little more connected to Christ? Facing huge burdens, we tend to look for huge sacrifices. But sometimes it is the fuzzy socks during chemotherapy, the promise of prayers during difficult times that help the most. Jesus made the major sacrifice of love. We can handle the smaller ones.

*Jesus, when I see people lonely and in pain, show me something I can do to share the light of your love. Amen.*

*Do: See how many times you can share God's love in small ways. Give someone your place in line. Commiserate with harried clerks. Smile and squeeze the hand of lonely people around you.*

*Read: 1 John 1 and 3*

Ruth Geisler  
Aliso Viejo, CA

Thursday, January 19, 2017

# Hope for the Future

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

*Jeremiah 29:11*

The month of January is often filled with hope for better days ahead in the new year. While previous months in our history have been marked with much turmoil nationally, as well as internationally, we look forward to hope for our nation's future.

We have elected our new president and our country's future is now in the hands of new leadership. However, we must remember that our lives are ultimately in the hands of our heavenly Father. Psalm 31 reminds us in whom we should place our trust. Our times are in God's hands. Proverbs 16:9 states, "The heart of man plans his way, but the Lord establishes his steps."

*Dear God, remind us that our future is in your hands. Direct our path and decisions in life so that we may glorify you. Amen.*

*Reflect: How has God shown hope to you?*

*Read: Psalm 31:14-24*

*Betsy Becker Niedringhaus  
Ballwin, MO*

Friday, January 20, 2017

# New Beginnings

*What does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?*

*Micah 6:8*

Today, January 20, is Inauguration Day. It is the time we install a new president. It is a time of new beginnings. All the rhetoric and TV ads are over. We have an opportunity to see the democratic process at work. It is the time for a new start—hopefully toward compromise and reconciliation. It is also an opportunity to plan for the good of our nation and its people. We can work together to “care for the common good.”

Let’s remember to pray for others, and think of their needs, wants, desires and beliefs as much as we consider our own. Through faith in Christ Jesus, we can “with confidence draw near to the throne of grace” (Hebrews 4:16) and ask God to bless our nation and its leaders.

*Dear Father, bless our nation during this time, as together we strive to work for the “common good.” Help us to listen and respect others’ thoughts and beliefs. Amen.*

*Do: Encourage positive words and actions.*

*Read: Psalm 103; Hebrews 4:14-16*

*Ann Eissfeldt  
Ballwin, MO*

Saturday, January 21, 2017

# How Many Coats?

*While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.*

*Romans 5:8*

With our capricious Midwest weather, we could have a closet full of coats and still not have the right one. How about the “right” colors, accessories and shoes? We want to be warm, but also presentable.

Consider being presentable to God. All of our physical considerations are turned upside down. The Holy Spirit gives us the “right” attitude, and that is one of repentance. We have God’s perfect solution, which is to cover us with the white robe of salvation made possible through Jesus’ death on the cross. As we age, we simplify our daily decisions out of necessity, but we know that we are presentable to God. Jesus has made everything match.

*Lord, bless us with the humility to repent and know your saving grace.*

*Simplify: Focus on the essentials; the white robe of salvation covers all.*

*Read: Luke 5:27-32; 2 Corinthians 7:9-10*

*Judy Scherr  
Lemay, MO*

Sunday, January 22, 2017

# Flavored Devotions

*You are the salt of the earth.*

*Matthew 5:13*

I had just finished mixing two strawberry smoothies and had placed them on the table. But what happened next sure didn't make my day. I sat down and turned to move my smoothie glass to a better location when it slipped out of my hand and *flavored* the *Hope-Full Living* devotions booklet. The book is now pink and the edges have a special strawberry taste.

Jesus longs to dump on us his flavored love and forgiving grace, which transforms us into what he would have us be: "You are the salt of the earth," He said. Be salty! Give a Christ-like taste of God's forgiveness and eternal-life promise to a sinful but seeking soul. It'll make your day, and theirs as well!

*Father, we praise you for sending your Son to bring undeserved favor, love and forgiveness to our sin-soaked lives. Drench us with your mercy and flavor us with the fruit of your Spirit so that we lead others to know the taste of your love. Amen.*

*Equipped: Study the fruit of the Spirit and pray for that "flavor" in your life and witness in the world.*

*Read: Matthew 5:13-16; Galatians 5:16-25; Psalm 34:1-8*

*David P. Schmidt  
St. Louis, MO*

Monday, January 23, 2017

# A Timely Word

*A word in season, how good it is.*

*Proverbs 15:23*

Who has spoken a timely word to you? A parent at your confirmation? A teacher encouraging and challenging you? A friend who confronts you in love? God in a Scripture verse? A physician who cares for your health? A co-worker helping you succeed? In what situations have you shared a timely word with someone else? “A word in season, how good it is!”

We hear timely words of Epiphany in Jesus’ early ministry. Jesus speaks to Simon Peter and his brother Andrew at their fishing nets: “Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men” (Matthew 4:19). Timely, because they left their nets and followed him. Philip speaks to his skeptical friend Nathanael, “Come and see” (John 1:46). Timely, because Nathanael came to Jesus and confessed him as the Son of God and the King of Israel (John 1:49). Listen for God’s timely words to you and speak a timely word to others as God leads.

*Touch my heart, Lord, with a timely word to hear and to speak on your behalf. Amen.*

*Speak: Seek a timely word to receive and share this week.*

*Read: Matthew 4:18-22; John 1:43-51*

*Stephen J. Carter  
Oakville, MO*



Tuesday, January 24, 2017

# Timing

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

*Ecclesiastes 3:1*

Are you stuck in a daily routine? I have been. Each day certain tasks have to be done, and if not daily, then weekly. Meals have to be prepared, the house cleaned, beds made, the dog walked and clothes laundered!

God sees life differently. Each day presents new possibilities. From his perspective, each day should not be same old, same old. In fact, God provides seasons of the year to make things different. Because of the God-provided seasons, there is a time to plant and a time to uproot. To sense these changes is a godly thing.

Jesus was a master of this. He knew when to speak the truth and when to be silent. He knew when to die, and when to rise from the dead—a timely thing, for without this we cannot live eternally.

*O Lord of all things, enable us to be wise enough to know the opportunities you set before us. Amen.*

*Help: Find something new to do for another person today.*

*Read: Ecclesiastes 3:1-14; Matthew 15:23-28*

*Gordon Beck  
Williamsburg, VA*

Wednesday, January 25, 2017

# This Changes Everything

*But first he must suffer many things and be rejected by this generation.*

*Luke 17:25*

The joy and excitement of Christmas has passed. The tree, ornaments and nativity displays have been packed away. Hopefully, winter is not going to last too long and snowfall will be minimal. We are in a period of change, always looking for opportunities to keep us motivated and happily looking forward to warmer weather and the ability to get outside.

God had a plan for his Son that was set in motion after the fall of Adam and Eve into sin. God sent his Son to be our Savior. For us, Jesus paid the ultimate price, dying on the cross and then rising from death for our eternal benefit. God's plan *changed everything!*

*God our Father, you always know what we need in our life. May we always accept the changes that will take place. Amen.*

*Believe: God has a plan for you.*

*Read: Matthew 20:17-19*

*Don Hollmann  
Ballwin, MO*

Thursday, January 26, 2017

# A Good Place

*The lines have fallen for me in pleasant places ...  
You make known to me the path of life; in your presence there is fullness of joy; at your right hand are pleasures forevermore.*

*Psalm 16:6, 11*

Pleasant places! A Midwest childhood, then life in a small town, a big city, moves from the Atlantic Coast to the Pacific, back to the Midwest and now on the East Coast again—each place offering unique and wonderful experiences. It's not hard to see, however, that millions of people don't live in good places: neighborhoods with poverty and violent crime, cities torn by war, and refugees who have no place at all. But God has given each of us in safe places unique opportunities to help those who aren't. Tutoring? House repair? Volunteering at a food bank? Joining a medical mission? Big or small, the ways to share the love of Jesus are available right now, and St. Paul exhorts us to never grow weary in doing what is right (Galatians 6:9).

*O God, may I use the talents you have given me for others. Amen.*

*Search: Look for opportunities to serve others today.*

*Read: Galatians 6:1-10*

*Sally Beck  
Williamsburg, VA*

Friday, January 27, 2017

# New Songs

*Oh sing to the Lord a new song; sing to the Lord, all the earth!*

*Psalm 96:1*

As people of the Lord, we sing new songs. We don't discard hymns and canticles of former years. We sing songs of the new life that is ours in Christ Jesus.

Putting off the old self, putting on the new, we sing of hope and healing, of comfort and cheer, of strength for the day, of our sure confidence.

We do not dwell on the doubt and despair of life without the Lord. We sing of sure foundations and the courage to face challenges. We lay down our burdens and lift up our Lord in praise. We sing timeless words of Scripture and our own poetry of prayer. As we sing the new songs, we join with the angels who are constantly crying, "Holy is the Lord!"

*Jesus my King, take my voice and let me sing, always, only, for you. Amen.*

*Do: Focus on a promise of faith, take a breath and sing to the Lord.*

*Read: 1 Samuel 2:1-2; Revelation 15:1-4*

*Martin Doering  
Bellwood, IL*

Saturday, January 28, 2017

# Down-Sizing, Up-Sizing

*Make every effort to supplement your faith.*

2 Peter 1:5

“Down-sizing” becomes a common topic as we age. We accumulate “stuff,” so we need to down-size. Many postpone the task, but the job must be done.

