

HOPE-FULL LIVING

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

April • May • June • 2018

Volume 7 • Number 2

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 April, 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.hopefulldevotions.com

Cover Design: Jamie Wyatt

Sunday, April 1, 2018

Expect the Unexpected

You seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has risen; he is not here. See the place where they laid him.

Mark 16:6

When the women came to the tomb, they expected to find a stone blocking the tomb of their dead friend. Instead, they found something totally unexpected. The stone was rolled away from an empty tomb, and they heard the startling news, “He has risen!” There are many other examples of the unexpected: Mary in her room, shepherds in the fields, Peter fishing by the lake. All were going about their “business-as-usual” lives, not expecting a life-changing event.

Perhaps you are expecting “business as usual” today. Perhaps your living Lord has an unexpected surprise that will change your outlook on life, renew your faith and hope or present an opportunity to touch the life of someone near to you. Keep your mind open; something unexpected may be in store for you today.

Lord Jesus, open my mind to the Word of hope you will speak to me today. Amen.

Pray: Give thanks for the unexpected opportunities God has given you.

Read: John 20:19-23

*Paul Scheidt
Chesterfield, MO*

Monday, April 2, 2018

Overjoyed Over Jesus

Jesus came and stood among them ...Then the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord.

John 20:19-20

Just hours after the resurrection, Jesus' disciples are huddled behind locked doors, fearful of being wrongly accused, minds whirling over what happened to their beloved Teacher. Imagine their joy when Jesus in the flesh miraculously enters the room. In that one moment, their downcast hearts jump for joy.

All these years later, we still are overjoyed over Jesus. Even though we don't see him in the flesh, we see Jesus in his Word. We experience his body and blood in the Lord's Supper, feel his presence in worship and receive his grace from above and his love from fellow believers here below. Right now, like the disciples, we have times of fear, confusion and sorrow. But our joy rests in the knowledge that one day Jesus in the flesh miraculously will enter our world again. In that one moment, Jesus says, "Your sorrow will turn into joy" (John 16:20).

Lord Jesus, I am overjoyed over your resurrection and over all the ways you reveal yourself. Amen.

Watch: Look for Jesus everywhere, every day.

Read: John 16:16-24; 1 Peter 1:8-9

*Marj Maynard
Billings, MO*

Tuesday, April 3, 2018

Wireless Connection

Call upon me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you shall glorify me.

Psalm 50:15

On April 3, 1860, the first Pony Express rider left St. Joseph, Missouri, heading west toward California. The 1900-mile trip took ten days. The cost to send a letter was \$5 for every half ounce—about \$26 in today's terms!

Today, cell phones are faster, cheaper and more efficient than any Pony Express rider ever dreamed. But Pony Express riders had something better. Each rider carried a Bible and a prayer to God. God took that call every time and saved each rider on the treacherous journey.

God saved us too! The cost? Enormous. Jesus paid with his lifeblood. But that call to God is always free for us. What God freely gives us, we can freely share with others. Maybe we can't ride a pony like we used to, but we can get on that phone and bring that good news from God to others.

O God, you spoke to us in Jesus. Now speak through us to bring your love to others. Amen.

Share: Make that phone call. Don't wait for others to saddle their ponies. You have good news to share.

Read: Matthew 5:13-16

*Lonie Eatherton
Fenton, MO*

Wednesday, April 4, 2018

What If Jesus Hadn't Died?

The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.

1 Timothy 1:15

What if I hadn't agreed to that blind date my friend arranged 64 years ago? I wouldn't have met my future husband and been blessed with the 4 children God gave us. What if he hadn't accepted the call to St. John's congregation? I would have missed knowing that flock of God's dedicated servants, many of whose friendships I still treasure today.

What if Jesus hadn't died on the cross, and what if he hadn't risen from the tomb? Then we would be lost in our sins, with hell our certain fate. Thankfully, that need not be our concern. For he *did* die on Good Friday and he *did* rise on Easter to guarantee eternal life for all who believe and cling to this truth.

Dear Father, may I never take my salvation for granted but thank you daily for such a heavenly blessing. Amen.

Share: What if you don't share the Gospel message with your unchurched neighbor? Do so today!

Read: 1 John 2:2; 1 Corinthians 15:3-8

*Harriet Stennfeld
Fort Wayne, IN*

Thursday, April 5, 2018

Growing Season

Be renewed in the spirit of your minds.

Ephesians 4:23

This is a season for new growth. During the growing season, we can also take on a new zest for our faith. Renewal can be exciting and refreshing! It can also be a challenge to change our old patterns of behavior as we try something new. There are so many ways to grow in our faith, but it takes the courage to get out of our comfort zone and reach for something more.

Rather than making sweeping changes, can you just take a tiny step forward, a mini-adjustment? Little modifications over time result in great differences. If your prayer time is stale, try to refresh it by learning a new method of prayer. Read something uplifting or a different part of the Bible. Try a small change and see where it leads you.

God of the seasons, help me to take a step of renewal today. Amen.

Pray: Read a verse of Scripture and make it a part of your prayers today.

Read: Lamentations 3:22-23; Revelation 21:5

*Annette L. Sherwood
St. Louis, MO*

Friday, April 6, 2018

The Smell of Spring

Thanks be to God, who in Christ always leads us in triumphal procession, and through us spreads the fragrance of the knowledge of him everywhere.

2 Corinthians 2:14

The smell of flowering trees, fresh cut grass and refreshing rain showers tell me it's springtime in the Midwest. The aroma of new life transforms my attitude and renews my hope. But you don't have to live in a particular location to enjoy the fragrance of spring.

In this Easter season, we're reminded of the new life we have through the death and resurrection of Jesus. We've been planted all over the world so that through us, Jesus can spread the sweet fragrance of new and abundant life in him. What does it smell like? Mercy, forgiveness, joy and unconditional love. When we "smell" like Jesus, our neighbors will inhale a breath of fresh air—the essence of Jesus' sacrifice, which transforms lives and offers new hope.

Thank you, Jesus for removing the stench of my sin. Help me bloom as your disciple and spread your fragrance everywhere. Amen.

Sniff: Consider how your words and actions "smell" to others? Are you sharing a whiff of Jesus?

Read: 2 Corinthians 2:14-17

*Sandi Geis
St. Louis, MO*

Saturday, April 7, 2018

Bringing Joy to Children

You are of more value than many sparrows.

Matthew 10:31

On a spring morning I watched two parents and two fledgling red cardinals sitting on the backyard fence. The male parent retrieved a sunflower seed from the feeder and fed the little one. Then the mother cardinal flew to the feeder and brought back a seed for the other baby bird. The young birds were never left alone and unprotected.

We too have been entrusted to share the seed of God's good news with children. The news of God's love and forgiveness will protect them in times of temptation and lift them up when they feel unloved. We love our children, but Jesus loves them even more and invites us to join him in his children's ministry. Sharing stories about Jesus brings joy to children that they will never forget, joy that reaches all the way to heaven.

Lord, bless the sharing of my stories with children. Bless the children, whom you love even more than we do. Amen.

Share: Plan ways to share stories of Jesus and his love with children and adults.

Read: Matthew 19:13-14; Matthew 10:29-31

*Leo Symmank
Seabrook, TX*

Sunday, April 8, 2018

From Doubt to Faith

Stop your doubting and believe.

John 20:27

Like Thomas, we often have our doubts about the reality of God's presence in our lives. Yet Thomas' unbelief changed into belief because of his encounter with Jesus. Faith is that crazy thing that allows us to believe when everything else says "impossible." This account is important because when we encounter Jesus, he can change our doubt into faith. God has overcome the grave, and now God even overcomes those things that lead to our death—disbelief, fear, hatred and narrowness.

We do not have a physical encounter with Jesus as Thomas did, but you and I can be present at those places where Jesus has promised to be present for us. We encounter him as we gather in his name, when we are in his Word and receive his Sacraments. After Thomas' encounter with Jesus, his doubt changed to faith in Jesus as his Lord and God. Don't let your doubts get the best of you. Let Jesus change them.

Lord, turn my doubts into faith. Amen.

Encourage: Comfort those who doubt with the promises of God's Word.

Read: John 20:19-29

*Mike Lutz
Shelby Township, MI*

Monday, April 9, 2018

Lesson in Pruning

Every branch that does bear fruit he prunes, that it may bear more fruit.

John 15:2

I get attached to my plants. I have a hard time cutting off anything green. After the short days of winter, some of my plants get leggy. I've learned that to have healthy, vibrant plants with beautiful blooms for summer, I have to get tough and prune them. I am often amazed later at their transformation and beauty.

Jesus says we are like branches on the vine of himself. Our Father knows when it is time to prune us back on activity that once was fruitful, but that will drain our energy and cease to be effective if we don't stop to rest and abide in Jesus. Situations that may disappoint us could be his wise pruning. Through time in his Word and prayer, he renews and guides us to opportunities for the next season of growth and fruitfulness.

Heavenly Father, help me to grow stronger in Jesus so that I will bear fruit to glorify you. Amen.

Grow: Spend time with God in his Word and in prayer today. Rest in his presence and let him lead you for future fruitfulness.

Read: John 15:1-8; Psalm 62:5-8

*Diane Bahn
Cypress, TX*

Tuesday, April 10, 2018

Fruitful Faith

We ought always to give thanks to God for you, brothers, as is right, because your faith is growing abundantly, and the love of every one of you for one another is increasing.

2 Thessalonians 1:3

Every spring western Michigan is abloom with mile upon mile of orchards. The beautiful blossoms promise a bounty of apples, peaches, pears and cherries. Every farmer knows these mature trees had to grow from tiny seedlings before they could produce fruit. This growth continues into the fruit-bearing years. Without growth, there can be no fruit.

It's the same with Christians. Faith grows through the Word and Sacrament. The fruits of faith won't come without that growth. Faith is not completed by love. Faith alone connects us with God's salvation, but like the trees in the orchard, faith blossoms and bears fruit. Love increases as faith grows.

Help us, Lord, to grow through your Word and Sacraments, that we may bear good fruit for you. Amen.

Investigate: What opportunities are available to you to grow in faith? How will this growth enable you to bear more fruit?

Read: Galatians 5:22-26

*Eileen Ritter
Byron Center, MI*

Wednesday, April 11, 2018

The Gestalt of Us

For the LORD takes pleasure in his people.

Psalm 149:4

Look closely at a forsythia bloom and you will see unattractive yellow scraggly petals clinging to a branch. But when the whole forsythia bush gobsnacks you on a spring morning, the effect is astounding. Yellow never looked so good. I'm hoping that's how God looks at us, taking in the gestalt, the whole of us, and choosing not to see the wrinkles, the sun spots, the infirmities, not to mention the grumpiness and impatience. No, he takes delight in us; he loves us with an everlasting love, and he asks us to look at each other the same way. "I love your gestalt!" he says.

Make my heart big enough, heavenly Father, to accept the whole of others as they are, just like you accept me. Amen.

See: When you look at others, see them as Jesus sees them, with love.

Read: Romans 5:6-8; John 13:31-35

*Sally Beck
Williamsburg, VA*

Thursday, April 12, 2018

Avoiding the Trees

Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths.

Proverbs 3:5-6

I've heard that when skiing down a mountain it's best to avoid looking at the trees. It may seem wise to appraise the trees to avoid running into them, but it seems that when you do this you automatically head straight for them.

