

HOPE-FULL LIVING

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

April • May • June • 2019

Volume 8 • Number 2

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Hope-Full Living Mission Statement

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

Hope-Full Living is published quarterly in January, April, July and October by Creative Communications for the Parish, 1564 Fencorp Drive, Fenton, MO 63026. Subscription rates: 1 year, \$15 (Canada \$20); single copy, \$4.50 (Canada \$6). Canada GST# is 84231 1870RT. Printed in the USA. Customer Service: (855) 325-4673 (HOPE). Website: www.hopefulldevotions.com

Cover Design: Jamie Wyatt

Monday, April 1, 2019

Shout!

Shout with joy to God, all the earth!

Psalm 66:1

The month of April seems to embrace this psalm verse with gusto. Even in those parts of the nation where snow rules the winter, April shouts with joy to God! The ground warms. Flowers sprout and bloom. Buds on trees swell and, in some cases, already burst with the new life of spring. It is indeed as though the earth itself shouts with joy to the Lord.

How old is the earth? Much older than we are! It still praises the Lord and so do we. Wherever you are, today is a shout-with-joy-to-God kind of day. God's love showers over you like a life-giving spring-time rain. Jesus prays for you before the Father's throne today. The Holy Spirit breathes the Christ-life into you today. The Father embraces you as his dear child again today. It is a day to shout with joy!

*I will praise you with shouts of joy today, O Lord.
Amen.*

Watch: Look around you today. How is the earth praising the Lord?

Read: Psalm 98

*Don Schatz
Kenmore, WA*

Tuesday, April 2, 2019

Little Things Count!

There is a boy here who has five barley loaves and two fish, but what are they for so many?

John 6:9

While at the gas station, I went inside to get a soft drink. An elderly woman in line in front of me was busy counting out coins to make sure that she had 97 cents to cover her soft drink. I said to her, "Put your coins away. I'm going to get it for you." She became so happy and thankful that it was almost embarrassing.

Jesus used a young boy's sack lunch to feed thousands. God can use our small actions to make a difference. It might be as simple as offering a smile or a friendly greeting. It might be lending a book to a neighbor, sharing your newspaper or inviting them over for a cup of coffee. Little things count. Sharing counts. Smiling counts. Serving counts.

*Lord, open my eyes to opportunities to serve.
Amen.*

Watch: Look daily for small things that you can do that will make others happy or make their lives easier.

Read: John 6:1-14

*Glen VanderKloot
Springfield, IL*

Wednesday, April 3, 2019

A “Let Us” Garden

Let us draw near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith.

Hebrews 10:22

Those who plant vegetable gardens in spring are hopeful people. They expect their weeks of working and waiting will be rewarded with a tasty crop.

In Hebrews 10:19-25, the writer suggests a “Let us” garden which will also produce a rewarding crop. His seed catalog lists five varieties of Let-Uss: “Let us draw near to God ... Let us hold to the faith we profess ... Let us spur one another on to love and good works ... Let us not give up meeting together ... Let us encourage one another.”

Our faithful God will bless those who cultivate such a garden and bless them with a rich harvest. Reflect on the possibilities: How can I cultivate such a “Let us” garden in my corner of God’s world?

Open my heart, Lord, to your gracious goodness and open my eyes to opportunities for cultivating a “Let Us” garden of blessings. Amen.

Plant: Cultivate seeds of faith and hope as you encourage others.

Read: 1 Corinthians 3:5-9; Colossians 2:6-7

*Paul Scheidt
Chesterfield, MO*

Thursday, April 4, 2019

What Time Is It?

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

Ecclesiastes 3:1

The days are getting longer now! We often hear people say that during spring. But are they really longer? There are still 24 hours in the day, just as God created them in Genesis. So why do people say this? It's because there's more sunlight.

Therefore, what do you do with your “extra time”? For those who are still able, you might be doing garden or yard work. For those who are physically unable to do such work, you might be going to your grandkids' outside sports activities. Or you may just be sitting on a lawn or rocking chair on a porch or patio. Seize these opportunities to be in prayer in addition to those you say before going to bed or when waking up in the morning. Use your “extra time,” day or night, for prayer!

Help me, Father, to take the extra occasions to offer up prayers to you. Amen.

Pray: As you go about your daily activities, turn to the Lord in prayer.

Read: Psalm 4

*Ken Schilf
New Haven, IN*

Friday, April 5, 2019

A Song of Springtime

Make a joyful noise to the LORD, all the earth! Serve the LORD with gladness! Come into his presence with singing! ... For the LORD is good; his steadfast love endures forever, and his faithfulness to all generations.

Psalm 100:1-2, 5

Wow, if ever there was a song of spring! The birds start to sing again and make so much noise in the early morning. Frogs sing at night so loudly. The trees burst out in their own kind of song in green. The whole world seems to be waking up. Just look at the words of the song: joyful noise, gladness, singing, thanksgiving, praise, thanks, bless!

God is good, loving and faithful! How can we not wake up to the realization of God and his goodness and love that endures forever and his faithfulness to all generations? We too break out in joyful song with all the earth. How can we not serve God by living in the joy of his goodness, faithfulness and everlasting love?

Dearest Lord, you fill my heart with joy to overflowing. Let it overflow to those near me who you would have me serve. Amen.

Rejoice: Spend a little time outside offering praise to our steadfastly loving God.

Read: Psalm 100; Psalm 148

*Nancy Rapp
St. Louis, MO*

Saturday, April 6, 2019

Turn Around

Unless you turn and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.

Matthew 18:3

Looking for a business in unfamiliar territory, I missed the intersection where I'd been instructed to turn. It was a highway with a median, so I needed to move to the left-hand lane in order to turn and go back. Shortly after I turned, there was a detour sign. It required several more turns before I was on the path to my destination. As I neared the business, it was visible from my side of the street but it was impossible to get there unless I again went further and then turned back.