We seldom hear people talk about the need to up-size. We need to up-size life issues such as our attitudes, family relationships, spiritual lives and learning new things and ways to serve other people.

God encourages us to up-size as disciples of the Lord Jesus. God’s kind of “up-sizing” doesn’t fill your closets. It fills your heart with greater peace, joy, love and a sense of significance as you make a difference in the lives of other people. “Grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be the glory both now and to the day of eternity” (2 Peter 3:18).

*Thank you, Lord, for all the stuff that you have provided for me over the years. Help me to make good decisions about passing these blessings on to others. Help me to “up-size” my faith and serve others with joy. Amen.*

*Grow: Look for ways to up-size your service to others.*

*Read: 2 Peter 1:5-8*

Ken Holdorf  
Frisco, TX

Sunday, January 29, 2017

# Birthdays

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

*Psalm 90:12*

According to the National Center for Health Statistics, the average life expectancy in the United States today is 78.8 years. How many birthdays have you celebrated? How many more will you see?

Whether you live nine years or 90, life is short. If you knew you had only six days or six months to live, what would you do? Would you tell a family member or friend you love them? Would you confess the sins you have been hiding and ask God to help you change the way you are living? Would you tell someone about Jesus? Why not do it now?

Our future birthdays are in the gracious hands of the God who loves us and gives us eternal life through Jesus our Savior.

*Lord Jesus, give me the wisdom I need to use my time in service to you. Amen.*

*Reflect: Would you like to know how long you are going to live? What difference would it make in your life?*

*Read: Psalm 39*

*Eileen Ritter  
Byron Center, MI*

Monday, January 30, 2017

# Time

*My times are in your hand.*

*Psalm 31:15*

Yes, Lord, “my times are in your hand.” But how do I use those “times” you put into my hands? I am a good steward of my everyday necessities: my house is neat and clean, my clothes washed and pressed. But I am a poor steward of my time. I fall into thinking that time belongs to me; that time is here to fill with my needs and pleasures. There are times when I feel I absolutely have to watch that TV show, shop for new clothes, take in a ball game, and oh, so many other seemingly important personal matters.

I forget that every breathing moment belongs to God. Through faith in Christ I can take his moments and wring the most from them. In Matthew 25 he shows me how: clothe and feed the forgotten, give drink to the thirsty, visit the sick and welcome the stranger. In serving them, we are serving our King.

*Lord Jesus, teach me to use my time in service to you through my service to others. Amen.*

*Share: Talk to busy people. How do they find the time for the good works they do?*

*Read: Ecclesiastes 3; Matthew 25:31-40*

*Ron Beathard  
Harrison, OH*

Tuesday, January 31, 2017

# Your Mission Field

*And he said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to the whole creation."*

*Mark 16:15*

My 99-year-old mother, who lives in an assisted living facility, often says, "I wonder why God keeps me alive." Then I hear, "My home is my mission field. God put me here to talk to the staff about Jesus."

So, what is your mission field? Regardless of age, we all have the joy and responsibility to witness to others about our gracious God. Maybe you have grandchildren whose lives need the tender touch of their Savior. Or maybe someone in your exercise class is experiencing sorrow. Who better to minister to their needs than you, a person whose Best Friend is the Healer of all pain?

You may think that you are not equipped to do the job, but your Lord will give you the words to say. Ask him to bless you as you venture forth into the mission field.

*Lord, I want to talk to others about you. Give me the opportunity and the words so that I may be your instrument. Amen.*

*Ask yourself: Do the people I see every day know Jesus?*

*Read: Ephesians 5:1; Luke 1:37*

*Janice Koehnke  
Neenah, WI*



Wednesday, February 1, 2017

# The “For Good” Years

*One gives freely, yet grows all the richer; another withholds what he should give, and only suffers want.*

*Proverbs 11:24*

Sometimes we hesitate to live heartily, saving things in case we need them later. Years ago, you probably knew someone who covered furniture with plastic covers. Today, you might save your best china for holidays and certain clothes “for good.” Spiritually—are you guarded and restrained with your prayers and good deeds?

Well, the “for good” years are here now. It’s time to interact with God and people heartily. Follow God’s example. He loves us enthusiastically. He gives and gives—even when we reject him. What can you give others? God blessed you with an endless supply of love and generosity. Don’t hold back. Lift off the plastic!

*Lord, help me to spring into action and live heartily each day. Amen.*

*Do: Put on your best clothes, get out your good china, and surprise a lonely person with an invitation to tea or lunch.*

*Read: Proverbs 11:25*

*Catherine A. Welch  
Southbury, CT*

Thursday, February 2, 2017

# Found

*I have been found by those who did not seek me.*

*Romans 10:20*

Children love to play hide and seek, especially hiding and doing their very best to avoid being found. Our God and Savior knows a different form of hide and seek. God said, “I was ready to be found by those who did not seek me. I said, ‘Here I am, here I am,’ to a nation that was not called by my name” (Isaiah 65:1).

Hidden players do not usually jump out and say, “Here I am!” Yet that is exactly what God has done in Christ Jesus. In Jesus “all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell” (Colossians 1:19). In Jesus, God was born among us as one of us for the sake of our salvation. When we were lost in sin, doing our level best to hide from him, God—both hidden and revealed in Jesus—came to seek and find and save us.

*Lord Jesus, thank you for finding and saving me.  
Amen.*

*Seek: Find the Lord today in his Word!*

*Read: Romans 10:14-17; Colossians 1:15-23*

*Carol Geisler  
Manchester, MO*

Friday, February 3, 2017

# A Record of Love

*May God be gracious to us and bless us and make his face to shine upon us.*

*Psalm 67:1*

I have a sensible black purse that sits in my closet, waiting for serious occasions. It also serves as a repository for snippets of my life: a ticket stub from *The Belle of Amherst*, a friend's business card, a discount coupon for a local restaurant, a Metro subway card, a hand-drawn map to a reception, a glue stick (you never know ... ), a prayer written for a company dinner and numerous worship folders from weddings and funerals. I could clean it out, but why? All those items hold memories of God's blessings—adventures, happy occasions for people in my life and farewells for friends and family who have entered life eternal. That little black purse holds a record of love, and I thank God for every remembrance.

*O God, I praise your endless giving. Amen.*

*Find: When you find bits of memories in a purse or pocket, give thanks to God for his blessings.*

*Read: 1 Thessalonians 1:2-10*

*Sally Beck  
Williamsburg, VA*

Saturday, February 4, 2017

# What Time Is It?

*It is not for you to know times or seasons.*

*Acts 1:7*

Were you ever impatient for something as a child? “Is it time for cake?” “Is it time to open the presents?” “Is it time to get up?” Do you remember what your parents answered?

The disciples asked Jesus, “Are you going to restore the kingdom at this time?” Jesus was patient! He did not scold them. He told them to wait and the Holy Spirit would empower their ministry of sharing the Good News. Some things aren’t for us to know. It is not for us to know the time every time. We wait and trust the Lord.

The Psalms often tell us to wait patiently. Are you anxious about anything? A loved one you haven’t heard from? Results from a medical test? You are in the Father’s loving care. Trust him. Wait for him. Don’t worry about the time.

*Lord Jesus, teach me to believe and wait. Amen.*

*Rely: Trust the Lord today.*

*Read: Psalm 102*

*Don Schatz  
Kenmore, WA*

Sunday, February 5, 2017

# Facing This Body of Mine

*I am fearfully and wonderfully made.*

*Psalm 139:14*

As I age, I see that my body with its wrinkles and chronic illnesses and less energy is not what it used to be. I wake up in the morning and begin to wonder about this body of mine.

That's when it is time to remember that my heart and mind and hands and feet are stamped with the imprint of my Creator. After all, I was created in the image of God (Genesis 1:27).

It is also time to confess with the psalmist, "I thank you, High God—you are breathtaking! Body and soul, I am marvelously made! I worship in adoration—what a creation!" (Psalm 139:13-14, *The Message*). After all, "my times are in your hand," O Lord (Psalm 31:15). You, Lord Jesus, are always with me. That's your promise (Matthew 28:20).

*Lord Jesus, help me rise each morning and remember who I am and whose I am and that you will take care of me. Amen.*

*Write: Read Psalm 139 several times and then write your own psalm of confession.*

*Read: Psalm 31*

Walter M. Schoedel  
Webster Groves, MO

Monday, February 6, 2017

# The Towel and the Basin

*But whoever would be great among you must be your servant.*

*Matthew 20:26*

Jesus was about to complete his mission on earth. But he had one more lesson to share with those he loved so dearly, his disciples. He wanted to do more than just *tell* them; he wanted to *show* them what their lives were to be about. He got up from the table, took off his outer garment, tied a towel around his waist, filled a basin with water and began to wash their feet.

He came to each of them, got down on his knees, and gently washed the dirt from their feet and ultimately from their lives. His message was clear. Their definitive tool in bringing others to follow Jesus would not be the “bully pulpit,” but rather “the towel and the basin.” “I have given you an example, that you also should do just as I have done to you” (John 13:15).