This reminds me of wrestling with a problem. The longer I think about it and worry, the larger it looms. Are you facing a problem right now? God encourages us in his Word to stop staring at our worries, and to look instead to him. As we gaze into our heavenly Father's eyes, the problems begin to fade away and our perspective changes. He shows us the way to get down the mountain without crashing!

Dear Lord, I let go of these worries and hand them to you. Forgive me for looking at them so intently and help me renew my focus on you. Amen.

List: Write down anything that is worrying you. Take the list to God in prayer.

Read: Matthew 6:25-34

*Kerry Osborne
Sydney, Australia*

Friday, April 13, 2018

Hope Is a Garden

Since we have such a hope, we are very bold.

2 Corinthians 3:12

Life began in a garden, the sign of God's abundant gifts. That first garden was spoiled when man tried to be like God, but man was not left without hope. We, too, sin, but God still receives us as his own.

A garden is God's therapy. A dear friend, though homebound, ordered plants from a catalog. That is hope. Hope is faith looking forward. The gardener, when planting, does not rush out the next day expecting plants and fruit. The hope is there that we will have those flowers and fruit later to give us joy. When we plant the seed of God's Word, we do not have to weed and water. The Holy Spirit makes the seed grow silently, unseen, in abundance, sometimes unknown to us. In our weakness, pain or loss, "May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing that by the power of the Spirit you may abound in hope" (Romans 15:13).

*Heavenly Father, fill me with joy, peace and hope.
Amen.*

Wait: Plant God's Word. The Spirit will make it grow.

Read: Ephesians 4:4-7; Romans 12:12; Psalm 25:5
Connie Bretscher
Valparaiso, IN

Saturday, April 14, 2018

Aging Out Loud

Even when I am old and gray, do not forsake me, O God, till I declare your power to the next generation.

Psalm 71:18

Remember the old phrase, “Children should be seen and not heard”? There is another phrase running rampant in our society today, not usually stated but often inferred: “Older adults should be seen and not heard.” It is called “ageism,” the stereotype that lessens the value of the elderly and assumes that we are “over the hill,” “too tired to try” and “too old to learn.”

Not so, says the Lord of all ages! The psalmist shouts, “Listen! We elderly still have plenty to say and to share. Do not take us lightly. Do not coddle us. Listen and learn from us!” Join the ranks of older adults who are “aging out loud.” Proclaim God’s love and hope. Encourage others to be involved in both church and community. Be loud! Be bold! Be proclaimers of the faith to all ages!

Lord, instill in us the energy and passion to proclaim our faith to those younger than us. Amen.

Share: Meet with someone younger than yourself to share your joys, your hopes and fears with them. Proclaim God’s hope!

Read: Psalm 71

*Rich Bimler
Bloomington, IL*

Sunday, April 15, 2018

Eternal Spring

I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die.

John 11:25-26

Each season displays the handiwork of our Creator: winter's pure white snow, summer's blue skies and sunshine and autumn's display of brilliant colors. But spring holds special wonder for me, as delicate green sprouts begin to appear on seemingly dead, barren branches. Perhaps spring is God's preview of heaven, where death's darkness becomes the glorious and unending joy he has promised.

Jesus died on the cross. His battered, lifeless body was sealed in the tomb. But death could not contain him, and his resurrection brought life and hope to all believers. Jesus' victory brought the beginning of a new and glorious season that will never end.

Risen Lord, enable me to share the wondrous message of an eternity with you. Amen.

Enjoy: Let God's Word fall on you like a spring shower, so it buds and grows in your mind and conversations.

Read: 1 Corinthians 15; Romans 10:9

*Sharolyn Sander
Lincoln, NE*

Monday, April 16, 2018

To Rust or Renew?

Count it all joy ... when you meet trials of various kinds, for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness.

James 1:2-3

I've seen rusting boats in for repairs at marinas and old boats left to rust in backyards. Some boaters embrace the work of repair—scraping off barnacles and painting, checking for leaks. Others do not.

At times, we may feel like those weathered boats, a bit worn out with too many resting days ahead of us. God does not want us to rust, but to be restored. He wants us to have more adventures as we grow in faith. With the help of the Holy Spirit, we scrape off the barnacles of our prayer life. We talk to God honestly about the regrets and fears that rust our souls. What is stopping us from loving him and others? This spring, be the boater and ask for the Spirit's help to embrace the hard work of repair.

Thank you, God, for helping me to grow in faith and love. Amen.

Restore: Renew your talks with God while repairing items in your home.

Read: Lamentations 5:21

*Catherine A. Welch
Southbury, CT*

Tuesday, April 17, 2018

Bloom in the Desert

The wilderness and the dry land shall be glad; the desert shall rejoice and blossom like the crocus.

Isaiah 35:1

The first crocuses are up and blooming! Seeing the crocuses pushing through the snow brought hope to our family, as it meant the long, cold Minnesota winter was ending. Soon the beauty, fragrance and majesty of God's creation would once again be seen as the daffodils, tulips and hyacinths covered the landscape.

As in the time of Isaiah, many people today are living in a desert filled with unbelief, hatred, prejudice and self-centeredness. As in Isaiah's time, these people need God's message of salvation through Jesus. Throughout your lifetime, God has used you and he is still using you. For many people, your faith is the first crocus in their desert. Let your faith blossom with God's love and forgiveness so that the entire desert may rejoice and blossom abundantly.

*Lord, send your Holy Spirit to help me blossom.
Amen.*

Rejoice: Brighten someone's day with a bouquet of spring flowers.

Read: Isaiah 55:10-13; Matthew 6:28-30

*Stan Torsen
Stewartville, MN*

Wednesday, April 18, 2018

Worrying?

And which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to his span of life?

Matthew 6:27

In his Sermon on the Mount, Jesus turns to another activity that plagues us—worrying. When you stop to think about it, worrying cannot solve a problem, cure a disease or brighten your day. As I listen to my peers as we age, I hear many of them expressing their fears and frustrations, their cares and concerns, their anxieties and agonies, in short, their worries.

When this happens, it is well for us to remember who we are and whose we are: God's special children. Our Father holds us in the palm of his hand. That's his promise. He watches over us. That's his promise, and he brings to pass that which is good for us. That's also his promise. After all, he sent his Son to take care of us and his Spirit to comfort us.

Awesome God, you alone are all powerful and all loving. Overcome our worries through Jesus and the working of your Spirit. Amen.

Practice: List your worries and then take them to the Lord in prayer, asking for patience, direction and hope.

Read: Romans 8:18-27; Romans 11:33-36

*Walter M. Schoedel
Webster Groves, MO*

Thursday, April 19, 2018

Renewed

Though our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day.

2 Corinthians 4:16

“Our outer self is wasting away.” Isn’t that the truth! Our outer selves just do not work quite as well as they used to. Yet as that outer self wastes away, the inner self is growing stronger and brighter, growing in faith through Word and Sacrament. Our eyesight may not be what it once was, but according to our inner selves, “we walk by faith, not by sight” (2 Corinthians 5:7).

As Scripture points out, the present form of this world is passing away (1 Corinthians 7:31), and so are *our* present forms, at least it often feels that way. Yet with sins forgiven through Jesus’ death and resurrection, bright-eyed in faith and growing ever stronger in the Word, we await the day of our Lord’s return when we—and the world—will be made new. Come, Lord Jesus!

Lord Jesus, help us to grow ever stronger in faith and to live in love and service to others as we await your return. Amen.

Practice: Get your inner self in shape through the study of God’s Word.

Read: 2 Corinthians 4:13-18; 2 Corinthians 5:1-10

Carol Geisler
Manchester, MO

Friday, April 20, 2018

Spring Cleaning

But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.

Joshua 24:15

I was just holding a 96-year-old photograph in my hands. My wife's father is a little child in the photograph. A hand-written notation states: "Four generations living in the same house." It takes a lot of love for even one or two generations to live under the same roof!

It's springtime. Maybe you do a lot, or a little, of spring cleaning. It makes no difference. Please go to or recall one room of your home and remember: That room has seen at least one generation of family and friends, maybe more, maybe four. Love from Jesus has happened there. Hugs have been exchanged. Forgiveness has been spoken. Prayers said. Tears of joy shed. Encouragement shared. Gifts given. Faith shared. Got any photographs?

Dear Lord God, thank you for the good things you have given in the rooms of our home. Amen.

Rest: Stop dusting the coffee table. Dust off some memories. Remind others to do the same.

Read: Luke 10:38-42

*Harry Edenfield
Brownstown, MI*

Saturday, April 21, 2018

Grow in Faith

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

1 Corinthians 3:6

We moved into our first house in July, over 40 years ago. What a joy to move from a tiny apartment into a bungalow that sat on over an acre. It even came with a garden in progress. The previous owners had planted it; we continued to care for it by watering it and weeding it. God blessed it with growth and a good crop that we enjoyed.

Like my own faith, I imagine your faith is a lot like that. Your parents or first Sunday School teacher years ago may have planted the seeds for your faith. Your pastors over the years watered it and tended to it. The Holy Spirit who gifted you with faith from those tiny seeds grew your faith.

Lord, thank you for the gift of a living, growing faith. Help me to use it to encourage someone else. Amen.

Tend: Plant seeds of faith or water seeds already planted and watch God bring growth.

Read: 1 Corinthians 3:5-9; 2 Thessalonians 1:1-4

*Terry Weber
Williamsburg, VA*

Sunday, April 22, 2018

Eternally Green

But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

2 Peter 3:18

No, I don't have a green thumb! My mom planted, watered, fertilized and prayed over her garden each year. I remember delicious food yields. But her daughter missed the gene! So, when a dear friend gifted me with an orchid, I followed all the scripted watering and fertilizing advice. I also decided to plant the orchid in the ground. My friend was incredulous. "It's growing? It's blooming?" Yes, I assured her, even sending photos to prove it.

When I look at this orchid, I'm reminded of how much God loves me! Through the waters of Baptism, God made me his own. I continue to grow as his Holy Spirit waters and fertilizes me through Word and Sacrament. When I wilt, he strengthens me. When I die, I know where I'll be—in his heavenly embrace, eternally alive, eternally green!

How blessed am I, good Father, to know where I'll spend eternity! Amen.

Recall: Think about times of growth and wilting in your life. Celebrate God's faithfulness at all times.

Read: John 15:1-8; 1 Corinthians 3:6-7

Louise Schini Weber
Fort Meyers, FL

Monday, April 23, 2018

Tiny Miracle Package

The kingdom of heaven is like a grain of mustard seed.

Matthew 13:31

In spring, many experience the miracle of a seed planted in their gardens. Such a tiny package, yet inside is God-given potential to produce much fruit. Awesome!

Jesus' ministry had a humble beginning: a babe in a manger, an uneducated rabbi with a small following, a martyred Messiah. Yet his rule grew so mighty that the forces of hell could not stop its outreach. Jesus' Gospel can appear to be very humble as well, simply words. Yes, but inside there is God's power to work faith and deliver the promised goods. One sermon can change a life. One word of encouragement can enable a struggling Christian to persevere. One final word from the Messiah can raise up a dead body and make it fit for everlasting life with him in glory!

Lord, plant your message in my life. Help me grow and become full of life. Amen.

Encourage: Do you know someone needing a word of encouragement in Christ? The Word can make a big difference for them!

Read: Romans 1:1-17; 1 Corinthians 15:42-58

*Ted Zimmerman
Napa, CA*

Tuesday, April 24, 2018

Leave the Light On

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

A familiar motel chain has the motto: “We’ll leave the light on for you!” Do you feel sometimes that the lights are out in your life and you are wandering in the dark? Do you find that you are forever bumping into things, or people, that leave you bruised or battered?