Turning back in our lives isn't easy either. Even with good intentions, we often come upon a detour or have to move into another lane of life to be able to turn around and proceed in the right direction. God promises his forgiveness and help. He will be there to guide us through every turn-around.

Father, hear our pleas for forgiveness and direction. Amen.

Turn: Remember God's willingness to take us back the next time you have to turn around while driving.

Read: Matthew 13:15; Luke 22:32

*Gloria Doty
Fort Wayne, IN*

Sunday, April 7, 2019

The Gentle Life

Let your gentleness be known to all.

Philippians 4:5

Most people know Philippians 4:4: “Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice!” Verse 5 is just as good. Gentleness is one of the fruits of the Spirit in Galatians 5:23. In this month when the harshness of winter weather gives way to kinder, gentler springtime conditions, it is good to be reminded: “Let your gentleness be known to all.” What a great way to be known: having a gentle heart, a gentle spirit, a gentle attitude toward others. St. Paul invites us to be Christ-like in our lives.

God dealt gently with us in Jesus. The Gospel is the good news of God’s gentle love. Forgiveness, mercy, grace and reconciliation are the fruit of God’s gentleness. As Christians, we bear this fruit. By God’s grace we can bless everyone with gentleness. Know God’s gentle love today. Be known for it.

Dear Lord, fill me with a spirit of gentleness today, and every day. Amen.

Grow: Practice bearing the fruit of gentleness today.

Read: Galatians 5:22-26; Ephesians 3:14-21

*Don Schatz
Kenmore, WA*

Monday, April 8, 2019

Got To or Get To?

For you make me glad by your deeds, O Lord; I sing for joy at the work of your hands.

Psalm 92:4

I use the phrase, “I gotta do this!” more often than I wish to remember. It happens when I do not feel like doing something that needs doing. “Can’t someone else do it?” I murmur. “Why me, Lord?”

Psalm 92:4 reminds us once again that being a person redeemed by the Lord allows us to reach out to love, forgive and serve others, not because we’ve “got to” do it, but because we “get to” do it. Serving the Lord is not a burden. Serving the Lord is a blessing. The psalmist even suggests that we “sing for joy” as we serve others! Go ahead, and watch the heads turn!

A story tells of vandals who broke into a church and broke the hands off a statue of Jesus. The members wanted to replace the hands quickly before others saw what happened. But then a little child said, “Let’s just put a sign on Jesus that says, ‘We are his hands!’”

Lord, turn our “I gotta’s” into “I get to’s.” Amen.

Serve: Be the hands of Jesus today because you get to.

Read: Matthew 20:25-28; Galatians 5:13-14

*Rich Bimler
Bloomingdale, IL*

Tuesday, April 9, 2019

Seeking Shelter

For you have been a stronghold to the poor ... to the needy in his distress, a shelter from the storm.

Isaiah 25:4

Unsettled weather sometimes disrupts spring. Rain, wind, lightning and thunder may force us to seek shelter from the storm. At those times it's helpful to recall scriptures that promise God's protection.

Psalm 91 pictures believers dwelling "in the shelter of the Most High" and describes God as a refuge and a fortress. Verse 9 includes the important word *because*. "Because you have made the Lord your dwelling place ... no evil shall be allowed to befall you." God's loving protection hovers over us like a gigantic umbrella. His mighty power shields us like a concrete tornado shelter. God's promises are always there, as long as we continue to seek shelter in him. Colossians 1:23 assures us that all of God's mighty works on our behalf are available, "if indeed you continue in the faith, stable and steadfast, not shifting from the hope of the gospel that you heard."

Shelter me, Lord, when storms alarm me. Amen.

Plan: Add a Bible to your emergency supplies.

Read: Psalm 91

*Marj Maynard
Pipe Creek, TX*

Wednesday, April 10, 2019

Living the Cross

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

Mark 8:34

People speak sometimes of “living the dash,” that is, living the life marked by the dash or hyphen between the dates of one’s birth and death. Yet some grave markers for the saints have, not a dash, but a cross between the years of birth and death. For those who have fallen asleep in Christ, and for those of us who live now in Christ, it may be more appropriate to speak of “living the cross.”

Jesus quite literally lived the cross. His life, from birth to death, was shadowed by the cross on which he would die to defeat death and bring us forgiveness and life. As we follow in his footsteps, we too live the cross, in faith and loving service and, at times, in suffering. But living the cross has a particular year at its endpoint only from an earthly point of view. To live the cross is to live forever.

Lord Jesus, thank you for living the cross for us all. Amen.

Look: If you visit a cemetery, look for headstones marked with a cross.

Read: Mark 8:31-38

*Carol Geisler
Manchester, MO*

Thursday, April 11, 2019

Recalculating

If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

1 John 1:9

Throughout the year we make changes. We change to daylight saving time, we move from Lent to Easter and winter to summer. We have to recalculate. It's much like the GPS in your car or phone when the voice reminds us we didn't follow instructions and now the directions are "recalculating."

It's that way for Christians as well. God gives us rules for living. As sinful humans we disobey those rules and we daily need to be "recalculating" through confession. Thankfully, God accepts our confession when we stray from his path and he offers us forgiveness and absolution. Paul tells us, "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23). Later he reminds us that "the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 6:23). Through God's grace, recalculate and receive his gift!

Lord, help me to recalculate as I walk in your ways today. Amen.

Confess: Think of ways you need to recalculate today.

Read: Romans 3; Romans 6

Margaret Rickers Hinchey
Englewood, CO

Friday, April 12, 2019

Rock-Like Living

And forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us.