*Lord, every morning when I arise, let me take out the towel and the basin. Show me, Jesus, whose feet you want me to wash this day. Amen.*

*Reach out: Give yourself to someone in need of God's love today.*

*Read: John 12:36; John 13:1-17*

*Don Luepke  
Fremont, IN*

Tuesday, February 7, 2017

# Life Happens

*He himself gives to all mankind life and breath and everything.*

*Acts 17:25*

My soon-to-be-retired younger sister teaches music to elementary students. To illustrate a kindergarten lesson one day, she played a song that she and two friends had recorded shortly after high school. Then she showed a photo of herself and her two friends at age 19. A blunt little voice asked, “What happened?”

It’s actually a good question for all of us. What happened, indeed? Think about your own high school photo. What happened to that smooth skin and good hair? Life happened. Years and years of it, and all a gift from God. Good days and bad, awful days and great ones—a lifetime of experiences. It’s tempting to mourn that the best days of life are past. Yet Jesus says, “I came that they may have life and have it abundantly” (John 10:10). Jesus offers abundant love and forgiveness every day, and his best gift of all—eternal life—is already ours by faith.

*Thank you, Lord, for all my days and years.  
Amen.*

*Reflect: Find your high school yearbook, and reflect on how God shaped you through the years.*

*Read: Acts 17:24-28; John 5:24*

*Marj Maynard  
Billings, MO*

Wednesday, February 8, 2017

# Pray for Mawumalolo

*I have called you by name, you are mine.*

*Isaiah 43:1*

I am sponsoring a 4-year-old boy in Ghana through an international organization. At first his name—Mawumalolo—was so difficult for me to pronounce that I wrote it on the cover of my *Hope-Full Living*. But God knew how to say his name. He had called Mawumalolo to be his child long before he was born. God would place him in a village with a small Christian church and preschool. He would give him an American sponsor to help with his educational and health needs. One who would pray for him and tell him often, “I love you and Jesus loves you.”

What is the story of your Christian walk? Who were the people the Holy Spirit chose to help you grow in faith? God planned it. He called you. You are his.

*Father, thank you for calling me to you, even before I was born. In Jesus' name. Amen.*

*Do: Share your faith journey with those around you. Ask them to tell you how they came to faith. God chose you to support them in their growing faith!*

*Read: Isaiah 43:1-2; Ephesians 1-2*

*Ruth Geisler  
Aliso Viejo, CA*



Thursday, February 9, 2017

# The Cradle of Jesus

*You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness about me.*

*John 5:39*

We have an adult daughter who has developmental consequences as a result of a seizure disorder. She also exhibits certain obsessive-compulsive behaviors, one of which is to pirate the pew Bible each time she attends church. Never mind that she has dozens in her room. Never mind that she cannot read beyond the level of a first-grader.

My wife discovered the reason for this mystifying behavior. She often finds her bed strewn with several Bibles. Our daughter is looking for “Jesus” in the Bible, a word she recognizes and identifies as the Savior she loves dearly. The Bible has been called the Cradle of Jesus. Our daughter may be challenged in some ways, but she is an example to us in faith!

*Dear Jesus, thank you for revealing yourself to us in your Word, wakening and strengthening our faith. Amen.*

*Search: Have you spent time in your Bible today, looking for Jesus?*

*Read: Luke 2:15-20; John 5:30-40*

*Ted Zimmerman  
Napa, CA*

Friday, February 10, 2017

# Keep on Dreaming Dreams

*I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh ... and your old men shall dream dreams.*

*Acts 2:17*

Do you still dream? I don't mean the nighttime kind of dreams but those exciting dreams about the future. Ask a child, "What will you be when you grow up?" and they're likely to say, "When I grow up I want to be ..." At a young age everyone has a dream to launch them into the future, but often when you get older the dreams you had when you were young don't pan out.

On the Day of Pentecost, Peter quoted from the Old Testament Book of Joel these words: "I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh ... and your old men shall dream dreams" (Acts 2:17). The Spirit of Christ is active in the hearts and minds of those who believe in Jesus, and so the saying is true: "God's not finished with me yet."

*Lord Jesus, help me to see all things through the eyes of your Spirit.*

*Encourage: Help others to see the power of God at work for good in the world around them.*

*Read: Acts 2:14-21*

*Edward Arle  
St. Charles, MO*

Saturday, February 11, 2017

# The Constancy of Christ

*For great is his steadfast love toward us, and the faithfulness of the Lord endures forever.*

*Psalm 117:2*

Have you discovered that there's a certain sameness when you are not working for a living? Eat breakfast, walk the dog, read the paper. Sound familiar? On the other hand, we also have experiences that disrupt our daily routine: sudden health issues, money problems, perhaps the death of a family member. During those times we crave the sameness that only Jesus can provide.

Where do we go for sameness? How can we possibly find it? Let's look to Scripture and read what Hebrews 13:8 has to say: "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever." So for those yesterday concerns, Jesus was the same. For those problems of today, Jesus is the same. And for the heartaches yet to come, Jesus will be the same. We will always be wrapped in his love, protection and assurance. Always.

*Lord, you are the constant in my life. I cling to the faithfulness that only you can provide. Amen.*

*Try: If you experience uncertainty during the day, reach out in prayer and hold on to Jesus.*

*Read: John 8:32; Psalm 121*

*Janice Koehnke  
Neenah, WI*

Sunday, February 12, 2017

# The Music Unfolds

*And he said to her, “Your sins are forgiven ... Your faith has saved you; go in peace.”*

*Luke 7:48-50*

Tchaikovsky’s *1812 Overture* was written to celebrate the Russian victory over Napoleon’s invading armies. As the music unfolds, the Russian hymn gradually drowns out the French National Anthem until it is heard no more.

Something similar is happening in the story of Jesus and the sinful woman. As the story unfolds, the sounds of fear and condemnation are taken over by the sounds of love and forgiveness, until only the sweet music of God’s grace is heard.

It’s the story of our lives, as we, too, reflect on our journey. When only distress was known in our relationship with God, the gentle, forgiving voice of God drowned out all other voices until only the sweet words of forgiveness rang in our ears: “Your sins are forgiven ... Go in peace!”

*Yes, Lord! How sweet the name of Jesus sounds! It drives away my fear. Amen.*

*Listen: If you have opportunity, listen to the 1812 Overture and think of how the Gospel drowns out all condemnation in our lives.*

*Read: Luke 7:36-50*

*Lionel Otto  
Adelaide, Australia*

Monday, February 13, 2017

# I Will Hand It Over!

*Cast your burden on the LORD, and he will sustain you.*

*Psalm 55:22*

Recall various times you may have handed over something. Perhaps it was a responsibility you performed for years, but you finally handed it over to someone else. It may have been something you wanted to purchase, but first you had to hand over a credit card or cash. It may have been at the wedding of a child as you handed your loved one over to the care and keeping of their bride or groom.

But what about time? Have you ever handed over to God the time God has allotted you here on earth? The psalmist says: “My times are in your hand” (Psalm 31:15). When you hand over your time here on earth, you place your time in good hands, hands outstretched to receive you just as you are, hands that were pierced as evidence of our Savior’s love.

*Gracious God, I entrust to you the time I have remaining on this earth until that day when I enter into timelessness with you. Amen.*

*Consider: What was the most difficult thing in your life that you had to give up and what blessing came to you because you did give it up?*

*Read: Psalm 55*

*Jerrold L. Nichols  
Fort Wayne, IN*

Tuesday, February 14, 2017

# The Love Box

*So now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; but the greatest of these is love.*

1 Corinthians 13:13

Most of us remember decorating boxes to hold the cards from classmates on Valentine's Day. My daughters enjoyed the flowers and paper doilies. My son, on the other hand, hated the idea and usually refused to comply with the teacher's instructions. When I asked why he couldn't add a few decorations to the his box, he explained, "The girls call them 'love boxes.' I hate that. Besides, you can't put love in a box." He had a point.

We often put our love for others inside our parameters of an invisible box. If they meet our requirements, they receive our love. If they don't, we keep the lid on our box of love. It is a wonderful blessing that Jesus died for everyone and loves everyone. His love for us overflows the box and touches every heart.

*Jesus, as people celebrate Valentine's Day, help us to remember your pure and abiding love. Amen.*

*Give: Buy a box of children's Valentine cards and hand them to random people, saying, "Jesus loves you."*

*Read: 1 Corinthians 13*

Gloria Doty  
Fort Wayne, IN

Wednesday, February 15, 2017

# Mountaintop Moments

*You make him glad with the joy of your presence.*

*Psalm 21:6*

What's the most joyful moment you've had in your life? Everyone's life is sprinkled with "mountaintop moments," from having a baby to gazing at mountains to completing a great achievement. At these moments, our worries and negativity melt away and we're filled with joy.

The Bible says God fills us with joy, which will be made complete when we join him in heaven. The source of this joy is the knowledge that God loves us and has sent his Son to die for us so that we have the assurance of salvation. With this knowledge, we can let go of all our worries because we are loved by the Almighty.

*Heavenly Father, thank you for loving me and sending Jesus to die for me. Please fill me with your heavenly joy. Amen.*

*Reflect: Write a list of your most joyful moments and reflect on the greater joy of God.*

*Read: Psalm 51; 1 Peter 1:6-9*

*Brenda Schmidt  
Minneapolis, MN*

Thursday, February 16, 2017

# My Songwriter

*The Lord is my strength and my song, and he has become my salvation.*

*Exodus 15:2*

What songs are in the soundtrack of your life? For celebrations and for crying times, in happiness or horror, we have the ability and the invitation to sing. Some songs pass quickly; others stay with us for years.