That is not the will of the Father for you. Jesus the Messiah tells us, “I am the light of the world” (John 8:12). He dispelled the darkness by enduring the darkness on the cross. He overcame the darkness of sin, death and the devil and shone brightly at the dawn of a new day. Jesus, the Light of the world, recharges your dead batteries and encourages you to “let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.” Be sure to leave your light on!

Eternal light, praise, honor and thanks for being the saving Light for the world. Amen.

Shine: What circumstance do you need to shine your light on today?

Read: Psalm 119:105-112

*Jerrold Lloyd Nichols
Fort Wayne, IN*

Wednesday, April 25, 2018

Walk With Jesus

They said to each other, “Did not our hearts burn within us while he talked to us on the road, while he opened to us the Scriptures?”

Luke 24:32

The same people who walked with Jesus long ago wrote down their experiences. That is what we read in the New Testament. It’s an eyewitness account to history, or better yet, *his story*. We can one day thank Jesus’ disciples for writing these inspired truths for future generations. We can also thank them for their faithfulness and obedience to God, even in times of persecution.

How blessed we are to be able to read their writings today! As we study Holy Scripture, we are walking with Jesus through the inspired words of those who wrote down the good news. Let us share that Word with future generations so they, too, can walk with Jesus.

Heavenly Father, thank you for the gift of your Word. Help us to learn of Jesus and strengthen our faith so that we might persevere in times of trouble. We pray in Jesus’ name. Amen.

Share: Tell someone how God led you to his life-changing Word.

Read: 2 Timothy 3:14-17; John 20:30-31

*Kay Charon
Glen Cove, NY*

Thursday, April 26, 2018

Escape

How shall we escape if we neglect such a great salvation?

Hebrews 2:3

Due to the ravages of a hurricane, our home sustained damage to the screened-in patio. Two of the large expanses of screen were totally gone, allowing insects to enter freely. I observed a large dragonfly bouncing about on the inside of the patio roof, desperately seeking to escape. I used a soft broom in an attempt to very gently guide it to the open areas, but to no avail. The next morning, it was dead on the patio floor. I asked myself why it couldn't see the giant openings.

I asked myself why I often can't see the giant openings of forgiveness spoken about in God's Word, even when someone is trying to direct me. Instead, I continue to attempt to escape my sins, shortcomings and bad habits, relying on my own efforts. My attempts are futile, but God in his grace leads me to the wide open window of his forgiveness.

Father, help me to see the escape you have provided. Amen.

Watch: Think about how many things entrap us, often before we are aware of them.

Read: 1 Corinthians 10:13

*Gloria Doty
Ft. Wayne, IN*

Friday, April 27, 2018

The Eyes of Your Heart

I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in his holy people.

Ephesians 1:18

Many say, “Seeing is believing,” as if only your eyes see what is real. What we can see with our hearts is much more real and more valuable. By his death and resurrection, Jesus opened the eyes of our hearts. He gives us the faith to see what God is doing in our lives and to see the “glorious inheritance” that gives us hope in all circumstances of life.

Too often the perils and problems our eyes see cloud the truths seen by the eyes of our hearts. When that happens, remember the deeds and promises of our Savior, and the Holy Spirit will open the eyes of your heart and help you grow in faith and in the love of Jesus.

Open the eyes of my heart, Lord. Help me see that death is the doorway to the glorious inheritance Jesus has prepared for me. Amen.

See: Look at events today with the eyes of faith.

Read: 2 Corinthians 5:6-9; John 20:26-29

*Paul Scheidt
Chesterfield, MO*

Saturday, April 28, 2018

Wake Up!

Wake up, O sleeper, rise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you.

Ephesians 5:14

Spring ushers in new growth. How exciting it is to see the plants and the trees wake up from winter's sleep! The first hint of that yellow-green new growth of spring always thrills me. Nature echoes the movement of God in Christ Jesus. Jesus, who rose from the dead, brings us along with him into life.

We can get down. We can mourn. It may seem like we have a rain cloud over our heads. Jesus says, "I woke up from the dead to give you life. My life in you overcomes your mourning, your feeling low. My life shines on you like the sun in the sky." No, this is not pie in the sky! This is truth, God's truth, about his love for you. God radiates that love onto you today. It will warm your soul. It will make you smile.

Holy Jesus, help me to live wide awake! Amen.

Walk: Look for spring's new growth and give thanks to the Lord.

Read: Isaiah 60:1-3

*Don Schatz
Kenmore, WA*

Sunday, April 29, 2018

Idol Worship?

Let us also lay aside every weight ... looking to Jesus ... who for the joy set before him endured the cross.

Hebrews 12:1-2

Recently, I read that dwelling on a troublesome issue is like having a mental idol. And I had just commented on my chronic back pain. Wow! Anything that so engages us and focuses our attention away from Jesus can be like an idol.

I found Hebrews 12 to be a helpful antidote. There I am reminded that Jesus endured suffering because he focused on the joy to come, and we are to follow his example and focus on him. I may not be running any races literally (verse 1), but I chuckled to read “lift your drooping hands and strengthen your weak knees” (verse 12), which hits closer to home. That reminds me to lift up my heart and bend my spiritual knees in prayer—for myself and for others!

Lord Jesus, keep me focused on you. Amen.

Focus: When you focus on your troubles, turn your thoughts and words to Jesus and pray!

Read: Hebrews 12:1-3, 12-13; Matthew 11:28-29

*Diane Bahn
Cypress, TX*

Monday, April 30, 2018

Cross-Eyed

For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross.

Colossians 1:19-20

We know that God is perfect in every way. But his vision? He is undeniably cross-eyed! Anyone who observes us sees immediately that we are sinful. We put ourselves first in everything, striking out at others with hurtful words and actions. We avoid opportunities to help our neighbors. God hates sin and has promised to punish sinners. And yet, when he looks at us, he sees us through the cross of his Son Jesus. Because of the cross, he sees us as redeemed, justified by grace through faith.

What about your vision? How do you respond to your neighbor's sin? Are you cross-eyed, too, forgiving as God has forgiven you?

Forgive us our trespasses, Lord, as we forgive those who trespass against us, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

Imagine: What if we could look at the people around us through "Gospel Glasses," forgiving them as God has forgiven us for Jesus' sake?

Read: Matthew 18:23-35

*Eileen Ritter
Byron Center, MI*

Tuesday, May 1, 2018

Bearing God's Gift

For to us a child is born, to us a son is given.

Isaiah 9:6

In the spring, I like to sit on my bench and admire the bluebonnets in my front yard flower bed. It is the Texas state flower, but in my meditation I think of Mary, the mother of Jesus. Artists have painted her dressed in blue. That is why bluebonnets remind me of her. I have heard many ministers and teachers speak of the Virgin Mary giving birth to Baby Jesus, but have heard only one devotion on the Son of God's nine months in Mary's womb.

I am awed by God's long stay in the womb of one of his own creatures. What a gift Mary was in God's plan for our redemption! What an honor for Mary. With Jesus alive in my heart and life, I can give birth to the story of God's love and forgiveness and share it with people I meet. What a privilege! To God be the glory!

Father, help us "bear one another's burdens," and so be Christ's gift to each other. Amen.

Ask: Pray for someone you know who is enduring troubles or sickness.

Read: Philippians 2:1-13

*Leo Symmank
Seabrook, TX*

Wednesday, May 2, 2018

The Greatest

Now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; but the greatest of these is love.

1 Corinthians 13:13

The other day, I reflected on what I'd accomplished in my lifetime. I thought about incidents with a specific person or group.

In Paul's word to the Corinthians, he names love as the greatest. I was taught that serving another person is the same as loving Jesus. Then I thought of Mary of Bethany as she anointed Jesus. Is there anything like that for me—loving Jesus in a person-to-person way? I pictured myself composing a poem especially for him, intentionally singing a song with a CD to him (even though my voice isn't so good these days) or writing "Dedicated to Jesus" on a photo of myself. When my granddaughter drove off in the car, I blew kisses. Could I do that to Jesus? I might feel silly, but it's person-to-person!

God, you created my capacity to love. Increase the boundaries of my heart that I may love you even more. Amen.

Give: Determine ways to show Jesus your love.

Read: John 6:1-9; John 12:1-3; Matthew 25:34-40

*Julaine Kammrath
Aurora, IL*

Thursday, May 3, 2018

When the Winds Blow

But God's firm foundation stands.

2 Timothy 2:19

Warm currents chase away the chilly air and snow gives way to rain. While we admire the daffodils and tulips, we also know that the transition can be as violent as tornadoes. Midwesterners know the drill—listen for sirens, get the weather radios, go to the basement and take cover.

As Christians, we also know the drill for our souls. We study and listen to God's Word to strengthen our faith, we gather at the Lord's Supper and we take cover in Jesus. By dying on the cross, Jesus made himself our safe place and the foundation on which we build. Nothing on earth guarantees our survival in times of danger, but Jesus is a hundred percent reliable, even if a tornado hits.

Thank you, God, for knowing us more than we know ourselves and providing us a safe place in Jesus through all kinds of weather. Amen.

Look: What place in our homes, or on this earth, is totally safe? Look to the cross, and the answer is always there.

Read: Psalm 121; Matthew 7:24-27

Judy Scherr
Lemay, MO

Friday, May 4, 2018

Faith

That according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith.

Ephesians 3:16-17

Sea oats grow and thrive on the seashore, despite harsh coastal conditions. Their delicate leaves brush the sand with deft strokes as the grasses bend in relentless winds. Yet the roots hold firm, and the stalks resiliently spring back to full height, maintaining their fragile beauty.

The impact of events on our lives is like those of the changing coastal winds. Our faith, like the roots of the sea oats that anchor them to the sand dunes, help us to defy the changing winds that blow our way, binding us to the promises of God's Word.

Lord, keep me rooted and grounded in love so that my faith will be sustained. Amen.

Recall: Remember times past when the Lord kept you strong in faith. Trust him to help you in the future.

Read: Hebrews 11:1; Romans 1:17

*Annie Laura Smith
Huntsville, AL*

Saturday, May 5, 2018

Only Our Life

Make the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil.

Ephesians 5:16

How long will I live? It's a question that never quite escapes us. And what can I do with the time I have left? It's very hard to hold onto the present. How the hours and days slip away! Every second of the future will be part of the past—in just one second. Scripture speaks of the average length of a person's life: 70 years, or maybe even 80 (Psalm 90:10). If I am 70, I have lived 25,550 days; if 80, then 29,200 days. How have those days been used?

What can we do for Christ, the one who gave his all for us? He himself said, "As you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me" (Matthew 25:40). Feed the hungry. Clothe the unclothed. Visit the sick and prisoners. Seize the moment while it's here. Who needs your help today?

Take my hands, Lord, and let them move with the urgency of your love. Amen.

Encourage: Comfort, listen to or sing to someone in distress.

Read: Psalm 90; Ephesians 5:15-21

*Don Hoeferkamp
St. Louis, MO*

Sunday, May 6, 2018

Empathy

[Jesus] was deeply moved in his spirit and greatly troubled.

John 11:33

The novel *To Kill a Mockingbird* defines empathy through the words of attorney Atticus Finch to his daughter: “You never really understand a person until you consider things from his point of view ... until you climb into his skin and walk around in it” (Chapter 3).

Jesus shows empathy for those who mourn the death of Lazarus (John 11:33-36). He shows ultimate empathy by “climbing into our skin” (John 1:14) to live, die and rise for us.