Matthew 6:12

In the 1960s many of us were captured by the songs of Simon and Garfunkel. In their song, “I Am a Rock,” a young New Yorker leans out his apartment window on a dark December day, after a silent shot of snow. He sings, “I am a rock, I am an island because I have no need of friends and friends cause pain. I have my books and poetry to protect me. ... I am rock and a rock feels no pain; and an island never cries.”

Jesus too is a Rock, but a far different rock. He was out-and-about encountering people, many of them in pain. Many caused him pain until it ended with him on the cross where he cried out, “Father, forgive them for they know not what they do.” We who believe what he did know: that his cross is the rock of our life. It empowers us to interact with other people even if they give us pain. Jesus is with us as we enlarge our circle of friends.

O Lord Jesus, our Rock, enable us to reach out to others daily. Amen.

Contact: Recall an old friend and reach out to him or her today, either through an e-mail or telephone call.

Read: Luke 23:26-47

*Gordon Beck
Williamsburg, VA*

Saturday, April 13, 2019

Travel in Hope

In all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight.

Proverbs 3:6

Our Interstate Highway System has made travel fairly easy, with wide roads, signs with directions, frequent rest stops and fueling and food opportunities. Best of all, travel times are shortened from the days of two-lane roads and changing speed limits.

Christ's earthly path to the cross was anything but easy. Beginning with his baptism until his death on the cross for our salvation, Christ encountered threats of stoning, temptation from the devil for 40 days, doubt from disciples, rejection by Judas, mockery, false accusations, beatings, the weight of a heavy wooden cross, and nails in his hands and feet as he hung from the cross until death. He suffered all of this to make our earthly life's journey one of certain hope.

Our heavenly Guide, as we move through our years, many with difficulties, may we always be mindful that life's travel is full of challenges. May we always know you as our guide. Amen.

Remember: Life is never a smooth path, but Jesus is walking with you.

Read: Psalm 16:11

*Don Hollmann
Ballwin, MO*

Sunday, April 14, 2019

He Who Comes!

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

Psalm 118:24

A plaque with the above verse hangs in our family room. On some days my spirit affirms the message. On other days filled with unpleasant tasks, I look at it and ask, “Are we having fun yet?”

As the last song of the Hallel (Psalms 113-118), the Jews sang these words as thanksgiving for national deliverance. This psalm took on greater fulfillment when its words were sung at the triumphal entry of Jesus into Jerusalem, “Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!” (Psalm 118:26; Mark 11:9-10). Whatever unpleasantness our day holds pales by comparison with what that week held for our Lord. Yet he graciously faced it all to bring us deliverance from sin, death and eternal damnation. Remembering this frees me to look past my day’s challenges and cheerfully go about fulfilling my duties to God and service to others!

Lord, help me embrace today’s opportunities to serve others as Christ lovingly served me. Amen.

Ask: What service can I cheerfully add to my day’s “to do” list?

Read: Psalm 118; Mark 11:1-11

*Ted Zimmerman
Napa, CA*

Monday, April 15, 2019

Three Certainties in Life

But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead.

1 Corinthians 15:20

Two hundred years ago, Benjamin Franklin said, “In this world nothing can be said to be certain, except death and taxes.” On April 15, we face the first certainty. Our taxes are due. No more procrastinating!

Sooner or later we all face the second certainty. When we were younger, death seemed to be ages away. But now that we are seniors, eternity looms ever closer. Some people fight death to the end. But those of us who live by faith in the risen Christ know that there is a third certainty.

On April 21 we will celebrate Jesus’ triumph over the powers of death and the grave. Our Easter faith proclaims that death is not the end of all things but rather the gateway to eternal life. Jesus assures us, “Because I live, you also will live” (John 14:19). That is our sure and certain faith.

Living Lord, grant me the assurance that nothing can ever separate me from you and your love. Amen.

Comfort: Send a card or note expressing the certainty of eternal life in Christ to offer comfort and hope to someone who is grieving.

Read: 1 Corinthians 15:12-22

Gil Duchow
Muskego, WI

Tuesday, April 16, 2019

Good at Loving?

This is his commandment: that we believe in the name of his Son Jesus Christ and love one another.

1 John 3:23

Chronic pain or disability can make loving deeply from the heart tough. What if I'm not very good at loving?

There is a Source of love inside my heart. I can ask Jesus to open my eyes every morning. He might show me a calendar date for a birthday e-mail. Jesus' healing touch can open my ears to hear a thought about a person I could lift up to God in prayer. I might hear of someone needing a cup of coffee and a visit. Love can also involve a simple hand on the arm of someone the Lord wants my hand to touch. It may be a visiting child who needs my hand to pat her shoulder. A prayer for a bigger heart brings answers from the Lord.

Lord Jesus, I believe you are God's Son who demonstrates God's love for me. Open my eyes, ears and hands that I may love deeply today as you direct.

Reminder: Write the above prayer on a card. Place it in your morning spot. Pray this prayer for a week and record what the Lord reveals to you.

Read: John 13:34, 1 Peter 1:22

Julaine Kammrath
Aurora, IL

Wednesday, April 17, 2019

Clean Feet

And how he loved his disciples!

John 13:2

My sandals had traversed hard pavement, dusty roads, wet grass, mud and sinking sand, and they had held up well. My feet? Not so good. My husband and I had just walked the city streets of Athens and the stony paths of Philippi, and I thought about the feet of Paul and his companions as they covered hundreds of miles, taking Good News across that landscape. The foot-washing stories in the New Testament came to mind, too, and I realized how intimate and restorative that must have been. Jesus, on that last night, knew what his disciples needed. He knew he was about to die, but he was thinking about them. He washed their feet! What a loving Savior we have. But guess what? “I have given you an example to follow,” he said. That’s us—we, too, are to serve others in intimate, restorative ways, and we ask him to give us servant hearts.