Moses and Miriam sang of the Lord, “my strength and my song.” More than mere ballads of famous people, or laments of love lost, our music is a way to praise our Lord. As we sing, we are reminded that the Lord is our song-source and our soul-salvation.

As we sing, our bodies and spirits respond, neurons and synapses interacting actively and energetically. Choristers and conductors through the ages echo the psalmist: “Oh, come, let us sing to the Lord” (Psalm 95:1). The Lord, our song, created our lives and makes our lives better!

*Holy Spirit, fill me that I may sing of my Lord.  
Amen.*

*Do: Start singing a favorite hymn. Ask others to sing with you.*

*Read: Psalm 92:1-4; Ephesians 5:18-20*

*Martin Doering  
Bellwood, IL*



Friday, February 17, 2017

# It's Only a Cup! Or Is It?

*And he took a cup.*

*Matthew 26:27*

A cup is such a mundane thing. It has been used for thousands of years. Yet what a kaleidoscope of images the term *cup* holds for us in the Scriptures. It symbolizes everything surrounding life itself. God assigns your portion and cup in life. An overflowing cup signifies an abundant life. And when the psalmist raises the cup of salvation to the Lord, he is offering the whole of his life to the Lord.

But there is one cup that is precious above all others for us and that is the cup that is the new covenant in Jesus' blood. As we take that cup, the whole of our salvation possesses us as Jesus pours his eternal life into us.

Every cup of water reminds us of God's gift of life itself. Every cup of wine reminds us of the blood of Christ shed for us and given in every Holy Communion. It never is just a cup.

*Lord Jesus, thank you for the cup of blessing that we share. It is the story of our salvation. Amen.*

*Reflect: Cups tell stories. Reflect on the different stories your many cups have to tell.*

*Read: Matthew 26:26-29*

*Lionel Otto  
Adelaide, Australia*

Saturday, February 18, 2017

# Think About These ...

*Finally brothers, ... if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things.*

*Philippians 4:8*

While I pump \$20 worth of gas, I'm inundated with messages. Advertisements on the pump screen inform me of kickback points or snacks to entice me. On the huge sign in the sky there's a digital screen that changes every couple seconds, tempting me to buy lunch in to-go containers. What if God's messages of hope and salvation were everywhere we looked?

What if I was struggling in faith and a grocer's sign said, "I believe; help my unbelief!" (Mark 9:24). What if I had no one to turn to and drove by a billboard assuring me, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life" (John 6:68). What if I can't find words to pray, but the gas pump screen reminds me: "We do not know what to pray ... but the Spirit himself intercedes for us" (Romans 8:26). God provides peace and comfort as close as a Bible. Those words are signs of hope I can share with friends.

*Create in me a clean heart, O God and renew a right spirit within me. Amen.*

*Learn:* Memorize a favorite verse and share it with a hungry soul.

*Read:* Psalm 51

*Nancy Rapp  
St. Louis, MO*

Sunday, February 19, 2017

# Changing Times

*Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.*

*Hebrews 13:8*

Have you ever visited a favorite café, or an old friend's home, only to be confronted with a new area that is barely recognizable? My friend recently went to visit her old family home only to find that it had been demolished. The crumbled brickwork lying in the barren field was the only trace of her memories. Even when we find the building still standing, it may look smaller than we remembered it, and the charm and warmth of old times may have vanished with the passing of the years.

Time moves on and places and people change. Yet as the landscape shifts around us, God stays the same. He walks with us through all the days of our lives, and stands strongly beside us even when we face loss and uncertainty. He goes on loving us, guiding us and comforting us.

*Lord Jesus, help me to trust in you as I face changes in my life. Where I have faced loss, show me new places and new friends to hold dear. Amen.*

*Pray: Give thanks for memories and new challenges.*

*Read: Psalm 102:24-27*

*Kerry Osborne  
Sydney, Australia*

Monday, February 20, 2017

# Seeing God Face to Face

*For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face.*

*1 Corinthians 13:12*

When I was a child, my father served in World War II. When he returned from 17 months in Europe, my joy was overwhelming. After all these years, 71 to be exact, I can still remember and recreate the thrill and excitement that accompanied his arrival home. None of us has yet seen our heavenly Father, but I am sure my earthly father's homecoming will pale in comparison to the moment I see my Lord face to face. What a joyful time that will be! As we anticipate that day, whether tomorrow or in a thousand years, we can be about his work of spreading his Word so that millions more will welcome him and see him face to face.

*Dear Jesus, as we await your Second Coming, let us be about your business while it is still day. We pray in your holy name. Amen.*

*Ask: Who else can I tell about Jesus?*

*Read: Matthew 25:31-40; John 5:24*

*Harriet Stennfeld  
Fort Wayne, IN*

Tuesday, February 21, 2017

# Hands

*No one will snatch them out of my hand.*

*John 10:28*

Look at your hands and what do you see? Are there wrinkles on the backs of them? Are they frail? Are they scarred? How about your palms? Are they sweaty? Are they calloused and rough from years of toiling? Are they soft and delicate from years of caring? Do they still hold any strength? Your hands tell an amazing story about who you are. They tell a story of where you have been and how you have been crafted into the person you are today.

I am certain that if you look hard enough and put those hands together, you will see and recall how God has blessed you. You will remember the times those hands were stressed or in trouble and God relieved you. You will think of the excitement and joy you have had over the years. You will remember the prayers you have said, and the times God would not let you be snatched out of his hand.

*Lord God, thank you for having me in your grip and allowing me to age gracefully. Amen.*

*Learn: Shake some hands today and feel the stories of your family and friends.*

*Read: John 10:1-30*

*Cory A. Wielert  
Crown Point, IN*

Wednesday, February 22, 2017

# Give Me Your Hand

*Even there your hand shall lead me, and your right hand shall hold me.*

*Psalm 139:10*

As a teenager, a friend convinced me to try ice-skating. New skates, ankle guards and all the right equipment did not prepare me for the daunting task of being able to stay upright on the ice. The friend gave me a chair to push to steady me. It didn't work. The chair slid as much as I did. My friend took pity on me and gave me his hand. With that support, I could at least stand up.

When someone we know is having a difficult time, due to health, finances, family issues or any of the many problems that assault us each day, it would be a comfort if we offered a "hand" to steady them. The world offers crutches, but like the chair, they are a fleeting support. We can offer our hand in friendship, understanding and the assurance of God's love, which lasts forever.

*Father, help us to see when someone needs our hand. Amen.*

*Help: Watch for people who could use your steady-ing hand of comfort.*

*Read: Psalm 34:18; Deuteronomy 33:27*

*Gloria Doty  
Fort Wayne, IN*

Thursday, February 23, 2017

# Why?

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

*Jeremiah 29:11*

The favorite word of my granddaughter seems to be, “Why?” If I answer one why, it is followed by another. This can go on until I say something like, “Just because,” or I change the subject.

Unfortunately, sometimes we all act like three-year-olds. We make plans and want things to go a certain way, but then everything changes. We complain and say, “Why did this happen? It’s not what I wanted.” But God knows what’s best for us and his plans for this life and eternal life are much better than anything we could imagine.

*Lord, help me to trust you to know what is best for me. Turn my “whys” into “your will be done.” Amen.*

*Learn: Study God’s Word to learn his will and remember what he has done for you in Christ Jesus.*

*Read: Psalm 40:5; Isaiah 55:10-12*

*Jeanette Dall  
Batavia, IL*

Friday, February 24, 2017

# Trust In God

*Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding.*

*Proverbs 3:5*

Sometimes it's hard to believe that God knows better than we do. It sounds like a simple idea until we start living life. We find ourselves bogged down with doubt and worry. How could certain things possibly work out for our good? Will they ever be made right?

But just as children do not understand the rules that their parents have for them, we do not always understand the way that God is working. Some things may never make sense this side of heaven, but we can still trust in God though we do not understand. We know that he is all-powerful and that he loves us and is working for our good.

*Heavenly Father, remove from me all doubt and worry and help me to trust in you. Amen.*

*Pray: Make a list of your worries and pray about each of them.*

*Read: Romans 8:26-28; Psalm 62*

*Brenda Schmidt  
Minneapolis, MN*



Saturday, February 25, 2017

# It's About Time

*But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his son ... to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption.*

*Galatians 4:4-5*

I remember Mom's recurring words when my brother and I would come home late from school: "It's about time!" I recall a teacher who would respond to my late homework assignments, "It's about time!" And I even remember my baseball coach shouting to me after I finally got on base, "It's about time!"

The Lord also "shouted" out to us when he sent Jesus to this earth, alerting us to the fact that our sins have been forgiven and we have become sons and daughters of the Lord himself. Now "it's about time" that you and I remember and rejoice in this fact as we live life in this timeless relationship with Jesus.