Christ calls his followers to be empathic, loving others as we love ourselves. Aging blesses us with a wealth of life experiences to do just that, including encounters with many people. God gives us empathy to share and model for those around us.

Lord, you walked in my skin. Help me lovingly do so for others. Amen.

Practice: Listen carefully to three people this week. Seek to understand life from their perspective.

Read: John 11:17-44; Matthew 9:36-38

*Tom Ahlersmeyer
Fort Wayne, IN*

Monday, May 7, 2018

Refuge!

God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.

Psalm 46:1

With a major hurricane headed towards our house in Fort Myers, Florida, we decided to evacuate. Cars of fellow evacuees lined every northbound highway for hours, but we finally arrived at our “storm home” in Atlanta. We were very grateful to the friends who had welcomed us to find refuge from the storm.

Jesus said, “Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest” (Matthew 11:28). Jesus calmed the wind and the waves, healed the sick and restored sight to the blind. He sacrificed his life in payment for sin to save us. And he promises to be with us always. What comfort and strength he gives us in our time of need!

Thank you, Father, for being our refuge. Help us to trust you at all times. Amen.

Trust: Read God’s promises and his acts of deliverance in the Bible. Ask him to be your refuge each day.

Read: Psalm 46:1-11; Matthew 11:25-30

*Steve Hess
Ft. Myers, FL*

Tuesday, May 8, 2018

Stitches

You knitted me together in my mother's womb.

Psalm 139:13

I was taught to knit as a young child. I learned to follow a pattern, carefully form each stitch and count the stitches. I learned that although there are many individual stitches in a garment, I needed to pay attention to each, because every stitch plays an important part in the finished product. Each affects how the other stitches fit together.

It's the same with us. We are God's creation, knit together in our mother's womb, created in a certain way according to God's perfect plan. There are no mistakes in that plan. Every stitch, even the not-so-perfect stitches of my personality, are created for his glory. My past experiences from before I experienced his grace, my shyness, even the limp caused by arthritis, play a part. Each stitch can be used by God for his kingdom.

Heavenly Father, thank you that I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Remind me to use all parts for your glory. Amen.

Encourage: Share with someone how you experienced God's grace through trouble.

Read: Psalm 139:13-14; Ephesians 2:8-10

*Lynne Waite Chapman
Fort Wayne, IN*

Wednesday, May 9, 2018

Such Love!

*As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you.
Abide in my love.*

John 15:9

In your mind's eye, when you picture Jesus, what do you see? Do you see a scowl or a smile? When Jesus looks at you, what does he see? Ponder this awhile. Then remember the rich young man who came to Jesus with a question. "Jesus, looking at him loved him" (Mark 10:21). Remember Martha and her family. Jesus knew and loved them by name (John 11:5). Remember "when Jesus knew that his hour had come ... having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end" (John 13:1).

When Jesus looks at you, he sees you through the lens of his love. Take heart. Trust his love for you. Love him in return.

Lord Jesus, your love for sinners took you to the cross and open tomb. Strengthen my faith to trust such love! Amen.

Give: Share a smile, a hug, a word of encouragement. Reach others with the love Jesus has planted in your heart.

Read: 1 John 4:9-11; Romans 8:31-39

*Donna J. Streufert
South Bend, IN*

Thursday, May 10, 2018

In Your Hearts

In your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy.

1 Peter 3:15

In 325 A.D., the Council of Nicaea decreed that believers should not kneel on Sundays or from Easter through Pentecost. Kneeling was a posture of humility and did not rightly reflect the joy and triumph of Jesus' resurrection. The decree was not universally followed, but if you have difficulty kneeling, it may sound like a good idea. In worship we stand to praise God, sit to learn from his Word and sometimes kneel to pray or perhaps to receive Holy Communion.

Our bodies may no longer allow us to participate easily, if at all, in the various postures of worship, but we *can* join in the ancient response still used in liturgies today: "Lift up your hearts. We lift them to the Lord." In our hearts, we bow in humility or stand in triumph to honor our crucified and risen Lord, who "looks on the heart" (1 Samuel 16:7), and sees and accepts our praise.

*Lord, hear and accept the praise of my heart.
Amen.*

*Praise: Standing, sitting, kneeling or lying down,
offer your prayers and praise to God our Savior.*

Read: Psalm 95:6-7; John 4:19-26

*Carol Geisler
Manchester, MO*

Friday, May 11, 2018

Hands

You open your hand; you satisfy the desire of every living thing.

Psalm 145:16

One of my favorite pictures is that of my 101-year-old mother-in-law holding my baby granddaughter. Mom is looking at her great-granddaughter with love and the baby is looking back unafraid. But the very best part of the picture is their hands. Tiny plump baby fingers are grasping the gnarled finger of the elderly woman.

Even though these two people are a century apart in age, they are both children of God. And God holds them in *his* hands, protecting them and caring for them. God loves them and all of us so much that he grants us life eternal through Jesus' death and resurrection. God truly opens his hand and satisfies all our desires.

Lord, thank you for being with me through every stage of life. Thank you for holding me in your almighty hands and satisfying all my needs. Amen.

Help: Reach out your hand to someone that needs a friend.

Read: Psalm 145

*Jeanette Dall
Batavia, IL*

Saturday, May 12, 2018

Perky People Refresh

Strive together with me in your prayers ... so that by God's will I may come to you with joy and be refreshed in your company.

Romans 15:30-32

When the apostle Paul felt dragged down, he turned to his fellow members in Christ for what he needed: other people who shared his love and passion for the work of Jesus in the world. He didn't complain about how bad things were or pout in the corner. He just asked for what he needed: refreshment.

It's OK for you to do that, too. Don't suffer silently or alone. When you need to be perked up, speak up and go to the perky people in Christ. That's where you're certain to find the tonic you need: refreshment.

Jesus, perk me up with your powerful presence. Help me seek out brothers and sisters in Christ whose faith and love will restore my wilted self. Amen.

Give and take: If you're wilted, find a perky person. If you're all perked up, reach out to someone wilted.

Read: Romans 15:30-33; Philemon 17-21; 1 Corinthians 16:17-18

*Mike May
Kansas City, KS*

Sunday, May 13, 2018

Be Still

Be still, and know that I am God.

Psalm 46:10

I wore my hair in braids until I was six years old. Every morning, 365 days a year, my mother would braid my hair. She was not a careless braider: she made sure every wisp of hair was tucked into the overlapping strands. I sat with my eyes forward ... most of the time. Occasionally, I would be distracted by something and turn my head. I can still hear her saying, "Be still."

Many places in the Bible we hear the command to be still. Jesus didn't tell the waves to relax or take a time out. He said, "Be still." There is a difference. We can relax while still doing something or we can stop working for a bit but continue to worry and fret. During our devotion or study time, we would benefit greatly if we would practice being perfectly still, physically and emotionally, as much as possible. Let God's peace soak into your very being.

Heavenly Father, grant us the ability to be still in your presence. Amen.

Challenge: Practice being absolutely still for a short time until it becomes a daily habit.

Read: Zechariah 2:13; Mark 4:39

*Gloria Doty
Ft. Wayne, IN*

Monday, May 14, 2018

What Did You Learn?

So neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God who gives the growth.

1 Corinthians 3:7

A high schooler asked her mom, “What’s it like having an awesome daughter?” Her mother calmly replied, “I don’t know. Why don’t you ask your grandmother?”

Regardless of our age, we continue to grow in the Lord. So what will we learn today from the Lord? We might learn that our families continue to be a source of joy and laughter, as the above story indicates! Growing today might mean that we will take the time to listen to those younger than ourselves, and then respond appropriately as a model and a mentor. Our growing might mean continuing our study of the Scriptures, book by book. It might even mean that we learn once again that the gifts of laughter and love and learning are methods that our Lord uses to encourAGE and support people of all ages, including awesome daughters, mothers and grandmothers!

Lord, keep “learning” us that you are an awesome God. Amen.

Encourage: Tell those special people in your life that they are awesome, too!

Read: Titus 2:1-8

*Rich Bimler
Bloomington, IL*

Tuesday, May 15, 2018

As You Get Older

With long life I will satisfy him and show him my salvation.

Psalm 91:16

Someone once commented that we all desire to live long, but none of us wants to be old. Living seems to be filled with promise. Being old seems to hold a lot more uncertainty. The way life was is set in stone. The future is filled with unknowns.

Yet God wants us to remember that it is he who brings us into a long life, and it will be life that is full and satisfying. As we get older, so many things we simply accepted before become so precious to us. The love of those close to us is cherished even more deeply. To be there for another becomes so much more important. And our relationship with Jesus becomes more important than anything, and keeps us in its hope and promise. When God brings us into old age, he turns long life into hope-full living.

Dear Father, thank you for filling our lives with your presence and for the promise of your salvation. Amen.

Remember: Write down the ways God brings you fullness and joy as you age.

Read: Psalms 90 and 91

*Lionel Otto
Adelaide, Australia*

Wednesday, May 16, 2018

Love Is the Greatest

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

1 Corinthians 13:13

Why would Paul say this? Love truly is the greatest, because when we think of the ultimate love, we think of Jesus and his unconditional love for us. You see, when we are in heaven, we will no longer need faith and hope because we will be in the awesome presence of Jesus, the embodiment of love. Jesus is the one who shows us the kind of love that accepts people the way they are. We will no longer be envious of others who seem to have more than we do. We will not think of ourselves as better than others. We will see individuals as Jesus sees them. He loves with a love that can love the sinner though he doesn't like the sin. Let his ultimate love for you lead you as you live your life each day.

Lord Jesus, show me how to love as you love me. Amen.

Share: Show the love of Jesus by helping those in need.

Read: 1 Corinthians 13

*Mike Lutz
Shelby Township, MI*

Thursday, May 17, 2018

Had We Known

[The owner] will rent the vineyard to other tenants, who will give him his share of the crop at harvest time.

Matthew 21:41

“If we had only known,” the vineyard tenants may have commented. They had decided they were owners, not renters, when the servants and even the son came to collect the fruits of the harvest. How did they come to that conclusion? A comment by Garrison Keillor gives us of a glimpse of what the tenants’ subconsciously knew: “Some luck lies in not getting what you thought you wanted, but getting what you have, which once you have it you may be smart enough to see it in what you would have wanted ... had you known.”

In our Lord’s world there is no “luck.” Everything occurs according to his gracious plan and promise, but some of us have the insight to know that what we currently have is enough and more than enough. We have our Lord Jesus, and we, by his grace, will bring forth the fruits of faith.

O Lord, bring forth in us the fruits of faith. Amen.

Grow: What fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23) will you work on today?

Read: Matthew 21:33-46

*Gordon Beck
Williamsburg, VA*

Friday, May 18, 2018

Older and Wiser

*The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom,
and the knowledge of the Holy One is insight.*

Proverbs 9:10

With age comes wisdom, and experience produces insight. At least that's what I tell my adult children when I want them to listen to my advice. Yet, so often I realize my limitations, not only in giving them good counsel, but as I make decisions and handle various situations every day.

For trusted wisdom, we all must look to One older and wiser—the Everlasting God, who promises to impart his wisdom to us through his Son, Jesus. Looking to Jesus and not ourselves, our minds are opened to God's truth, which gives us insight into his purposes.

The beginning of wisdom doesn't start at a certain age, but with humble reverence to the God of the ages, who equips us to walk in his ways and share his good Word with others.