Dear Jesus, the opportunities for “foot washing” are endless. Give us your generous heart. Amen.

Watch: Look for opportunities to serve those around you.

Read: Galatians 5:13-14; Romans 12:9-12

Sally Beck
Williamsburg, VA

Thursday, April 18, 2019

Truth Be Told

God our Savior ... desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.

1 Timothy 2:3-4

Pilate asked of Jesus: “What is truth?” (John 18:38) Recently a friend and I got into one of those political discussions that often cause one’s blood pressure to rise until one or the other says, “I think I’d better quit or we may not be friends any more.”

What gets people into situations like this? Why do they often lead to broken friendships over questions of what’s true and what’s not? My friend said it well, “There’s my version of the truth and there’s your version of the truth, and somewhere in the middle is the Truth.”

Pilate did not know that Truth is not some abstract thing that each of us chooses to believe or not believe. Standing face-to-face with the Son of God, Pilate stood face-to-face with the Truth in flesh and blood.

Lord, help me to listen to you always; then let your truth teach me what freedom really means. Amen.

Believe: Trust the truth that Jesus is close by in all situations.

Read: John 8:31-36

*Edward Arle
St. Charles, MO*

Friday, April 19, 2019

Silence

He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth.

Isaiah 53:7

Jesus' passion provided several opportunities for him to speak up and defend himself. He did not want to face crucifixion, yet he put aside his will to follow his heavenly Father. Jesus was betrayed by Judas. Charges were brought against him, but Jesus remained silent. He was mocked, spat on, and ridiculed, but he refused to stand up for himself. He was accused in front of Pilate, yet Jesus refused to answer. The soldiers mocked him, stripped him and put a crown of thorns on his head. The taunting and mocking continued as he hung on the cross. Through this all, Jesus remained silent.

Yet, Jesus had the last word. His victory over death provided the answer the crowds sought. As the guards exclaimed, "Truly this was the Son of God!" (Matthew 27:54).

Dear Savior, thank you for your silent suffering and your triumphant victory! Amen.

Consider: Ponder the restraint that Christ exhibited throughout the passion account.

Read: Matthew 26:36 to 28:10

*Celeste Cummins
Storm Lake, IA*

Saturday, April 20, 2019

Helpless, Not Hopeless

Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.

Luke 23:42

He was helpless, a condemned criminal nailed to a cross. He knew he would not see the sun rise again. He was helpless. But not hopeless! Turning to the One on the center cross he said, “Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom,” and he heard words of profound hope: “Today you will be with me in Paradise.”

There are times when we feel helpless. We see no way out and no end to the dilemma that traps us. Even (especially!) when we stare death in the face, we will be helpless, yet not hopeless because of the death and resurrection of the Crucified Christ. His profoundly hopeful promise is just as valid for you as it was for the criminal next to him on the cross.

*Lord Jesus, my hope is based on your blood shed for me, and on your righteousness given to me.
Amen.*

Trust: Replace feelings of helplessness with the Word of hope from the living Lord Jesus.

Read: Romans 8:28-39

*Paul Scheidt
Chesterfield, MO*

Sunday, April 21, 2019

While It Was Still Dark

Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene went to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the entrance.

John 20:1

Early in the morning, while it is still dark. That's when I like to arrive at church on Easter Sunday. I sit in the darkness, pondering how the women must have felt walking to Jesus' tomb, expecting to complete his burial. The darkness they experienced was not merely because it was so early, but because of grief and fear. Yet, while it was still dark ... the Son had already risen; their grief, fear and failures already conquered.

As I sit in the dark church, the aroma of Easter lilies reminds me that even when guilt, fear or pain consume me, the reality is that Jesus has already shined his light into my darkness, forgiving my sins and securing my life for eternity. I have nothing to fear. Jesus has risen—for me and for you! Alleluia!

Jesus, shine your light into my darkness and assure me of the power of your resurrection. Amen.

Chant: In dark times, chant "He is risen! He is risen indeed! Alleluia!" Repeat.

Read: 1 Peter 1:3-9; John 8:12

*Sandi Geis
St. Louis, MO*

Monday, April 22, 2019

Picnic

Jesus said to [Peter], “Feed my sheep.”

John 21:17

I like picnics, and I think Jesus liked picnics, too. He provided a picnic lunch for 5000 people on a grassy hillside. He treated his disciples to a breakfast picnic on the beach, and at that picnic the risen Lord reinstated Peter as a disciple by saying, “Feed my sheep.”

The picnic on the beach is one of my favorite stories, for I, too, deny Jesus. In a threatening situation I may pretend I don't know Jesus just as Peter did. I turn my back on him and follow my own desires. I even rebel against him and willfully place my trust in myself or other people for strength and help. At the picnic on the beach, Jesus forgave Peter. I know Jesus forgives me. And Jesus forgives you, too. With Peter we declare, “Lord, you know that I love you” (John 21:15).

Loving Jesus, you forgive your ungrateful and rebellious followers. You know, Lord, that I do love you. Forgive me, accept me and be with me in spite of my selfishness and denials. Amen.

Remember: The next time you go to a picnic, remember the picnic on the beach and Jesus' forgiveness.

Read: John 21:9-19

*Eldor Kaiser
Lenexa, KS*

Tuesday, April 23, 2019

On Time

Martha said to Jesus, “Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.”

John 11:21

In the gospel accounts, when someone is dying, Jesus often arrives too late. He arrives after Jairus’ daughter has died (Mark 5:35). The widow of Nain is already on her way out of town to bury her son (Luke 7:12). Jesus arrives after Lazarus has been buried for four days (John 11:39). To the mourning families, Jesus has come too late—until he brings life out of death. Jesus’ timing is exactly right.