*Thanks, Lord, for giving us time each day to celebrate and serve you by telling others of your timeless love for us. Amen.*

*Plan: What "It's about time!" activities can you do for and with people today as the Lord enables you to have the time to "take the time" to serve others?*

*Read: Galatians 4:1-7; Galatians 5:13-14*

*Rich Bimler  
Bloomingdale, IL*

Sunday, February 26, 2017

# That's My Boy!

*A voice from the cloud said, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased.*

*Matthew 17:5*

When my son played on his junior high basketball team, they were trailing by one point in the final seconds of the championship game. He was fouled as he took the shot and awarded two free throws. The first one swished through. When the second shot cleared the rim and won the game, I jumped up and yelled, "That's my boy!"

At the Transfiguration, God the Father in effect said of Jesus, "That's my boy!" The disciples had just seen Jesus in all his glory. It was truly an awesome event. Then God spoke from the cloud, declaring his love for Jesus. He made it quite clear that Jesus was his perfect Son, the One who would save us from our sins by his death and resurrection.

*Thank you, Lord, for sending Jesus, your beloved Son, as the Savior of the world. Amen.*

*Tell: Share the exciting news of salvation with someone.*

*Read: Matthew 17:1-8*

*Jeanette Dall  
Batavia, IL*

Monday, February 27, 2017

# Time for ... ?

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

*Ecclesiastes 3:1*

Our culture encourages and appreciates busyness. Even many “leisure” activities require speed, intensity and hectic schedules. Do you remember days that began before dawn, or continued until the late-night news? Though work and ministry brought great joy, life rarely offered a peaceful pace.

Are you thankful to have a less demanding daily schedule? Do you enjoy time to thoughtfully consider new goals? How about that extra cup of morning coffee, along with Bible study and prayer? Are you finding more time to listen to others, give help to neighbors, and try new service opportunities? God continues to work through us to bless others in every season of life. Relax and enjoy it!

*Thank you, Lord, for the new adventures and opportunities you place before us in every phase of life! Open our eyes to see them. Amen.*

*Rest: Let your midday prayers lead into a little nap today.*

*Read: Ecclesiastes 3:1-13; Psalm 4:8; Mark 6:31*

*Sharolyn Sander  
Lincoln, NE*

Tuesday, February 28, 2017

# Spring Training

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

*Jeremiah 31:34*

To paraphrase Alfred, Lord Tennyson, “In the spring a young man’s fancy lightly turns to thoughts of ... baseball!”—especially spring training. The strike-outs and errors of last year don’t count any more. All-stars and rookies alike take the field to practice and prepare for a new season of play.

Our new life in Jesus Christ resembles spring training. The sins of our old lives don’t count anymore; they’ve been washed away by Jesus’ blood. God sees us as righteous and remembers our sin no more. Because our former selves have been buried with Christ by Baptism into his death, we arise with Christ to walk in newness of life.

As each baseball season is filled with potential, so our new lives in Christ overflow with opportunities to serve God and others in Jesus’ name.

*Thank you, Lord, for forgiving my sins and giving me another season to serve you. Amen.*

*Get in shape: Begin your spring training regimen by reading the training manual—God’s Word.*

*Read: Romans 6:1-14*

*Eileen Ritter  
Byron Center, MI*

Wednesday, March 1, 2017

# Dust

*For he knows our frame; he remembers that we are dust.*

*Psalm 103:14*

We would like to be remembered for our achievements, service and devotion, but God “remembers that we are dust.” It is hardly a ringing endorsement. We are dust, descended from Adam, who was formed “from the dust of the ground” (Genesis 2:7), and we will, like Adam, return one day to dust (Genesis 3:19).

Yet God’s remembrance of our dusty origins is a memory of compassion. He knows our earth-born weakness and in mercy sent his Son to walk the dusty road to the cross for our salvation. Jesus rose from the dead, and because he lives, we too will one day rise from the dust of death. “Just as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the man of heaven” (1 Corinthians 15:49).

*Lord Jesus, look in compassion on our weakness. Forgive us and raise us each day to new life in your name. Amen.*

*Walk: As you walk a dusty road or path, remember your Savior’s path to the cross.*

*Read: Psalm 103; 1 Corinthians 15:42-49*

*Carol Geisler  
Manchester, MO*

Thursday, March 2, 2017

# Remember to Remember

*Remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead.*

2 Timothy 2:8

I recently ran across the words “remember to remember.” We need to hear that reminder, and to remember that remembering is important in our faith-life. We receive the sacrament and hear the words, “Do this in remembrance of me.” The entire season of Lent is a time of remembering—remembering Jesus’ journey to the cross and the sacrifice of his life. But that has no meaning unless we also remember that he is risen from the dead. His resurrection assures us that we stand in holiness before God.

Thankfully, for us who are prone to forget, worship services are full of reminders of that which is important to remember. Young or old, we need those reminders. We easily forget the wonderful things God has done for us. Above all, let us remember to remember that God has promised to *not* remember our sins anymore (Jeremiah 31:34; Hebrews 8:12).

*Gracious God, help us to remember every day your loving care and the wondrous gift of forgiveness in Christ our Lord. Amen.*

*Remember: At the end of the day remember some of the gifts God gave you today and give thanks.*

*Read: Hebrews 8:8-12*

Eldor Kaiser  
Lenexa, KS

Friday, March 3, 2017

# Fresh Fruit

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

*Galatians 5:22-23*

How fresh is your fruit? How sweet is the love you share? Is your patience in peak season?

The Holy Spirit empowers us to bear fresh fruit daily, yet we struggle to live by the Spirit. The law of nature (sinful nature) determines certain seasons are not favorable for producing good fruit. When the winds of change blow, when the heat of trouble is turned up, when we face the winter season of life, we often bear bitter fruit. Peace shrivels up. Goodness and kindness rot away. Self-control decays. When it comes to the fruit of the Spirit, however, “against such things there is no law!”

Jesus overcame sin. He is the vine; we are fruit-bearing branches. Connected to him, we can produce a harvest of fresh fruit in any season, including joy so juicy it drips wherever we go.

*Jesus, nourish and refresh me, that I may bear a bounty of good fruit today. Amen.*

*Share: Serve generous portions of fruit of the Spirit with everyone you meet this week.*

*Read: John 15:5; John 15:16*

*Sandi Geis  
St. Louis, MO*

Saturday, March 4, 2017

# Blessed for Life, Forever

*I trust in you, O Lord; I say, "You are my God." My times are in your hand.*

*Psalm 31:14-15*

Blessings come in many forms: things, pleasures, health and people. Most blessings are fragile; sooner or later they wear out, lose value, are stolen by time and misfortune or pass away.

The most valuable blessing comes from Jesus, the Savior sent from heaven to live among us, to rescue us from this world where everything dies. By his blood he has bought us so now we belong to the heavenly Father—our lives, our times, our future are in his hands.

As you experience the inevitable loss of one blessing after another, remember this forever blessing: Because of Jesus you can trust your God to hold you in his capable, caring hands ... today, tomorrow, forever.

*Thank you, Father, for so many blessings. Help me, as life declines, to find comfort in my Savior Jesus, so I can live hope-fully today. Amen.*

*Remember: Reflect with a thankful heart on the lifetime of blessings God has showered upon you.*

*Read: Psalm 111*

*Paul Scheidt  
Chesterfield, MO*



Sunday, March 5, 2017

# Our Eternal Home

*We look ... to the things that are unseen. For ... the things that are unseen are eternal.*

*2 Corinthians 4:18*

My knee aches most days. Stretching helps, but it's age-related. Aging isn't for sissies. As my friend Rich Bimler says, "Remember: aging is the only way to live."

The apostle Paul observes, "Though our outer nature is wasting away, our inner nature is being renewed day by day." He calls this process a "slight momentary affliction" which God is using to prepare us for our eternal home in heaven.

Now every time my knee aches, I'm reminded that my "slight momentary affliction" won't last. The unseen kingdom of heaven is eternal. The best is yet to come. What great news!

*Father, my times are in your hands. Please help me to use this day to honor you while I wait for you to call me home. Amen.*

*Consider: Is God using your "slight momentary affliction" to point you to your eternal home?*

*Read: Psalm 90; 2 Corinthians 4:16-18*

*Steve Hess  
Ft. Myers, FL*

Monday, March 6, 2017

# Shifting Our Focus

*I am not alone, for the Father is with me.*

*John 16:32*

Some days I think the daily news should come with a warning: “Not suitable for sensitive viewers!” This morning I learned of the latest terrorist attack in France. My heart aches for those affected. Living in our fallen world, it is inevitable that we will be confronted with evil acts of violence and hatred.

When Jesus was with us, he faced this too. I’m sure his heart ached for those who were suffering, but his focus was on his Father. He encouraged his disciples (and encourages us today) to “fear not” for he is with us, and one day there will be an end to the suffering. His Word teaches us how to shift our focus: “Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things” (Philippians 4:8).

*Dear Lord, please show me the things I should focus on today. Amen.*

*Write: List five true, noble, lovely, admirable and praiseworthy things in our world and thank God for them.*

*Read: Philippians 4:4-13*

*Kerry Osborne,  
Sydney, Australia*

Tuesday, March 7, 2017

# Useless or Useful?

*So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.*

*1 Corinthians 10:31*

In my visits with folks who are chronically ill or are unable to do the things they used to because of age or injury, I often hear them express a feeling of uselessness.

Let me assure you that you are still useful to God, no matter your circumstance or physical ability. You may even be more useful than you were when you were young and healthy. Now you have wisdom to impart. Now you have the ability to pray and you know how important prayer is. Now you have the time to be a listening ear or a caring heart for those in need.