Thank you, Jesus, for sharing with me the wisdom of God. Help me to seek you in all things. Amen.

Wise up: Before getting up each morning, ask Jesus to give you wisdom for the day.

Read: John 15:15; John 16:12-15; James 1:5

*Sandi Geis
St. Louis, MO*

Saturday, May 19, 2018

Enough!

Be still, and know that I am God.

Psalm 46:10

As we grow older, many of us can recall both the joys and the challenges of teaching Sunday School. My wife and I still chuckle about one of her memories. Having finished teaching a lesson on the second coming of Christ, she asked the class, “What do you think Jesus will say when he returns?” One little girl raised her hand and said, “Please sit down and be quiet!”

While it was not what my wife expected, this answer was the same message that God gave to Israel: “Be still, and know that I am God.” God was saying, “Enough! Stop it! Listen and be at peace, for I have a plan for your salvation.” That plan of salvation was the birth, death and resurrection of his Son Jesus. Perhaps today God still says to us, “Enough! That’s enough time on Facebook, on Twitter or texting. Be still and know that I am God.”

Lord, help me to set more time aside for prayer and your Word. Amen.

Unplug: Set limits on your use of social media.

Read: Philippians 4:8-9; 1 Thessalonians 5:12-24

*Stan Tordsen
Stewartville, MN*

Sunday, May 20, 2018

What Will I Say?

And I have put my words in your mouth and covered you in the shadow of my hand.

Isaiah 51:16

A friend shared shocking news with me recently about her family. I didn't know how to respond! Do you sometimes hesitate to approach someone in need, because you don't know what to say? We can trust that God will provide the words.

On Pentecost, the Spirit empowered those present with words they had never spoken before. Jesus instructed his disciples, "It is not you who speak, but it is the Spirit of your Father speaking through you" (Matthew 10:20).

When you feel yourself hesitating to reach out because you lack confidence to articulate comfort, pray for inspiration. Ask God to speak through you to bring words of encouragement and hope.

Lord, fill me with your words of wisdom, comfort and encouragement. Amen.

Contact: Call or write someone for whom you are praying. Ask the Holy Spirit to speak through you.

Read: Matthew 10:20; Luke 12:12

*Lisa Heule
Littleton, CO*

Monday, May 21, 2018

Boom Times

And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved.

Acts 2:47

Events around Pentecost set the early Christian Church off with a bang. Peter delivers an impassioned sermon about Jesus, the long-prophesied Messiah. When the Jewish crowds hear the truth, they are “cut to the heart” and implore, “Brothers, what shall we do?” (Acts 2:37). With hearts accused by the Law, many are ready to receive the Gospel: “Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins” (Acts 2:38).

In one day about 3,000 people are saved, kicking off a period of phenomenal growth, with the Lord adding to their number every day. These boom times begin with this priority: “And they devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching” (Acts 2:42). Early believers’ devotion to the Gospel lays a solid foundation. That same first-things-first foundation still exists today for the Church—and in the heart of each true believer.

Continue, Lord, to bless and grow your Church wherever the Gospel is preached. Amen.

Prioritize: Prize the Gospel truth above all else.

Read: Acts 2:42-47; Ephesians 2:19-22

*Marj Maynard
Billings, MO*

Tuesday, May 22, 2018

Calming Presence

See that you do not despise one of these little ones.

Matthew 18:10

You may have witnessed a little child acting up during worship. Parents are frustrated; congregational members become uneasy. Suddenly an individual, maybe a teenager or a person of some maturity, comes to the unruly child and with a smile and whispers in the little one's ear. No, the words are not threatening, for the child smiles and settles down. Soon the child anticipates the calming presence of the individual. A bond of loving trust is established.

Actually, that is a reflection of our Lord's relationship with us. We unruly children want nothing to do with the Lord God. Our sinful lives reveal our godless nature. Through the Scriptures, the Holy Spirit whispers in our hearts, revealing the unfathomable love of God for us. The Spirit opens our hearts to receive the gift of faith in Jesus our Redeemer. Now we anticipate the calming presence of Jesus, trusting that he works all things together for good for the benefit of his children.

Lord, embrace us in your loving care. Amen.

Look: Be ready to assist the little children.

Read: Matthew 18:1-6, 10-14

*David Bernthal
Juliette, GA*

Wednesday, May 23, 2018

Give Thanks

Give thanks in all circumstances.

1 Thessalonians 5:18

I got the call to help those in need after the wild-fires in California began because I'm a trained Red Cross "RWTC" (Ready When the Time Comes) volunteer. When I talked with people in the shelter where I was deployed, they would inevitably begin with "Thank you!" It never failed to surprise me. Not words about length of stay, food, sleeping arrangements or even loss, but "Thank you!" What witnesses they were!

Throughout the day, I asked God to bless my words and to bless the families with whom I was working. St. Paul's words strengthened and comforted me: "Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God" (Philippians 4:6). I did; he answered!

I am thankful that you enable me to be your heart, hands and feet, good Father. Amen.

Remember: Recall a time you were surprised by someone's "Thank you!"

Read: Genesis 8; Daniel 6; Psalm 9

*Louise Schini Weber
Fort Myers, FL*

Thursday, May 24, 2018

Send Me

Now may our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God our Father, who loved us and gave us eternal comfort and good hope through grace, comfort your hearts and establish them in every good work and word.

2 Thessalonians 2:16-17

Matthew's gospel traces Jesus' ministry from his birth to his calling of disciples and his teaching of what it means to live in the kingdom of God.

Then Jesus turns to his disciples and points out the critical need for workers to share all they have learned and experienced while walking with Jesus. "Pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest," Jesus tells them (Matthew 9:38). Then Jesus sends the disciples out to do what he himself has done. The disciples become the answer to their own prayer!

As we grow in faith and love for the lost and helpless, we begin to see that we, too, are laborers in God's harvest. What a calling!

*Lord, send me to share your love for the lost.
Amen.*

Labor: What planting and tending is needed in your family or community to ensure an abundant spiritual harvest for the Lord?

Read: Matthew 9:35-38

*Donna J. Streufert
South Bend, IN*

Friday, May 25, 2018

Tell the Neighborhood

I will sing to the Lord all my life.

Psalm 104:33

We loved a recent video of our six-year-old grandson, *loudly* singing original songs of praise from the backyard swing. Our daughter said he was “taking the neighborhood to church” for a good twenty minutes. He boomed out thanks and praise for family, friends and all creation, with refrains of “Jesus loves us! He is always with us!”

Are you “singing” to *your* neighbors? Early believers were devoted to teaching, fellowship, sharing meals and prayer. Your backyard fence or local coffee shop may provide just the place to listen, share and relate to your community. Ask God to bless you with understanding ears and encouraging words. Invite new friends to worship or church activities. Don’t be shy about sharing the joy you have in Jesus; the song in your heart will always be a blessing!

Lord, inspire us to boldly proclaim the good news we know in you. Amen.

Sing: Make a joyful noise in the car, in the shower or from the middle of your own backyard.

Read: 1 Peter 3:15-16; Psalm 105:2

Sharolyn Sander
Lincoln, NE

Saturday, May 26, 2018

My Word

So shall my word be that goes out from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty.

Isaiah 55:11

Growing up, I remember hearing discussions about the Gideon Society that put Bibles in hotels. There were always two sides, the “What a wonderful idea” side and the “Totally inappropriate” side. Surprise! In our current home away from home, I found a Gideon Bible. I was curious.

The introductory pages are filled with questions and biblical answers, most of which seemed reasonably appropriate to me. The last of the introductory lists was an assortment of John 3:16 in twenty-seven languages.

Look through the drawers in your next hotel room or encourage a friend who might be traveling to do so. If there is a Gideon Bible, check it out and pray that its words might enlighten a traveler or two.

Thank you, Lord, for sending out your Scriptures in so many ways. Encourage me to be one of your helpers. Amen.

Ask: If there is no Bible in a hotel you visit, ask someone at the desk to provide them.

Read: Isaiah 55

*Lois Scheer
San Diego, CA*

Sunday, May 27, 2018

Winsome Joy

Restore to me the joy of your salvation.

Psalm 51:12

The story is told of an agnostic who argued that he didn't believe Christianity because it couldn't be true. If it were true, every church and every Christian would be passionate to share the Gospel with everyone else. And they would do so filled with joy. But he seldom, if ever, experienced that with Christians. Ouch!

So when others meet us, can they conclude we are among those who have the joy of salvation? Life can be hard. But God's loving presence, even in the midst of grief, is sweet. The saying is still true: The faith is more caught than taught. The last thing the world needs is another long-faced Christian. We all need King David's prayer: "Restore to me the joy of your salvation."

O Lord, may Paul's words ring true in our lives. Fill us "with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit," we may abound in hope (Romans 15:13). Amen.

Comfort: Visit someone who is hurting. Comfort him or her with God's love.

Read: Philippians 4:4-5; Nehemiah 8:9-12

*Ron Weidler
Batavia, IL*

Monday, May 28, 2018

What the Gospel Asks

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

Ephesians 2:10

German soldiers occupied Assisi, Italy, during World War II. Despite their presence, hundreds of Jews fled to Assisi to escape persecution in the city where St. Francis set the standard of caring for others. The citizens sheltered these refugees and no lives were lost.

Years later, Father Don Aldo Brunacci, who was secretary to the bishop, visited Washington, D.C. While he was there, someone asked why they risked their lives for a few hundred Jews. He replied, "It is what the Gospel asks a Christian to do." We receive the same message today. Helping others is what the Gospel asks us to do.

Lord, open my eyes to your presence that I might be more aware of the need for assistance of those around me. Amen.

Watch: Look for those around you who may need assistance. How can you share Christ's love with them?

Read: Matthew 25:35-40

*Annie Laura Smith
Huntsville, AL*

Tuesday, May 29, 2018

Connect, Grow, Live

Grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

2 Peter 3:18

Our church's mission statement is "Connect, Grow, Live." Our members are encouraged to connect to God and his people, to grow in faith and love and to live in service and sharing. We connect to God in Sunday morning worship and in reading his Word in private devotion time and group Bible study. We connect to his people in Christian fellowship opportunities and take what we learn to connect to the community. Through these discipleship efforts, our faith grows, as does our love for God and others, which equips us to serve in the community and share our faith and other blessings. We do all this to support our vision statement. We connect, grow and live so that all may know the love of Jesus.

Lord, connect me to those around me so that I can use my faith and your love to serve others. Amen.

Remember: Connect, grow, live!

Read: Ephesians 3:14-21; Colossians 2:6-7

*Terry Weber
Williamsburg, VA*

Wednesday, May 30, 2018

My Fake Fingernails

You will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.

John 8:32

This week I went to a salon to have my acrylic fingernails removed. For the past year I've enjoyed having fingers adorned with dazzling shades of purple, pink and crimson. People admired my pristine nails, not realizing that they were imposters. I would accept the compliments, pretending my fake fingernails were my own. Now, exposed again to the light of day, my own nails are modest, short and brittle, yet they are uniquely mine.

It can be tempting to present a false self to the world, to wear an impressive mask rather than reveal our true self. Yet God urges us to be authentic and truthful in all that we do. Instead of lying, he encourages us to be open and honest. Looking at my imperfect nails today, I'm reminded that God loves me just as I am and never requires me to cover myself with falsehood.

Dear Lord, please show me areas of my life where I can be more authentic or truthful and grant me the courage to be more open and honest. Amen.

Remember: God loves you just as you are.