Jesus said of his own approaching death, “For this purpose I have come to this hour” (John 12:27). At just the right time, Jesus took up his cross for our salvation. At just the right time, he left the tomb. On the Last Day our risen Lord will bring life out of death for us, and his timing will be just right.

Lord, help me to trust in your promises, knowing that your timing is perfect. Amen. Come, Lord Jesus.

Believe: In all circumstances the Lord Jesus is with you, and he is always right on time.

Read: John 12:27-36

*Carol Geisler
Manchester, MO*

Wednesday, April 24, 2019

Whole Heart

Serve him with a whole heart.

1 Chronicles 28:9

Your heart is a muscular organ that pumps blood to your body. The blood carries oxygen and vitamins that your body needs for moving, thinking and growing. The heart is the center of your circulatory system.

As the heart is the center of your body, by faith Christ is at the center of your life. Do you have a heart that serves God or is your heart consumed with the worries of this world? Scripture says, “Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you” (James 4:8). By faith we draw near to God, who has brought us to himself in Christ Jesus. Then, with a cheerful and a whole heart, we seek to serve him. How do you serve God with a whole heart? Open your heart to God’s love, care for others and have joy in worship. Pray for a willing mind to serve God with a whole heart that reflects God’s love for you.

*Jesus, help me to serve you with a whole heart.
Amen.*

Visit: Spend time with someone who needs Jesus.

Read: 1 Kings 8:61

David Bever
Las Vegas, NV

Thursday, April 25, 2019

Seasoning Life

You are the salt of the earth.

Matthew 5:13

A visit to our local spice shop reminded me of the different people God has put into my life. Each spice is created to bring out a different flavor in food, much like the friends in my life bring out different things in me. In this spice shop there were 11 different kinds of salt—pink, Himalayan, rock, sea and the list goes on. Instructions near the salt display recommended it be used for preserving things, making ice melt for ice cream, baking, cooking and canning. Salt was used in biblical times, as it is now, as a flavor enhancer.

Jesus encourages his disciples to be salt for one another. Jesus tells his followers to enhance the flavor of life in our world just as salt enhances the food it seasons. Shake the world up today with the salt of your life!

Lord, make me salt to my world today. Amen.

Shake: Take a salt shaker and sprinkle some grains into your hand. Think about how you might enhance the lives of others today.

Read: Matthew 5:13-16

*Margaret Rickers Hinchey
Englewood, CO*

Friday, April 26, 2019

At the Close of Day

In peace I will lie down and sleep.

Psalm 4:8

As I crawl into bed for sleep, I pause briefly to review my day.

What did I do well?

Where did I fail?

Whom did I help or encourage?

How could I have done better?

Then it is time to have a conversation with my Lord. I ask him for forgiveness where I failed and thank him for the blessings of the day. I ask him to keep watch over me throughout the night and to quiet my mind and still my heart. I pray for those who have touched my life, my family, friends and the community where I live. I close by praying the Lord's Prayer or a hymn stanza or maybe humming a favorite hymn. Then it is time to close my eyes and have a peaceful night of sleep.

Lord Jesus, bless me with your presence, promises and peace this night. Amen.

Rest: Before going to bed, meditate by reading Scripture, a devotional or an evening prayer book.

Read: Psalm 4; Psalm 61

Walter M. Schoedel
Webster Groves, MO

Saturday, April 27, 2019

Out of Service

Rendering service with a good will as to the Lord and not to man.

Ephesians 6:7

As my grandson and I sat at a stoplight, I noticed a city bus on the other side of the intersection. The words in the destination space were “Out of Service.” I thought about the reasons they might be there. Perhaps it was needed on another route and couldn’t pick up passengers at the moment or perhaps it needed some repair. My grandson remarked, “I’m glad people don’t go out of service.”

We laughed about that, but it made me think of times when I’m tempted to say, “I’ve done enough, Lord. I’m tired, my health isn’t the best and I’m out of service.” Perhaps as we age, our areas of service change, but there are still things we can do to serve: send cards, make phone calls, greet at church, be part of a prayer chain ... the opportunities are endless.

Father, let me never be out of service to you. Amen.

Serve: Make a list of possible acts of service you can do.

Read: Galatians 6:9-10; Philippians 4:13

*Gloria Doty
Fort Wayne, IN*

Sunday, April 28, 2019

How Sappy!

They still bear fruit in old age; they are ever full of sap and green.

Psalm 92:14

The Endicott Pear Tree in Essex County, Massachusetts, is known to be the oldest living fruit tree in North America. Planted in the 1630s, the tree has survived significant damage from several hurricanes, disease and vandalism, yet it has never failed to bear fruit year after year.

That old tree can be an inspiration to old Christians! Does that sound sappy? You bet! The Bible tells us that even in our old age the righteous will stay green, full of sap and still able to bear fruit. We are righteous because of the blood of Jesus that flows in us like life-giving sap in a tree. We may have been damaged by many storms, afflicted by disease and scarred by the attacks of Satan and the world, yet we are alive in Christ. He sustains us, protects us and still gives us good work to do.

Jesus, forgive me when I make excuses that keep me from bearing fruit. Continue to use me year after year. Amen.

Produce: Through words or actions, look for opportunities to serve each day.

Read: John 15:1-5; Psalm 1:1-3

*Sandi Geis
St. Louis, MO*

Monday, April 29, 2019

Power for the Weak

But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses.

Acts 1:8

Unbelievable! You shake hands with that frail-looking person. Her grip is powerful as she relates her latest sorrows and joys. You walk away marveling at her strength.

We Christians often feel weak and feeble as we speak of our Savior Jesus. We wonder why we even try to witness. Our words appear powerless to accomplish our mission. The truth is that we are not speaking our words but God's Word. Our power is limited but the power of the Holy Spirit knows no limit! Who witnessed to you? Possibly your parents or relatives, or maybe your friends presented the Gospel in their own fashion. Joyfully the Holy Spirit blessed their Gospel presentation. Look at the results. You are a citizen of God's kingdom because they believed that the Holy Spirit would accompany their Christian witness. Unbelievable but true!