Thankfully your usefulness isn't dependent on you at all. It is dependent upon the Holy Spirit living in you. The Spirit will work in you and through you!

*Holy Spirit, work your will through me. Amen.*

*Do: Pray for at least one person today.*

*Read: 2 Timothy 2:20-21*

*Jeremy Klaustermeier  
Warrenton, MO*

Wednesday, March 8, 2017

# Surprise!

*Sarah ... shall have a son.*

*Genesis 18:10*

Surprise parties are fun to plan and attend. Even when the surprise doesn't go exactly as planned, the love it expresses is obvious.

In the Genesis account, Sarah prepared the meal for her own surprise party! God's promise to Abraham had seemed impossible. But soon her deepest longing would be realized. Sarah laughed in joy as unexpected visitors announced her pregnancy!

Likewise, after centuries of promise and waiting, Jesus was born to unlikely parents, at an inconvenient time and unexpected place. His birth surprised both shepherds and kings. Only God knew the plan: "God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8).

God is at work in your life today. He knows your heart's desire and your deepest needs. Enjoy his perfect plan and timing.

*Loving God, open our eyes to see your surprises, as you bless us with your grace and love. Amen.*

*Surprise someone: Plan a simple surprise for someone who needs to be uplifted.*

*Read: Genesis 17:1-18; Genesis 21:1-7; Romans 5:1-11; Psalm 139*

*Sharolyn Sander  
Lincoln, NE*

Thursday, March 9, 2017

# Remembering

*Remember the wondrous works that he has done, his miracles, and the judgments he uttered.*

*Psalm 105:5*

At the age of 43, St. Augustine set about writing his spiritual autobiography called *The Confessions*. It had been 10 years since he had dramatically turned from his wandering ways, going from a religious movement to skepticism to finally fulfilling his mother's prayers by accepting Christ as his Lord. With candid honesty of his youthful exploits, he described his spiritual journey until, on Easter morning in A.D. 387, he was baptized.

Recalling his past journey, he sensed the hand of the Lord leading him from one phase to another in his life. It is a good spiritual exercise and a model for us to recall our spiritual journey and honestly write about our missteps, because Christ's gracious forgiveness from the cross covers all of them.

*O eternal and forgiving Lord, who knows all things, enable us to present ourselves honestly before you when we pray. Amen.*

*Compose: Write an honest sketch of your spiritual life when you were young.*

*Read: Psalm 105 and Acts 7:1-56*

*Gordon Beck  
Williamsburg, VA*

Friday, March 10, 2017

# Precious Wounds

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

*Isaiah 53:5*

My young grandson, Mattias, loves baseball. One day, playing catch with his brother, he dove for the ball and fell on the concrete sidewalk. Crying in pain, he came in the house with the palms of both hands scraped raw and bleeding. Quickly the wounds were cleaned and dressed and he went right back to playing catch.

Our Lord Jesus bore wounds in his palms, too. But it was not a game, not an accident that resulted in those precious wounds. He willingly opened his hands to the nails of the cross so we could live in peace with God.

*Jesus, dear Savior, you did it all. The blood and the pain and the wounded palms proclaim the victory you won not just for me, but for all people. Make my life a song of praise, for in your wounds we are saved. Amen.*

*Hold: Hold someone's hand. Share a prayer of thanks for the precious wounds of Jesus.*

*Read: Isaiah 53*

*Donna J. Streufert  
South Bend, IN*

Saturday, March 11, 2017

# Timing Is Everything

*My times are in your hand.*

*Psalm 31:15*

Not my time, not your time, but God's time. In your time, the train should not be late. The rain should not fall until after the picnic. No one should interrupt me while I am writing. The phone should not ring.

In God's time the sea parted, the walls fell down, the waves were calm, the lions went hungry, the sky was split with light, the angels sang and the stone was rolled away,

How do we find patience to adjust to God's timing? Maybe we could get up earlier to pray. Maybe we could cross off some things on our have-to list and have time to read and pray with our grandchildren, call that lonely friend or offer a ride to someone who no longer drives. God is the master of time. At the right time he sent his Son to be our Savior. Tell him of your time management, pray for patience and submit to his timing.

*Lord, help me to live according to your timing.  
Amen.*

*Reflect: There is time to enjoy his creation and thanks for his salvation.*

*Read: Ecclesiastes 3:1-8*

*Connie Bretcher  
Valparaiso, IN*

Sunday, March 12, 2017

# Seasons

*Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth.*

*Revelation 21:1*

Between our home and the tidal creek is a forest. During winter the water is visible, but spring brings buds and leaves that begin to obstruct the view, and by summer the forest is completely green. In the fall the leaves turn brilliant shades of red, orange and gold. The water view doesn't come back until those leaves drop. Seasons.

Through all of the seasons of our lives, there remains one constant—our God. His light and truth might be obstructed during some of our life seasons, but he is always there. His mercy and grace fall richly on us each day. In the final season, he will call us home.

*Loving and gracious God, let me be aware of your daily presence, even when life events obstruct my view of you. I pray in Jesus' name. Amen.*

*Rely: Trust in our almighty God, whatever season of life we are in.*

*Read: Daniel 2:20-23, 1 Thessalonians 5:1-11, Revelation 21:1-21*

*Terry Weber  
Williamsburg, VA*



Monday, March 13, 2017

# Get Off the Donkey

*He said, “The one who had mercy on him.” Jesus told him, “Go and do likewise.”*

*Luke 10:37*

In the story of the Good Samaritan, when the priest and the Levite saw the man who had been robbed, each passed by on the other side. But when the Samaritan saw him, he got off his donkey, went over and bandaged his wounds, poured oil and wine on him, put him on his animal and took him to the urgent care facility of his day, taking care of the bill.

Serving always starts at the same place—getting off the donkey! It is that initial step that allows the rest to happen. When we walk along the theoretical road from “Jerusalem to Jericho” and see a situation that needs God’s loving care and grace, we are called to action and to engage in the business of serving.

*Lord, in my journey through life help me to “get off the donkey” and kneel down and give love and comfort to those you set before me. Amen.*

*Serve: Minister today to the needs of someone you will encounter.*

*Read: Luke 10:25-37*

*Don Luepke  
Fremont, IN*

Tuesday, March 14, 2017

# Revealing Light

*I have come into the world as light, so that whoever believes in me may not remain in darkness.*

*John 12:46*

Always looking for ways to make housework easier, I bought a lightweight cordless vacuum for the kitchen and dining room hardwood floors. It's a great sweeper with a slightly unsettling feature—a front light. When pointed into corners and under cabinets, the light sometimes reveals an unpleasant array of crumbs, dust and cobwebs. But without that light, I wouldn't be able to see the dirt that needs cleaning.

In John 12:46 Jesus calls himself light. Without the light of his Word, we would not be able to see the unpleasant sin hiding in our hearts. And without the light of his Gospel, we would not see how he loves and forgives us, restoring to us clean hearts. Jesus lights our way out of darkness. His Word reveals the dark corners of our hearts. Then it lights our way to God's gift of a clean heart, the righteousness of Jesus that leads to eternal life in heaven.

*Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me (Psalm 51:10). Amen.*

*Follow: Follow Jesus' light out of every darkness.*

*Read: 2 Corinthians 4:5-6; 2 Peter 1:19*

*Marj Maynard  
Billings, MO*

Wednesday, March 15, 2017

# Amen!

*The Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.*

*Romans 8:27*

Our prayers take many forms. We use the prayer Jesus taught us, or pray the psalms that so well express joy, praise, fear or doubt. We use the familiar hymns and prayers of the Church or in our own words pour out our hearts before God.

There are times when words just won't come, not even a brief prayer like Peter's desperate cry as he began to sink beneath the waves: "Lord, save me!" (Matthew 14:30). Yet even when words fail us, our needs are unfailingly presented before the throne of grace by the Spirit, "who helps us in our weakness" when "we do not know what to pray for as we ought" (Romans 8:26). The Spirit offers up our needs, hopes and fears. We, with our prayers, are surrounded with the holy shield that is the will of God. To that we can only say, "Amen!"

*Lord Jesus, thank you for hearing my prayers, even when words fail me. Amen.*

*Speak: "Pray without ceasing" (1 Thessalonians 5:17).*

*Read: Romans 8:26-30; Matthew 14:22-33*

*Carol Geisler  
Manchester, MO*

Thursday, March 16, 2017

# A Time for Everything

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

*Ecclesiastes 3:1*

Your wedding. Your kids' births. The arrival of grandchildren. Retirement. These are all happy occasions that we look forward to in life.

Illnesses. Financial challenges. Divorce. A house fire. Death. These are some things we do not want to experience.

The writer of Ecclesiastes reminds us that there is a time for everything—good and bad. Throughout our lifetime, we are subject to different times and many changes. But the one thing that will never change is our God, his love for us and his promises to us. He has promised us, “For I the Lord do not change” (Malachi 3:6). We can rest assured that though our experiences on earth are ever changing, our God will always remain the same.

*Dear unchanging God, amid the times of change in my life, help me to remember that you never change. Amen.*

*Search: Look through photographs to see how your family has changed.*

*Read: Ecclesiastes 3; Psalm 31:15*

*Celeste Cummins  
Storm Lake, IA*

Friday, March 17, 2017

# Anytime, Anywhere

*I am with you always.*

*Matthew 28:20*

The tour bus set us down before a gold-encrusted Thai temple. Inside, people gripping incense sticks bowed to a central idol. “What are they praying?” I asked the tour guide.