Read: Ephesians 4:25; James 5:16

*Kerry Osborne
Sydney, Australia*

Thursday, May 31, 2018

Paul's Discovery

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

Philippians 1:21

Have you ever thought about Paul's circumstances when he writes his joy-filled letter to the believers in Philippi? He is in prison, probably under house arrest for two years! With limitations, constantly watched by a Roman guard, and facing an uncertain future—life or death at the hands of an unpredictable Roman emperor—Paul, in the closing years of his life, articulates a clear spiritual discovery: “For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.” He has known Jesus as the crucified and risen Savior since the Damascus road. But now, perhaps because of his dire situation, he rejoices in Christ whether he lives or dies.

What are your current circumstances in life? Limitations of declining health, limited mobility, financial or family struggles, loneliness, grieving or an uncertain future in this world? Might Paul's discovery be yours, as comfort and joy? “For me to live is Christ and to die is gain.”

*Lord, thanks for your comfort in life and in death.
Amen.*

Comfort: Share your discovery with someone hurting this week.

Read: Philippians 1:1-7, 19-26

*Stephen J. Carter
Oakville, MO*

Friday, June 1, 2018

Who Am I?

Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, “Who do people say that the Son of Man is?”

Matthew 16:13

A person’s reputation is a precious possession, worth more than silver or gold. Each of us is more than just a first and last name. We are the sum total of all that we have experienced in our lives and we are also what others come to believe is true of us. Jesus wanted his disciples to understand who *he* was as well. So one day he asked them, “Who do you say that I am?” In response, Peter said, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God” (Matthew 16:16).

Now it’s our turn to speak what we believe: “Jesus, you are the Son of God, my Lord and my Savior.” With this answer, we declare who we are by faith. We are brothers and sisters in Christ.

Lord, you have called me by name; I am yours and you are mine. Amen.

Show: Get your identity out there where others can see it: in acts of love for Jesus’ sake.

Read: Matthew 26:57-65

*Edward Arle
St. Charles, MO*

Saturday, June 2, 2018

The Keys

I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of Death and Hades.

Revelation 1:18

Have you misplaced your car or house keys lately? After frantic searching, patting of pockets, or digging through a purse, the missing keys (hopefully) surface once again.

Our enemy Satan held the keys of Death and Hades (the place of the dead) because the sin of Adam and Eve, and our sin, put those keys right into his grasp. But Jesus came to die on the cross “that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil” (Hebrews 2:14). Satan doesn’t hold the keys to Death and Hades anymore. He didn’t lose the keys; they were torn from his grasp by the power of Jesus’ resurrection. Our crucified and risen Lord has set before us “an open door, which no one is able to shut” (Revelation 3:8). He is the door to eternal life and he assures us, “I have the keys.”

Lord Jesus, thank you for holding the door open for me. Amen.

Open: As you open doors or locks, remember the open door to eternal life.

Read: Revelation 1:9-18; 1 Corinthians 15:53-58

*Carol Geisler
Manchester, MO*

Sunday, June 3, 2018

Get a Grip!

I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the Lord's holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ.

Ephesians 3:17-18

My family has produced generations of short women. As one of them, I frequently struggle to reach things. Top shelf—too high; stray sock in washing machine—too deep. You get the picture. There is, however, one thing that is never out of my reach.

Through Jesus, I am part of the family of God, with genes rooted in his love. Therefore, I never fall short of his grace. He, in fact, reaches out to me, so that I can grasp how wide his love is when surrounded by trouble; how long his love extends as I look to the future; how high his love is that always watches over me; and how deep his love reaches to rescue me from pits of darkness.

So, get a grip! As God's children, you, too, have the power to grasp Jesus' limitless love.

Jesus, help me grasp the vastness of your love in every situation. Amen.

Get a grip: When peace seems out of reach, look for signs of Jesus' loving hand.

Read: Romans 8:31-39; 1 John 3:1

*Sandi Geis
St. Louis, MO*

Monday, June 4, 2018

Promise Power

Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful.

Hebrews 10:23

Some promises just don't pan out, as most of us learned early on. One of my early lessons began with a Saturday morning TV commercial promising kids we could "run faster and jump higher" in a certain brand of sneakers. Next time I needed sneakers, I made sure to ask for that brand. How disappointing to lace them up and find I was as lead-footed as ever!

Through the years, we've all bought products that didn't work as promised. More hurtful were promises broken by people we loved or respected. People and shoe companies don't always have the power to keep promises. God always has the power and always is faithful. He promised a Savior to Adam and Eve and to all believers. "And this is the promise that he made to us—eternal life" (1 John 2:25). We can count on God's power to keep the best promise of all, eternal life, through faith in Jesus our Savior.

Thank you, Father, for your faithfulness. Amen.

Consider: Recall God's promises kept to Abraham, Sarah, Hannah, Elizabeth and so many others.

Read: 2 Corinthians 1:18-22; 2 Peter 3:13

*Marj Maynard
Billings, MO*

Tuesday, June 5, 2018

A New Song

He put a new song in my mouth, a song of praise to our God.

Psalm 40:3

Imagine being in a “miry bog” and feeling the muck suck your feet in so powerfully that you are afraid you will never get out. That’s how David felt about his life. He waited for God, who set his feet “upon a rock.” Then God “put a new song” in his mouth (Psalm 40:1-3).

Any deliverance calls for a song of praise, which would be “new” because we had been singing the blues. God delivers us from the swamp of our sins again and again, so let us sing new songs of praise again and again. We no longer have to feel afraid. Our Lord has come. He lived and died for us and rose again to seal our place in the family of God. Sing a new song!

Lord, you have made us new. We glorify your name with a new song. Grant that we may live in peace and joy as your children. Amen.

Praise: Sing “Praise God, From Whom All Blessings Flow” or another song of praise. Sing out loud, even if you are alone.

Read: Psalm 40

*Eldor Kaiser
Lenexa, KS*

Wednesday, June 6, 2018

Growing Joys

Jesus said to him, “Feed my sheep.”

John 21:17

Time and again St. Peter got it wrong and every time Jesus was there to keep him growing. In the storm on the lake, on the road to Jerusalem, at the transfiguration of Jesus, in the courtyard of the high priest, on the beach after the resurrection, on a roof top in Joppa, in the home of Cornelius—every time Jesus was there to turn him around. And Peter’s joy in his Savior grew.

Jesus comes for us, too. We struggle and get things sort of backwards. Then Jesus comes to our side, and we grow again in the joy of his salvation.

Precious Jesus, never stop coming to my aid and turning me in your direction—again. Amen.

Rejoice: It’s never too late to have a joyful growth spurt in Christ.

Read: Matthew 14:28-31; Mark 8:33; Mark 9:5-6; Mark 14:72; John 21:17; Acts 10:13-15, 44-46

*Mike May
Kansas City, KS*

Thursday, June 7, 2018

Keep It Simple

Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.

1 Thessalonians 5:16-18

Our pastor's sermon transformed my week. Pastor encouraged us to pray Martin Luther's simple prayer, "God, help me. Amen." As my week progressed and I practiced this simple sentence prayer, I became keenly aware of God's constant closeness. The Lord is a very present help in traffic, in health issues or with daily interactions and sinful thoughts. God, help me. Amen. And God says, "Yes!" Have you ever, like me, had a question about God's will for you? God's will is that we pray without ceasing, rejoice always and give thanks in all circumstances. God, help me. Amen.

Dear Jesus, help me. Thank you. Your will be done. Amen.

Pray: Say the simple prayer "God, help me. Amen" with or for someone today.

Read: Psalm 46; Psalm 86; 1 Peter 5:6-7; 1 Corinthians 10:13

*Nancy Rapp
St. Louis, MO*

Friday, June 8, 2018

Unexpected Strength

You are awesome, O God, in your sanctuary; the God of Israel gives power and strength to his people. Praise be to God!

Psalm 68:35

Never miss a reunion. Why? You may encounter someone you never expected. It happened to me at my hometown's all-class reunion. For one whole day I walked about the main streets of the town. I sat down at a table of elderly women (more elderly than myself) and said, "I know you." "Yes, and I know you, too, Gordon. I am the organist at your church." The next day I attended the church where I was confirmed 63 years before, and there in the sanctuary was the 93-year-old organist who had played at my confirmation and was still playing, and quite well.

Unexplained strength welled up in me. What faithfulness on her part! What a great example of God's faithfulness to me, faithfully forgiving my sins by his Son Jesus Christ.

Lord, thank you for letting us see your faithfulness in faith-filled friends from the past. Amen.

Meet: Seek out a long lost friend that you haven't talked to in a long time.

Read: Psalm 136

*Gordon Beck
Williamsburg, VA*

Saturday, June 9, 2018

Be a G. O. A. T.

For the grace of God has appeared ... training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives.

Titus 2:11-12

It is time to realize that we are all G.O.A.T.S.! Before you skip to the next page, consider Titus' encouragement to us to affirm that the Lord is training us to lead upright and godly lives as we celebrate God's gift of aging. God empowers each of us to be a G.O.A.T.—a Grand Older Adult in Training!

How can we continue our training? We do so by keeping connected with Scripture, worship and prayer. We learn new skills and share our faith with others in our home, church and community. We equip each other as we help and support others. Through it all, we train our bodies, minds and spirits to acknowledge that our Lord and Savior is also a G.O.A.T.—the Greatest Of All Time!

Lord, you became the G.O.A.T. for me so that I can continue to grow as a G.O.A.T. in your love and forgiveness. Amen.

Talk: Start a lively discussion with a friend by suggesting that he or she is a G.O.A.T. in the Lord.

Read: 1 Timothy 4:7-10; 2 Timothy 3:16-17

*Rich Bimler
Bloomingdale, IL*

Sunday, June 10, 2018

Ain't Seen Nothin' Yet!

No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love him.

1 Corinthians 2:9

In 1933 the first outdoor drive-in movie theater opened in New Jersey. They're just about all gone now. But we saw it all, didn't we? We've seen a lot of things in our lifetime. With each new thing the old saying rings true, "You ain't seen nothin' yet."

You may have seen all the wonders of the world, but "you ain't seen nothin' yet" if you haven't seen Jesus as your Savior. In Jesus, God gives us the blessings of his eternal love. You can't see it with the human eye, but by faith in Jesus, we see it all—forgiveness, eternal life, salvation and God's abiding protection every day. We walk by faith and not by sight, and that gives us energy and enthusiasm to face each day and walk in the Lord's ways.

Thank you, Lord of creation, for all you've shown me in my lifetime, especially your salvation for me in Jesus my Savior. Amen.

Remember: Talk with someone (your age) about what you've both seen in your lifetimes. When did you first see Jesus as your Savior?

Read: John 3

Lonie Eatherton
Fenton, MO

Monday, June 11, 2018

Family Resemblance

We will tell the next generation the praiseworthy deeds of the Lord, his power, and the wonders he has done.

Psalm 78:4

Attached to a recent text message from my brother were three photos: one of me as a blond, curly-haired toddler; one of him as a blond curly-haired toddler; and one of his grandson, a blond curly-haired toddler. The family resemblance is unmistakable! Our father's curly hair has passed from one generation to the next.

Along with physical traits, our biases, behaviors and beliefs are passed on intentionally as well as unknowingly. We have a Scriptural directive to pass our faith from one generation to the next. As members of the family of Christ, let us teach, worship and serve with children, youth and young adults, guiding them to resemble Jesus in their words, values, attitudes and actions.

Lord, lead me to show and tell your love, resembling you in all I say and do. Amen.