Holy Spirit, empower us to witness of your eternal truth! Amen.

Exercise: Prepare your Christian witness. Rehearse it. Be ready to use it.

Read: Luke 10:17-20; Acts 4:33

*David Bernthal
Juliette, GA*

Tuesday, April 30, 2019

Compelled to Act

You received without paying; give without pay.

Matthew 10:8

Wanted: Christian service provider, 24/7. Individual must be ministry focused and demonstrate Christ-centered, committed care for the needs of others. Individual must exemplify the fruits of the Holy Spirit: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. Unpaid position with no per diems available. No interview is required.

What would your response be to a position description such as this? We are the benefactors of the selfless, life-saving, sacrificial and forgiving love of Jesus. Author Henry James noted, "Deep experience is never peaceful." Having experienced the depth of Jesus' love, we are compelled to act in his name for the benefit of all. Called to be imitators of Christ, we commit to providing sacrificial love to others through our words, actions and interactions. With gratitude, we seize every opportunity to freely and generously provide for people's needs in the name of Jesus.

Jesus, thank you for your sacrificial love. Lead me to seek opportunities to serve others in your name. Amen.

Serve: Identify and engage in acts of service. Exemplify the fruits of the Holy Spirit.

Read: Galatians 5:16-25; Galatians 6:6-10.

*Judith Christian
St. Louis, MO*

Wednesday, May 1, 2019

Like Flowers

If we love one another, God abides in us and his love is perfected in us.

1 John 4:12

My father was an avid gardener. In the spring he cleared the autumn leaves and dead vines from the garden. He tilled the soil and fertilized it and finally planted his seeds. While he grew tomatoes and other vegetables, he gave special attention to the asters and zinnias he grew for my mother. When they blossomed, he would proudly bring them into the house in bouquets for her.

Like beautiful flowers that reflect his loving care, God wants us to share the beauty of his love with others. Even as our strength begins to diminish, we can still share the beauty of God's love by listening, smiling, inviting someone who's rushing to get in front of us in line, giving an encouraging word to a young cashier, thanking a nurse or sending a thank-you note for a small kindness. In simple ways we can share the beauty of God's love to enrich others.

Lord, help us to share your love with all we encounter in the daily circle of our lives. Amen.

Give: Share the beauty of God's love in the garden of your life.

Read: John 15:9-11

Pat Shopland
Portland, OR

Thursday, May 2, 2019

Our Faithful God!

*But you O LORD are a shield about me, my glory,
and the lifter of my head ... I lay down and slept; I
woke again, for the LORD sustained me.*

Psalm 3:3-5

David said that God was a shield that surrounded him. No matter what was going on in his life, David's confidence in God did not change. Because of God's great care, David lived life without fear or trepidation. That doesn't mean David was never afraid, only that he did not allow his fear to undermine his faith.

The God of David is our God too. Through every generation God has watched, defended and supported us because we are his very own beloved creations. Because God has not changed, we can have just as much—if not more—assurance as David did. We can sleep in peace, and live life without becoming enslaved by fear. That God is God is our comfort, joy and strength. That's good news to keep and to share!

Thank you, Father, for your excellent care. Because you have not changed, I can live confidently, assured of being covered in every way. Amen.

Share: Call or email someone you know who is experiencing trials. Remind them of God's care and faithful assistance

Read: Psalm 100; Hebrews 13:5

*Cheryl-Ann Lewis
North Ridgeville, OH*

Friday, May 3, 2019

Be Joyful in the Lord

I rejoiced in the Lord greatly.

Philippians 4:10

When we think of the word *happy*, we usually think of special events, laughter or times when everything is going well. But if happiness depends on our circumstances, what happens when things rust, when loved ones die or health deteriorates?

Now contrast happiness with joy. Joy is the quiet, confident assurance of God's love and work in our lives. Paul experienced joy even while he was in prison. He could rise above his circumstances because he had the joy of the Lord in his heart. We must also realize that when the joy of the Lord is within us, we too can rise above any circumstance and experience with a joy that prompts us to serve the Lord with gladness and live for him. May we experience that joy each day!

Lord, help me to rise above my circumstances and experience your joy. Amen.

Joy: Read Philippians and count the references to rejoicing and joy. Apply these to your life.

Read: Psalm 33

*Mike Lutz
Shelby Twp., MI*

Saturday, May 4, 2019

Presence vs. Presents

I will never leave you nor forsake you.

Hebrews 13:5

Have you noticed that when you have a problem, everyone is quick to offer advice? Some don't pause long enough to really listen before suggesting a solution or uttering a platitude.

God doesn't offer a glib answer or a band-aid solution to dull our pain. His answers to our prayers aren't neatly wrapped like presents. Instead, he offers something so much better—his eternal presence, his love and friendship and his quiet stillness and spirit of compassion, willingly walking with us through the darkest of nights. When we face a mountain, God helps us to climb the rocky paths, not by giving complicated geology lessons, but by walking beside us. When we bravely do the same for others—letting go of our desire to fix and control—we walk on sacred ground.

Lord, help me to walk with others as you walk with me. Amen.

Be Present: Reflect on times you've offered presents rather than your presence and look for opportunities this week to help others God's way.

Read: James 1:19-27

*Kerry Osborne
Sydney, Australia*

Sunday, May 5, 2019

Giving Support

Live in harmony with one another, be sympathetic, love as brothers, be compassionate and humble.

1 Peter 3:8

When I was three years old, a rooster jumped on my back. The next Sunday we had that rooster for dinner. The moral of that story is: before you get on someone's back, first consider the consequences. It is better to be someone's backup instead. That brings joy to both the receiver and to the giver.