“They be praying for their sick children. This god does that.”

I saw more diverse idols. Everywhere people prayed to idols, some by rote, some with desperation. Outside, I noticed several dusty peasants running. They had traveled a good distance and were dashing to make it in.

Imagine lying in a sickbed unable to pray because you couldn't get to church. Imagine being lost at night unable to reach your Shepherd. How differently Christians experience each day's encounters. We've been given anytime-access to the Lord, the God of all issues, not just one issue.

*God, you are over all things. How you keep track is beyond my ability to even conceive. But I am glad of it! Thank you for being attentive to me. Amen.*

*Rest: This day and every day you can instantly connect with God Almighty.*

*Read: Psalm 139:2; Psalm 46:1*

*Julaine Kammrath  
Aurora, IL*

Saturday, March 18, 2017

# Happy Birthday?

*I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made.*

*Psalm 139:14*

How do you celebrate your birthdays? “Been there, done that.” “Just forget about my birthdays; they make me feel old.” “Too many candles on the cake!” Or can you rejoice in the prospect of a new year of grace? Get out the old photo albums and “remember when.” Chuckle at the clothes we wore and the cars we drove. Can you look back through the many years of God’s incredible blessings, graduations, vacations, celebrations, answered prayers, rainy days and glorious sunshine? Could you choose a special goal for your fresh new year of grace? Find an old friend or make a new one? Write a story about a funny memory? Make your next birthday a celebration of God’s abundant love for you and your joyous expectancy of a future home in heaven.

*Lord, heaven is my future home but while I am still on this earth, help me be a joy to all those folks around me. Amen.*

*Write: Remember one of your favorite birthdays. Weave it into a devotion and send it to Hope-Full Living.*

*Read: Psalm 139:1-18*

*Lois Scheer  
San Diego, CA*

Sunday, March 19, 2017

# Love, Not Judgment

*Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.*

1 John 4:11

Our pastor said, “For we are sent not to judge but to love!” That set me to thinking. It is so much easier to judge, to see how things and people “ought to be.” We could make things better if others would just listen to our judgments. But is that what we are sent to do?

Let’s work out the “sent to love” theme. Annoyed with the grocery clerk who’s too slow? What if we loved him for his service, even on his time? Someone cut in line—perhaps there’s an emergency at home. Love them on their mission. Waited too long for the doctor? Love her for the time she is taking with someone who needs her attention. Upset with someone who forgot something you wanted? Love him because he is yours to love. Love her because she is taking care of other things. Just love. It’s so much easier than judging.

*Jesus, my Lord, help me to love as you have loved me. Amen.*

*Love: When you are tempted to judge others, pray for them instead.*

*Read: 1 John 4:16-21*

Gail Lutze  
Valparaiso, IN

Monday, March 20, 2017

# Waiting

*Be strong, and let your heart take courage, all you who wait for the Lord!*

*Psalm 31:24*

Here in Wisconsin, March is the month when we wait for spring to arrive! Sometimes it's hard to be patient!

Seniors experience a more serious kind of waiting with issues of aging. We wait for test results, healing after illness and surgery, decisions on finances, down-sizing to smaller homes, and many other circumstances. These experiences often require patient waiting and guidance from God. So we pray and wait for his answers. Sometimes it's a long wait. God is eternal; he has no beginning and no end. He's timeless! With our time frames and schedules, we find this difficult to comprehend, but his Word tells us to be strong and courageous because our times are in his hands.

*Dear God, strengthen us to wait patiently for your answers and trust you will provide. Amen.*

*Remember: Christ is our Rock and our Strength, and he will lead us on his chosen paths, in his time.*

*Read: Psalm 31:3; Psalm 31:14-15; Ecclesiastes 3*

*Annette Schumacher  
Muskego, WI*



Tuesday, March 21, 2017

# Jesus Is the Same Forever

*Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.*

*Hebrews 13:8*

A common saying goes, “The only constant is change.” During the first half of life I anticipated and planned for change, looking forward to birthdays, graduating from high school and college, getting married and having children. Now change is sometimes something not planned—a hospital visit, the loss of someone I love. Others find themselves faced with moving for more care or giving up the car.

We can be assured that God’s love and care never change. God is and was and always will be, never changing, the great I Am. Jesus made our salvation sure and certain. We can depend on God’s promise, his plan in our life for eternal life. His promise is never changing, even amidst all of life’s uncertainties.

*Dear Jesus, be the never-changing center of my life and enable me to be a help to others through the ever-changing phases of their lives. Amen.*

*Today: Make a positive change by calling a friend or sorting a drawer and reliving some of the happy changes in your life.*

*Read: Mark 4:35-41; Psalm 18:2*

*Nancy Rapp  
St. Louis, MO*

Wednesday, March 22, 2017

# Attention, Class!

*Seeing the crowds, he ... taught them.*

*Matthew 5:1-2*

Generally, you cannot get into second grade until you have attended first grade. You cannot take the level 400 classes in college until you pass the level 100 courses.

We never hear of Jesus separating the people he taught by age; that is, the preschoolers over here, elementary kids over there, those with higher education sit there, and those who can't read sit in the back. Instead, "seeing the crowds, he ... taught them." Today you listen to Jesus teach as you sit shoulder to shoulder in worship with infants, young people and grandparents. The Holy Spirit is at work in the lives of babes and seniors as the Word of God is read, taught or preached to the multitudes. The Word you learned as a child is the same Word that stirs your heart today as you draw closer to God.

*Dear Lord, I thank you that I have sat at your feet over the years alongside of your children of all ages. Amen.*

*Recall: What earliest truths from God's Word did you learn as a child?*

*Read: Psalm 119 (read a section each day over the next few days)*

*Jerrold L. Nichols  
Fort Wayne, IN*

Thursday, March 23, 2017

# Why God Invented Time

*My times are in your hand.*

*Psalm 31:15*

Remember the sign “God invented time so that everything wouldn’t happen all at once”? Take the time now to read all of Psalm 31. It could have been written by you or me as we continue to struggle with the challenges in life—the distresses that bombard us, the disappointments that continue to mount. The psalmist is shouting out to the Lord, “Help me, I’m in trouble,” perhaps in ways that are all too familiar to all of us.

But the psalmist doesn’t stop there. As he calls for help, he also believes that hope is on its way, that everything doesn’t happen all at once, as we trust and are comforted by God’s people who say to us, “It’s okay, the Lord is with us always!”

*O Lord of time and grace, enable us to pray as the psalmist does, “I trust in you, O Lord. You are my God. My times are in your hand.” Amen.*

*Write: Reflect on the struggles you are dealing with now. Write your own version of Psalm 31, and know that, not only time, but you yourself, are in God’s hands.*

*Read: Matthew 14:22-33*

*Rich Bimler  
Bloomingdale, IL*

Friday, March 24, 2017

# Love Needs an Object

*A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you.*

*John 13:34*

My friend Roger gave me a ride to the doctor's office when I wasn't feeling well. I thanked him profusely. "It seems like you're always helping me. I wish I could help you." Roger put his arm around my shoulders and said, "Christians are supposed to show love. They need someone to receive that love."

Yes, we are to outdo one another in sharing love (Romans 12:10), but that love needs to be received. When you receive someone's love, you are completing the equation and acting in a loving way yourself. When someone helps you, don't think of yourself as a burden. Rejoice that you can help that person carry out his Christian duty. Giving thanks and praying are loving actions in themselves!

*Father, let me receive the loving actions of others with gratitude and grace. Help me to love them in return with my thanks and prayers. In Jesus' name. Amen.*

*Do: Do something right now to thank others for their love—write a note, make a call, send an email, say thank you!*

*Read: John 13:31-35; John 15:1-17; Romans 12*

*Ruth Geisler  
Aliso Viejo, CA*

Saturday, March 25, 2017

# That's Enough!

*“The Lord is my portion,” says my soul, “therefore I will hope in him.”*

*Lamentations 3:24*

When it was time for dessert growing up, my siblings and I didn't care what was served as long as we each got the same amount—I mean, the exact same amount.

“He has more than me!” “No, she has more!” The bantering went on as Mom painstakingly measured equal amounts onto each plate. Finally, irritated by our greed, Mom intervened: “That's enough!” Those two words stopped our bickering. One more word from any of us, we feared, would result in no dessert at all. Suddenly, we were satisfied with our portion, ready to savor each bite.

We often look at our neighbor's wealth or health and conclude, “He has more than me!” Yet, Jesus painstakingly went to the cross so we have unlimited grace and eternal life. He is our portion—and that's enough.

*Lord, make me content, so I may taste and see that you are good. Amen.*

*Savor: Give thanks as you chew on the ways God provides for you.*

*Read: Matthew 6:25-33; Romans 8:31-39*

*Sandi Geis  
St. Louis, MO*

Sunday, March 26, 2017

# Choices, Good and Bad

*The Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.*

*Matthew 20:28*

We can look back on many choices we've made ... some fortunate, some not so much. I often think, if I had it to do over again, I'd probably mess it up even more. We can be thankful God does not discard us when we choose foolishly or sinfully!