Consider: In what ways do you resemble Jesus?

Read: Psalm 78:1-7

*Judith Christian
St. Louis, MO*

Tuesday, June 12, 2018

Eyes Forward

Let your eyes look directly forward, and your gaze be straight before you.

Proverbs 4:25

My first job was waitressing. Cups and saucers were used rather than the mugs that are often used today. It was difficult to carry numerous saucers without spilling some of the hot liquid out of the cup and onto the saucer. Having half their coffee in the saucer did not make the customers happy, of course. A more experienced waitress observed my dilemma and offered some advice: “Don’t look at the cups you’re carrying; look ahead at the table where you’re taking them.” I tried it and it worked. As long as I kept my eyes on my destination, I had no trouble.

Perhaps if we followed the same advice in our lives, it would be much better. We tend to watch our troubles, concerns and health issues, but often they spill over the edge and create more problems. If we keep our eyes on our Savior and our ultimate destination, we will have much more peace.

Lord, help us focus on you and our heavenly destination. Amen.

Consider: Sing or read the hymn “Turn Your Eyes Upon Jesus.”

Read: Hebrews 12:1-3; Revelation 1:7

*Gloria Doty
Ft. Wayne, IN*

Wednesday, June 13, 2018

Think About Such Things

Whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable ... think about these things.

Philippians 4:8

Recall the line from the popular song: “I think to myself, what a wonderful world.” This world is filled with great beauty—the wonders of nature, large and small, joy and laughter and so much more. But the beauty is marred by what is ugly, the destructive forces of disease, disaster and death.

Because the ugliness of our sin has been absorbed on the cross by our Savior, we can focus on the beautiful and not allow the ugly to consume our minds. Look today for what is beautiful, noble and lovely in your world. Thank God for those things; grow in faith and love for God, who forgives our ugly sin and wraps us in the beauty of his grace.

Forgive my ugliness, Lord, and help me reflect the beauty of your love to those around me today. Amen.

Focus: Look for God’s beautiful gifts today and give thanks.

Read: Philippians 4:4-9; Psalm 19

*Paul Scheidt
Chesterfield, MO*

Thursday, June 14, 2018

Clean

A leper came to him and knelt before him, saying, "Lord, if you will, you can make me clean." And Jesus stretched out his hand and touched him, saying, "I will; be clean."

Matthew 8:2-3

Keep your teeth clean! It is important. We have all heard a dentist say these words. We recognize that to keep our teeth clean, we need to do a lot of hard work ourselves. Depending on whether we have our own teeth or now have dentures, we still brush, floss, and rinse or soak to hear the dentist say, "Good work! Your teeth are clean!"

The man with leprosy recognized that his own works could not cleanse him, either physically or ceremonially. Only Jesus could do that and Jesus was willing. When it comes to our sins, we can't brush or floss them away. We can't by our own works gain salvation. Like the leper, we need Jesus. Once again Jesus said, "I am willing. I am willing to die on the cross to make you clean."

Lord, thank you for your willingness and your grace. Amen.

Reminder: Leave a Bible verse by someone's toothbrush.

Read: Matthew 8:1-4; 1 John 1:7-9

*Stan Tordsen
Stewartville, MN*

Friday, June 15, 2018

Leaping and Dancing

And leaping up [the lame beggar] stood and began to walk, and entered the temple with them, walking and leaping and praising God.

Acts 3:8

Our friends are going dancing Friday night. My husband and I will stay home. We claim we are too old for dancing, but we say it tongue-in-cheek.

No matter how old in years, however, those who know Jesus, graced with faith in him, have amazing spiritual strength—even strength for dancing. Daily his children of any age confess their sins and rely on Jesus' power to forgive. They begin each day with strong ankles, strong feet, spiritually walking, jumping and leaping, praising God. Your heart can dance, even if your feet cannot.

Lord Jesus, when I feel old and weak, remind me of your strength. Show me someone who needs your love. Empower me with the right words, the right approach to love someone for you. Daily renew me with forgiveness. Accept my praise and thanks. Amen.

Dance: Join hands with someone today. Feel stronger together. Share the story of the leaping lame man.

Read: Acts 3:1-10

*Donna J. Streufert
South Bend, IN*

Saturday, June 16, 2018

Refillable

What you have learned and received and heard and seen in me—practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you.

Philippians 4:9

Is your glass half full or half empty? We've all considered this question regarding our attitude and outlook on life's journey, especially when we encounter detours and bumps on the road. Sometimes, it requires a lot of prayers to keep a "half full" outlook on life.

A friend of mine told me she prays for her glass to be refillable as she grows in faith and love, with God's help. When she encounters challenges that drain her glass, she counts her blessings and asks God to refill her with his strength and love to grow her faith. Trusting in God can change our outlook on life!

Dear Jesus, please refill me with your love and strengthen me to cope with problems in my life, and to help others cope with theirs. Amen.

Fill: When you meet someone with a glass half full, pray that the Lord would refill them with his peace.

Read: 2 Thessalonians 1:3; Philippians 4:13; Matthew 19:19

*Annette Schumacher
Muskego, WI*

Sunday, June 17, 2018

Gambles

No one will snatch them out of my hand.

John 10:28

Dad taught me early in life not to dive into unknown water before checking for depth and debris. I still try to avoid taking frivolous chances, but ...

That is why the above words of Jesus, recorded by John, encourage my faith. As a human being, I really am not a sure thing. Sometimes insecure, indecisive, inconsistent, unaware; well, you know what I mean. But Jesus—there is no gamble with him. Healings happened. The feeding of five thousand happened. The raising of the dead happened. The Last Supper happened. The cross happened. The empty tomb happened. The Shepherd happened. The hand that holds the sheep happens. No gamble here, just a sure place. I am set “secure on the heights” (Psalm 18:33).

Dear Jesus, thank you for being the secure object of my faith. Amen.

Celebrate: Rejoice, my heart, be glad and sing, a cheerful trust maintain; for God, the source of everything, our portion shall remain.

Read: John 10:22-30

*Harry Edenfield
Brownstown, MI*

Monday, June 18, 2018

The Evening Sunset

From the rising of the sun to its setting, the name of the LORD is to be praised.

Psalm 113:3

For many summers I had the privilege to stand on the shores of Lake Michigan with a crowd of people at Camp Arcadia. We were watching the setting of the sun. What a sight to behold! At the moment when the sun dropped below the horizon, the crowd broke out in applause.

At that time, and still today, this experience reminds me of our God as the Creator of a beautiful universe. I want to praise him with a shout. That leads me to confess that he so loved the world that he entered it to redeem and restore and rescue me as his very own through his Son Jesus.

That's my faith—trusting God as my Creator and Redeemer. I pray that this is also your faith.

Heavenly Father, help me always to take delight in what you have created and what you have done for me through Jesus, my Lord and Savior. Amen.

Take time: Walk in the park or view pictures of landscapes. See God at work in his marvelous creation.

Read: Psalm 148:1-6; Romans 1:20

*Walter M. Schoedel
Webster Groves, MO*

Tuesday, June 19, 2018

Freedom for Slaves

So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed.

John 8:36

Are you familiar with Juneteenth? I recently came to understand that many Texans celebrate it, but it is not as commonly known in some other parts of the country. Abraham Lincoln had issued the Emancipation Proclamation to free the slaves in the Confederate states effective January 1, 1863. However, the slaves in Texas did not learn the good news until June 19, 1865, remaining enslaved for over 2 more years. That day became known as Juneteenth.

There are still countless sinners in the world enslaved by the sin in their lives. Just like the slaves in Texas, they have not heard and do not know that Jesus abolished sin, eternal death and hell when he died on the cross. It is a gift for all who believe in him. It is our responsibility to “get the word out” to those still lost.

Dear Jesus, thank you for your sacrifice that freed us. Help us to be powerful witnesses to others who still don't know that freedom. Amen.

Serve: As a “freed slave,” do an act of loving service.

Read: John 8:34-36; Romans 6:16-18

*Harriet Stennfeld
Fort Wayne, IN*

Wednesday, June 20, 2018

The Last Quarter

They still bear fruit in old age.

Psalm 92:14

During a visit from our sports-minded friends, the discussion led to our advancing years. The former basketball player remarked, “Well, I guess we are in the fourth quarter.” “No,” his spouse retorted, “we are in overtime.”

Overtime, indeed! The psalmist says we still bear fruit and goes on to say we are “ever full of sap and green.” There are limitations to our sap, however, sometimes even painful ones. What fruit can we bear? It doesn’t hurt to smile. We may even have more time for prayer. Our friends, who may be lonely, are in need of our prayers. Our caring calls or notes shine forth our God-given peace and reliance on God’s never-ending love and presence, and we must never forget the healing power of shared jokes and laughter. God still uses “the power at work within us” (Ephesians 3:20) in ways we could never imagine.

Lord, thank you for the blessings of the years behind me and strengthen me for the future. Amen.

Give: Share the love of Jesus with a kind word or note.

Read: Isaiah 46:4; Job 12:12

*Connie Bretscher
Valparaiso, IN*

Thursday, June 21, 2018

Growing as a Caregiver

*That they may be called ... the planting of the LORD,
that he may be glorified.*

Isaiah 61:3

A dear friend of ours has been planted as a caregiver in his own home, tenderly helping his wife for the last six years through the ravages of vascular dementia. After a lifetime of service to his country and church, he has accepted his calling as caregiver, though facing daily challenges with little preparation. By God's grace and the help of many other resources in church and community, he is growing and blooming where he is planted.

In Isaiah 61, the Messianic servant (the title Jesus applies to himself in Luke 4:16-21) is anointed to preach good news and bind up the broken-hearted. He will bestow on caregivers like my friend a garment of praise instead of a spirit of despair so they are called "a planting of the LORD, that he may be glorified." Are you growing as a caregiver in difficult circumstances? Jesus, your Savior, is there with you, that he may be glorified.

Lord, bind up my broken heart, so that I may serve as a caregiver. Amen.

Help: Identify someone close in need of care.

Read: Isaiah 61:1-3, 11

*Stephen J. Carter
Oakville, MO*

Friday, June 22, 2018

The Routines of Life

Be merciful, even as your Father is merciful.

Luke 6:36

How many routines have you followed during your lifetime? What time do you go to bed and what time do you get up? As an athlete, what practice drills did you do? In music lessons, what warm-up scales did you go through?

God's creation functions by dependable routines. Sunrises and sunsets are predictable. Calendars print the changes of seasons in advance. There is the harvest routine: prep the soil, plant the seeds, apply fertilizer and water, then let the sun do the rest until it is time to start the combine.

We can depend on God's reliable routines. We sin, he forgives; we pray, he hears; we mourn the death of a loved one, he comforts; we seek divine guidance, he directs our way. We are not deserving of the love of Jesus our Savior, but he is merciful. Since God has been merciful to us, we know how to be merciful to others.

Thank you, gracious Lord, that we can depend on your divine routine of showing mercy. Amen.

Give: How routine is your mercy? Be merciful to someone who doesn't deserve it!

Read: Psalm 28

*Jerrold Lloyd Nichols
Fort Wayne, IN*

Saturday, June 23, 2018

A Life Worth Living

He who began a good work in you will bring it to completion.

Philippians 1:6

I read that while the percentage of people who have currently reached the age of 100 is about 5% of the population; of those who are now teenagers the percentage is likely to be closer to 50%. There's no doubt that our life spans are increasing. No matter what our age, we need to ask ourselves whether our lives are worth living.