Jesus is more than our backup. He goes behind us, before us, above us and lives in us. St Paul says. "It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me" (Galatians 2:20). We have a great God and there is no other. He died for our sins. His forgiveness moves us to forgive others even as Christ daily forgives us. To live in God's forgiveness is a life like no other. It gives us peace and joy. It is a prelude of a life of joy in heaven for all eternity.

Thank you, Lord, for all those who give me support. Strengthen me to support others. Amen.

Give: Share the loving compassion of Jesus with others.

Read: 1 Peter 3:8-21

Leo Symmank
Seabrook, TX

Monday, May 6, 2019

Social Status

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

Mark 10:45

If given the choice, most people would prefer to be one of the guests at a festive gathering rather than one of the servers. This attitude is nothing new. Even before Jesus' time, many people lived their lives seeking and valuing status over service.

Jesus turned the tables on that attitude. Through his words and example, he taught us how to love and serve. Not that we earn points with God by serving, but we serve because God loves us and enables us to share his love and grace. "As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace" (1 Peter 4:10). Because of that grace, the tables will be turned once again. At the end of time, God will welcome all believers in Jesus to be his guests at the heavenly banquet table.

By your Spirit's power, Lord, allow me to serve you today as I serve others in your name. Amen.

Enjoy: Brighten someone's day (and yours) by sharing God's love through words, action or prayer.

Read: Luke 12:35-37; Galatians 5:13

*Marj Maynard
Pipe Creek, TX*

Tuesday, May 7, 2019

Fervent in Spirit

Outdo one another in showing honor. Do not be slothful in zeal, be fervent in spirit, serve the Lord.

Romans 12:10-11

Have you ever heard the saying, “If you want something to get done, get a busy person to do it”? It is good to go into things with the confidence that God is going with you.

Just because your feet may be a little slower, and it might take you a few minutes longer to get from place to place, doesn’t mean your heart for service has to slow down. It doesn’t mean your faith can take a hiatus. Your service will still continue and may even be enhanced. All it means is that you’ll get there a few minutes later than everyone else, but you’ll still get it done. As an older adult, you can still be full of zeal and fervent in spirit!

Lord, give me a fervent and zealous spirit to serve you. Amen.

Begin: Start a ministry or activity that you would like to see at your church.

Read: Romans 12; Titus 2:11-14

*Jeremy Klaustermeier
Warrenton, MO*

Wednesday, May 8, 2019

The Grammar Police

For you tithe mint and dill and cumin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faithfulness.

Matthew 23:23

The old woman shook her head disparagingly as she attacked the notice with her red pen. “~~Dear~~ Contestant, You ~~has~~ ~~winned~~ the ~~furst~~ prize in ~~are~~ ~~anyoo~~ drawing. Yure gonna get free ~~plain~~ tickets ~~two~~ anywhere ~~U~~ want.” She threw the message in the waste basket.

Jesus criticized the scribes and Pharisees for obsessing over the minute requirements of the Law while missing its message: practice justice, mercy and faithfulness. “These you ought to have done without neglecting the others,” he said (Matthew 23:23).

How often do we lose out on the peace Jesus offers because we focus on other things: the inappropriately dressed teenager at worship, the out-of-tune singer, the rambunctious toddler in the next pew? Don’t miss the prize because you’re correcting the grammar.

Forgive me, Lord, for focusing on things that distract me from the message of your love. Amen.

Listen: Focus on Jesus’ message for you this week in your devotions and Bible reading.

Read: Deuteronomy 30:15-20

*Eileen Ritter
Byron Center, MI*

Thursday, May 9, 2019

Winnie's Honey Pot

Gracious words are like a honeycomb.

Proverbs 16:24

Winnie the Pooh loves his honey. Much of his world and that of his friends revolves around it. He once said, "A day without a friend is like a pot without a single drop of honey inside."

The Proverbs passage says that gracious words are "sweetness to the soul and health to the body." In these days our world doesn't seem to be overflowing with kind and refined speech. What a shame; what a pity. Words can sing joy. Words can bring comfort. Words can foster encouragement. The Lord gifted his people with "a land flowing with milk and honey." Wouldn't it be great if in our world today we would speak in a way that would be "sweetness to the soul and health to the body." Sharing God's love does just that!

Lord, flavor my thoughts and words with grace and kindness. Amen.

Encourage: Today, take a moment to write a short note of gentle support to someone in need.

Read: Numbers 13:27; Psalm 119:103

*Don Luepke
Fremont, IN*

Friday, May 10, 2019

The Vintage Vase

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

Psalm 71:18

Older adults are vintage vases. Now before you think of a cracked pot, look at it through the eyes of Scripture. The Lord has never, and will never, forsake us. He continues to value each of us as a vintage vase, the word *vintage* meaning, “denoting something of high quality.”

Look what we have to offer: V is for vision to help others see hope in the future; A is for availability, to “be there” to support and encourage others; S is for the skills we have learned that we may now share with the younger generation; and E is for experience that teaches us that one is never too old to dream. So, vintage vases, what are we waiting for? Let’s get off of our shelves and start to change the world, by serving and celebrating in the Lord!

Lord, you have given us the gift of aging, full of love and hope. Use us, your vases, in valuable ways. Amen.

Give: Think of ways to pour out your love and hope to someone younger today.

Read: 2 Corinthians 4:7-10; 2 Timothy 2:20-21

*Rich Bimler
Bloomington, IL*

Saturday, May 11, 2019

Act of Love

Let all that you do be done in love.

1 Corinthians 16:14

I just never got the hang of filleting fish. Good thing I never catch many! But if I do, some friendly person—one not prone to snide comments about filleting a three-inch bluegill—will likely offer assistance. Since would-be helpers do not need to provide credentials, the results of such “help” are varied. Nevertheless—gulp—it’s the thought—not the bones—that counts. The task is an act of love, if not expertise.