Our Savior has made the choice that trumps all our mistakes and failures. He chose to enter our world and our lives to sacrifice himself "as a ransom," to rescue us from our sin and from the death we must die.

Know this and believe it firmly: Our past mistakes (big and small) are washed away by his blood. Our present is wrapped in his grace. Our future is secure in his caring, capable, nail-pierced hands. With confident faith in Jesus, live today hope-fully and peace-fully.

*Lord, I trust in you. Help me today to remember that my life is in your hands. Amen.*

*Look: When looking back at life, look back all the way to the cross of Jesus.*

*Read: 1 John 1:7-9*

*Paul Scheidt  
Chesterfield, MO*

Monday, March 27, 2017

# Don't Worry

*And he said to his disciples, "Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life."*

*Luke 12:22*

In the early morning we sit on our porch and watch the birds come and go in the trees just beyond our reach. They work at feeding and caring for their young. And they do it from the rich resources God's providential hand provides. With no worries, they just do it.

It's a calming and reassuring thing to listen to the doves calling to each other and helping each other with the newborn. So why should we fret over the trifles of the day, the aches and pains that come our way with even more frequency than when we were young? God, who's caring for the birds and all of his created world, is in control, and he is watching over me. I don't need to worry about one solitary thing!

*Thank you, heavenly Father, for calming my fears. Help me learn from your created world and your life-giving Word that you are in control, that you love me and care for me at all times. Amen.*

*Reflect: Take time to relax in the peace and quiet of the early morning dawn to relish the joyful workings of God's winged creatures.*

*Read: Luke 12:13-34*

*David P. Schmidt  
St. Louis, MO*

Tuesday, March 28, 2017

# Reunions

*There is one body and one Spirit ... one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all.*

*Ephesians 4:4-6*

My wife and I just came back from a family reunion in a town south of Chicago. My folks seldom traveled, so I had never met many of the older folks who were at the reunion. It was wonderful to make a first-time acquaintance with my “long lost” relatives!

That experience reminds me of the “relatives” we all have as members of the Body of Christ. We were all baptized in the name of the Triune God. Christ lives in all of us. We have much to share—stories, victories, defeats and occasions when we were strengthened by the love of Christ in each other. There were occasions when we probably couldn’t have “made it” by ourselves, but we did because we were helped and empowered by fellow members of the Body of Christ.

*Lord Jesus, how can I ever thank you enough for placing me in my birth family and in the family of my new birth through Baptism! Amen.*

*Help: Reach out to those who are hurting and in need of a spiritual uplift and encouragement from a friend.*

*Read: Psalm 68:1-6; Ephesians 4:25; Ephesians 5:29-30*

*Paul Eggold  
Greendale, WI*



Wednesday, March 29, 2017

# Make It Happen!

*The Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost.*

*Luke 19:10*

A pastor I know will often tell his children, “Make it happen!” I wasn’t always sure what he meant by those three words, but his children never had doubts as to what he meant. For them those words meant, “Do something to make this world a better place.”

I think that when God drew his Son Jesus aside to prepare him for life in our sin-dark world, he spoke those words too: “Make it happen!” Scripture tells us what he meant:

Bring sight to the blind; bind up the brokenhearted; set the captive free; teach the lame to walk ... (Isaiah 61:1).

... and carry the lost to your cross and show them love in your death and resurrection.

Because of what Christ Jesus has done for us, those three simple words take on a precious, personal meaning when Jesus says them to us: “Make it happen!”

*Dear Father in heaven, whatever your will is for me today, make it happen for Jesus’ sake. Amen.*

*Do: Whatever your faith in Jesus moves you to do today, do it!*

*Read: Matthew 9:9-13*

*Edward Arle  
St. Charles, MO*

Thursday, March 30, 2017

# To Be Continued ...

*While he blessed them, he parted from them and was carried up into heaven.*

*Luke 24:51*

Growing up I loved to listen to Paul Harvey on the radio. He was a master storyteller. Even the commercials didn't bother his listeners, because we were so captivated that we wanted to hear "the rest of the story." It was a "to be continued" moment.

As Jesus ascends, it is a "to be continued" moment. We remember that although Jesus has ascended, he is still with us. We remember the promise of a continued story. As we move forward through Lent into Easter, we remember that the story never ends. We cling to Jesus' victory and we also cling to the blessed hope of his return to bring us home to be with him. Until then, we say not only "Come quickly, Lord," but also "to be continued ... "

*Heavenly Father, may you help us to know you are with us and that your Son will indeed come again. Amen.*

*Consider: Trust in God's promises and reflect on the petition, "Thy kingdom come."*

*Read: Matthew 28:16-20*

*Cory A. Wielert  
Crown Point, IN*

Friday, March 31, 2017

# The Time Is Now

*Behold, now is the favorable time; behold, now is the day of salvation.*

*2 Corinthians 6:2*

Life on the farm was never boring. “Rise and shine!” Dad would announce at daybreak. “Time to make hay while the sun shines!” I learned that when it’s time to plant or harvest or feed the cattle, there is no time to delay.

The apostle Paul urges believers to embrace God’s love in Jesus today: “Now is the favorable time,” he writes. Paul also writes, “Look carefully then how you walk ... making the best use of the time” (Ephesians 5:15-16). There is no time like the present to grow closer to God. He sent his only Son, Jesus Christ, to save us. He longs to assist us each day. Pray to him right now—he is listening!

*Thank you, Father, for hearing our prayer right now. Help us to come to you at all times. Amen.*

*Think: What is the best use of my time right now?*

*Read: 2 Corinthians 6:1-4; Ephesians 5:15-21*

*Steve Hess  
Ft. Myers, FL*

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

## Monthly Hints for 2017

- January:** Forgive and forget—a great way to start the new year.
- February:** Smile and laugh—the Lord loves you.
- March:** Volunteer as you serve and celebrate.
- April:** Get enough Z-Z-Zs. Rest is refreshing.
- May:** Listen to music, and sing out loud, too.
- June:** Worship and meditate regularly.
- July:** Break a sweat! Jog, walk, skip ... just keep moving.
- August:** Count your blessings. They surround us.
- September:** Make new friends, remembering what a Friend we have.
- October:** Put some pep in your step, in words and actions.
- November:** Repeat over and over to yourself: “I am blessed! I am blessed!”
- December:** Continue reading *Hope-Full Living* as you celebrate God’s gift of aging throughout 2017.

# Hope-Full Praying

## *For the New Year*

Lord, as I move into a brand-new year, I offer to you my thanks for the blessings of the past as well as my regrets for those things that I have done and not done this past year. Thanks for giving me another chance in 2017! Guide me as I thank you for the past year of joys and struggles and look forward to your presence and peace in the new days to come. Amen.

## *Anniversaries and Reunions*

Special days are so important to remember and to celebrate, Lord. Today I thank you for my family and friends' birthdays and anniversaries, even if I forgot some of them. Help me to pray and affirm those around me who celebrate special occasions and, where I can join together with family and friends in person, help me to remind others to get ready for the biggest reunion of all, which is called heaven! Amen.

## *For Healthy Habits*

Jesus, you walked this earth proclaiming, teaching and healing people and you continue to do this through people like me. Thanks for giving me healthy habits such as time, rest, devotions, worship and healthy food and exercise as I continue to celebrate and serve, walking this earth with you. Amen.

### *For Loved Ones Near and Far*

I miss my friends and family who are far away, Lord. Please help me to stay close to them, not by miles, but by prayers and thoughts, and emails and phone calls. When my arms cannot reach people who are close to me, let me hug them with my prayers. Amen.

### *For Safety*

It's a dangerous world out there, Lord. I have fears of what might happen to me, my family, my friends and so many others. Lord, change my fears into hope by knowing in faith that you are always with me and others, guarding, protecting and taking away these fears, through your death and resurrection. Amen.

### *For Missionaries*

I thank you, Lord, for brave women and men who risk their lives to proclaim the Gospel of Jesus to others throughout this world. What a work of faith! What a gift to the Church and the world! As I pray for them, remind me, Jesus, that I am also a missionary, right where you have placed me this day. Amen.

### *Thankfulness for Good Health*

I don't thank you enough for the times when I am in good health, Lord. Thank you for giving me the energy and strength I need to do the tasks you have given me to do and to enjoy the life you have blessed me with. Grant me gratefulness for all the ways in which my body functions well. Amen.

### *For Shelter*

I praise you for this place that I call home. Thank you for the ways in which it keeps me warm and safe and protected. Having a roof over my head reminds me of the many ways in which you cover me with your grace and love so that I may live in peace and joy. Thank you for dwelling with me always Amen.

### *For Support Systems*

I am surrounded by a wonderful support system of friends and family who love me and will do whatever it is I need to help me. Grant me a willing spirit to accept the help they give and to go to them whenever I am in need. May I never be too proud to seek assistance from them. And may I be a blessing to them in their times of need as well. Amen.

### *For Opportunities to Worship*

You give me so many opportunities to worship you. Let me take advantage of every chance I get to sing your praises, to pray in your name, to gather with the faithful around your Word in church or in my home or in chapel of a senior living center. May I always be happy to be in your presence. Amen.

### *For New Life*

As flowers bloom and trees blossom with spring, I am reminded of the new life you supply me with every day and the new life that has been born to families I know through the births of new babies. Help me to rejoice in all forms of new life in you. Amen.

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