Paul didn't see the prolonging of life as a great advantage. In fact, he saw death as bringing a far greater reward than anything in this life. Yet at the same time, he saw that Jesus Christ makes life worth living. God has made us to be a blessing to others by giving us faith. Because of that faith, we can live lives that will be used by him to bring his loving message to many. He is the one who will make our lives worth living. Rely on him.

Lord, use me to share your love. Amen.

Rejoice: Give thanks for the years of life God has given to you.

Read: Philippians 1

*Mike Lutz
Shelby Township, MI*

Sunday, June 24, 2018

How Does Your Garden Grow?

He came seeking fruit on it.

Luke 13:6

In the garden of Eden, the good things God planted were replaced by the weeds of sin and disobedience. In the garden of Gethsemane, a beautiful plant was cut off and seemingly was dead.

What grows in the garden that is your life? Gentle buds of hope? Fragrant flowers of love? Succulent fruit of forgiveness? Or do weeds threaten to take over the garden of your life? Are you amidst invasive weeds of sin and selfishness that might overwhelm those fragile buds?

You do have a good and willing gardener available. Your Lord Jesus not only prunes and weeds, he also plants anew. Time after time, Jesus enters your life and your heart, guiding and pruning, weeding and planting. There are two prominent gardens mentioned in Scripture. One became filled with sin and disobedience. The other became a place of hope and life. Which garden are you growing?

Lord, help me grow good fruit. Amen.

Consider: How does your garden grow?

Read: Galatians 5:22-23

*Neal A. Orabka
Las Vegas, NV*

Monday, June 25, 2018

Jump for Joy

Rejoice in that day, and leap for joy, for behold, your reward is great in heaven.

Luke 6:23

Recently I read of a man who stays fit by exercising with a jump rope. He keeps his workout fresh by trying new moves, mixing up the footwork and jumping to music.

Spiritually, we can keep fit with the jump rope of holy exuberance—joyful childlike anticipation and faith. We don't need answers to all our questions. God will get us through the tough times and we will be with God one day. That's all we need to know. We can wake up eager to mix up our prayer life and study Scripture in new ways. We can energize our faith by having good old-fashioned fun with others, which helps us feel God's presence and love. We will never be too old to jump for joy!

Loving God, you created me with holy exuberance. Help me find it again. Amen.

Enjoy: Play a game—Candyland, Go Fish or miniature golf—with someone and share God's love and joy.

Read: Psalm 98:4

Catherine A. Welch
Southbury, CT

Tuesday, June 26, 2018

Do I Have a Future?

I know the plans I have for you ... to give you a future and a hope.

Jeremiah 29:11

Who knows what the future will be? If you ask people what they think their future will be like, some might respond: “The world’s going to pieces. What is there left for me?” “I hope my grandchildren won’t have to live in fear of nuclear war.” “I’m not hopeful that my faith will stay intact.”

Hold on a minute! Maybe we have such great expectations that nothing measures up to our dreams. Perhaps we’ve forgotten that our Lord has sustained us all our lives, through good times and bad. It could be we’re just in too much pain to look up. But do look up to a loving Father. Though we don’t know what the future holds, we know who holds the future. God said: “I have wonderful plans for you. I’m giving you a future full of hope.” That’s an open-ended promise that is always true!

O Lord, hoping against hope I stand. Dying, and behold, I live. Amen.

Grasp: Hold unto Jesus for your eternal future.

Read: Jeremiah 29:11-13; 1 Peter 1:3-9

*Don Hoeferkamp
St. Louis, MO*

Wednesday, June 27, 2018

Every Seed a Miracle

Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit.

John 12:24

Put a dried, seemingly lifeless, seed in soil and wait. During the waiting, it's possible to lose all hope. Our Savior died for us so that we, who could not save ourselves from death, sin or the power of the evil one, could be saved. Jesus lives and because he lives we also live. God wants us to plant seemingly scattered, sometimes unremarkable, words and actions among people. His powerful Spirit is the life force that gives rise to new life. God helps us as we scatter the seed of his Word, so spread the seeds and do not lose heart as you wait. Anticipate the fruit of God's amazing plan.

Dear Lord, open my eyes to the miracle of your Gospel. Bless my words and actions of witness so that others will come to know and worship you. Amen.

Anticipate: Plant a sunflower seed and wait for it to grow. Plant the seed of God's Word and watch for growth.

Read: Galatians 5:22-23; Matthew 13:1-23

*Nancy Rapp
St. Louis, MO*

Thursday, June 28, 2018

A Gift for You

For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God.

Ephesians 2:8

I was walking with my granddaughter one day when suddenly she ran ahead of me, bent down and picked up a small rock. A ladybug was painted on one side of the smooth rock and on the other side were the words, “A little gift for you.” My granddaughter was delighted and informed me that this little act of anonymous gifting had been going on for quite some time. She said, “It’s a way of saying, ‘Here’s a little something to help you have a nice day.’”

I thought, “Isn’t that the way of Jesus too?” He speaks to us in surprising ways—through a stranger’s kind word or through a friend’s message in the mail in sad times. “God loves you and so do I.”

Lord, thank you for the big and little gifts you surprise me with every day, especially the wondrous gift of your love in Jesus. Amen.

Give: Plant your own gifts of love where others, even strangers, will find them.

Read: Romans 3:21-26

*Edward Arle
St. Charles, MO*

Friday, June 29, 2018

Missing Pieces

Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it.

1 Corinthians 12:27

Has it ever happened to you? You purchase a 500-piece jigsaw puzzle at the church rummage sale for 25 cents. The only problem? It's in a plastic bag and not the box with the picture on the cover. You examine one puzzle piece after another, but have no idea what the finished picture will look like. The only way to know is to assemble all of the puzzle pieces.

The Church is a lot like that puzzle, made up of a multitude of sinful people saved by grace through faith in Jesus Christ. Each piece is unique. One piece is able to witness, while another brings meals to the sick. One writes encouraging notes or visits the lonely. One who is homebound lifts up the others in prayer. Without you or any of the other pieces, the picture is incomplete. The finished picture will be revealed in heaven.

Thank you, Lord, for making me a piece of your kingdom, the Church, through the blood of your Son, Jesus. Amen.

Share: Look for "missing pieces" all around you. Invite them to be part of the picture in Christ.

Read: 1 Corinthians 12:12-27

Eileen Ritter
Byron Center, MI

Saturday, June 30, 2018

From Whom All Blessings Flow

Their life shall be like a watered garden and they shall languish no more.

Jeremiah 31:12

Perhaps our memories are not all that they used to be. But I would be willing to say that most of us still remember a hymn often referred to as the Common Doxology: “Praise God From Whom All Blessings Flow.” We have sung it hundreds of times, but maybe we did not concentrate on that verb. Indeed, his blessings don’t “trickle,” they flow. They even gush. His blessings are not a slow drip, but rather a true fire hose of goodness. As the poem states: “I’m drinking from my saucer ’cause my cup has overflowed!”

As you walk with the Lord today through normal events and tasks, think of all his benedictions upon your life.

Almighty God, I give you thanks and praise for the blessings that flow through my life, especially the gift of my Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

Exclaim: With a joyous grin on your face, sing out boldly the Doxology.

Read: Psalm 150:6; Ephesians 1:3

*Don Luepke
Fremont, IN*

HOLY HABITS for **HOPE-FULL HEALTH**

GROWING IN FAITH THROUGH LIFE-LONG LEARNING

Consider these life-long learning opportunities:

1. Write a daily journal for your own reflections as well as for future generations.
2. Handwrite personal letters to your grandchildren and great-grandchildren. If you don't have any, write letters to children you know.
3. Join or start a movie group or a book club to keep aware and alert to what is being said and shared in today's world.
4. Enroll in a local college course, for credit or just to audit—just for the fun of it!
5. Volunteer at a soup kitchen, hospital, homeless shelter or childcare center.
6. Walk around your neighborhood for the exercise and pick up litter and other trash along the way.
7. Walk the talk and talk the walk. Take a walk with the Lord daily, learning from him by listening to the birds, watching the children, smelling the flowers and sensing that the Lord is always with you!

Keep learning, laughing and loving—in the Lord!

Hope-Full Praying

The Joy of Spring

Spring has sprung, Lord! Thanks for this new season of smells, flowers, green grass and even those pesky insects! May your beautiful buds and shining shoots remind us of your love and grace, and may those bothersome bugs and frightful flies remind us of the sin and fear that we grapple with each day. We know, Lord, that our joy that springs from you always triumphs over life's bites and burdens, as we celebrate your love and grace. Amen.

The Power of Prayer

Lord, in prayer, we do not change you, but you change us. Help us all to believe that. Remind us daily, as you do in Ephesians 6:18, that even when we put on the shield of faith and the helmet of salvation, you urge us to “pray in the Spirit on all occasions.” Power us, Lord, in prayer. Amen.

Strength for Hard Times

Another good friend of mine died this week, Lord. There are more aches and pains popping up throughout my body. The tension and turmoil in the world continues to grow. Why, Lord? Keep sending me signs of your love and hope—in a phone call from a friend, a note from a grandchild, a smile from my neighbor. And keep reminding me that even when there seems to be no hope, there is hope in you always. Amen.

The Love of Family

The families you have created, Lord, are where people know each other through and through and still love each other, all in all. Forgive me when I have taken my family for granted. Whether we are gathered or scattered, assure each of us that we are able to love and forgive each other because of your love and forgiveness of each of us. Amen.

Keeping Active

Lord, a friend once told me that the best kind of exercise is to “walk daily with the Lord”! Remind us that you are walking beside us each and every day, whether we realize it or not. Help us to take good care of our bodies since they are the only ones we have. Encourage us to move and stretch and wiggle and shake our limbs so that we are better prepared to serve and celebrate you in our daily walk with you and with those whom you place around us. Amen.

Being a Good Friend

Lord, it has been said that to have a friend is to be a friend. Thanks for being my best friend! Your love and forgiveness enables us to befriend others, as we show and share your friendship through our affirming deeds. Thank you for the friends you have put into my life, to support, encourage and hold me up, in good times and bad. Thanks especially for those friends who have died. I miss them dearly but rejoice with them in your promise of the resurrection for all of us. What a friend we have in you, Jesus! Amen.

Individual Subscription (U.S. and Canada only)

	U.S. Rate	Canada Rate
1 Year Subscription (Published Quarterly)	_____ \$15	_____ \$20
2 Year Subscription	_____ \$28	_____ \$38
3 Year Subscription	_____ \$39	_____ \$54

Mail: Hope-Full Living
P.O. Box 291847
Kettering, OH 45429-0847

Call Toll-Free:
855-325-4673
(HOPE)

Order Online: www.hopefuldevotions.com/04hope

* An Individual Subscription requires payment with order.

Quarterly Bulk Subscription

	Quarterly Bulk Rate	Quantity
5-9 Copies	\$1.89 each	_____
10-19 Copies	\$1.79 each	_____
20+ Copies	\$1.69 each	_____

Mail: Hope-Full Living Bulk
P.O. Box 291847
Kettering, OH 45429-0847

Toll-Free
855-325-4673
(HOPE)

* Bulk Subscriptions are billed each quarter with an invoice in the package. Bulk Subscriptions are sent to one address. **Shipping charges will be added.** Bulk subscriptions will continue each quarter unless you notify us of a change. **Payment must be in U.S. funds drawn on a U.S. bank.**

Send to _____

Attention _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Daytime Phone (____) _____

Email _____

Single quarter only (circle one) JAN APR JUL OCT