What acts of love do you do? Perhaps you do them imperfectly, and you might not even think of them as acts of love. But Jesus commended the good we do for others as being the same as doing good for him. In fact, the only reason you can serve others in love is because that is what Jesus did for you!

Dear Jesus, thank you for loving sinners like me so much that you suffered, died and rose to take my sins away. Amen.

Plan: What can you do in love for others this week? (Be specific.)

Read: Matthew 25:31-40

Ed Grube
Addison, IL

Sunday, May 12, 2019

Reason for Serving

Serve the Lord with gladness!

Psalm 100:2

While at a retired couple's home, we took a tour of their gladiolus garden. What a sight to see, five acres of gladiolus in various stages of bloom. Amazingly, these beautiful blooms are given away! Each week the couple delivers a pick-up load to a nearby hospital, local care centers and churches. Their flowers bring memories, smiles and hope to patients, relatives and caregivers.

When asked why they are willing to put in so much time and labor raising gladiolus just to give them away, they replied, "God has given us so many blessings, we just want to share them." They know, as Ephesians 2:8-9 states, that the greatest of these blessings is God's grace. They know that serving the Lord by raising gladiolus does not earn salvation for them. Jesus has already done that. But because of God's grace, this couple is able to serve the Lord with gladness and to serve the Lord with their gladiolus.

*Lord, help me daily to serve you with gladness.
Amen.*

Remember: List your top five blessings from God.

Read: Psalm 100, Ephesians 2:8-9

*Stan Torsen
Stewartville MN*

Monday, May 13, 2019

Gentle Joy

For I am gentle and lowly in heart.

Matthew 11:29

One thing we know about Jesus is that he was not merely “nice.” You can’t love deeply when you are only “nice.” Nice isn’t a bad thing, but it’s not enough for Jesus or his people. Paul lists nine traits in Galatians 5—all of them describe Jesus. Nice is not listed, but gentleness is. Gentleness is the opposite of harsh.

Jesus encountered a “fallen woman” at a well (John 4). Jesus knew her better than she knew herself. Jesus was not merely nice to her, but rather gentle. His gentle prodding drew faith out into the open. Where Jesus could have been harsh, he was gentle. He hasn’t changed.

Gentleness seems rare today, but it is but one gift we can give our neighbor. They might be surprised by our gentleness. They won’t know where it came from, but we will.

Lord Jesus, your gentleness surprises me. Help me to extend that gift to someone today. Amen.

Consider: There is someone near you who needs a gentle touch, a gentle word today.

Read: Philippians 4:4-5

*David Boyd
Staunton, VA*

Tuesday, May 14, 2019

Christ's Body

If one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honored, all rejoice together. Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it.

1 Corinthians 12:26-27

Gone are the days when I hardly noticed my body's individual parts. When I was younger, it used to seem more cohesive. Now I notice my hip as I ascend the stairs or my teeth when I eat ice cream, but what a blessing! Paul tells us we as individuals are each important, separate parts of the Church, Christ's Body! If my back hurts—whoa, it affects every part of my body! Let us be encouragers of each other, to suffer together, to rejoice together. We are all connected by Christ our Head!

O Lord, please guide me and let me be a blessing to others, each special soul-bearing gifts for the Church at any age. Amen.

Serve: Look for ways to serve others in the Body of Christ.

Read: 1 Thessalonians 5:11; Hebrews 10:24-25; Colossians 3:16

*Nancy Rapp
St. Louis, MO*

Wednesday, May 15, 2019

But God...

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

Romans 5:8

If we try to make excuses, someone might respond, "Don't give me your 'buts.'" Yet it is the "But God ..." that is our most powerful hope in every circumstance. We may have a friend desert us. But God will never leave us (Deuteronomy 31:6). We will experience sorrow. But God comforts us (Isaiah 40:1-2). We may lose our way. But God is the Good Shepherd who seeks the lost and brings them home (Psalm 23). We will all die. But God promises us a resurrection and life with him forever (John 11:25-26).

Lord, I will experience trouble, but you, God, are with me until time will be no more, and I will still be with you. Thank you, Jesus. Amen.

Remember: There are times of trouble, but God will see us through every storm and his rainbow of blessings will cause us to rejoice.

Read: Romans 5:1-8; Mark 4:35-41

*Leo Symmank
Seabrook, TX*

Thursday, May 16, 2019

Selfless Service

But whoever would be great among you must be your servant ... even as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.

Matthew 20:26-28

Next to his death on the cross, the act of washing his disciples' feet is perhaps the most selfless moment in Jesus' ministry. He got down and dirty to undertake a task ordinarily assigned to servants: cleaning the filthy, grimy feet of disciples who walked dirt-packed roads where people and animals trod. Let us follow Jesus, rolling up our sleeves and getting down into the muck of life. Let us humbly serve the needs of others, without judgment, expectation of compensation or a word of thanks.

Lord, open my eyes and ears to the needs of others. Give me the insight and courage to act on their behalf, serving in your name. Amen.

Reflect: Meditate on the mission of service God calls us to in our baptisms. Then serve others by sending thank-you notes to service providers.

Read: John 13:1-17

*Judith Christian
St. Louis, MO*

Friday, May 17, 2019

Like an Oven

Be transformed.

Romans 12:2

You've measured out the ingredients you'll need. You've mixed them together. You've let the dough rise and then kneaded it. That doughy, inedible mass now needs one final step: it must be baked, at a specific temperature for a specific length of time. When it comes from the oven, it will be ready to tantalize with its delightful aroma (can you smell it now?) and its warm deliciousness. It's not bread until it's changed by the heat of the oven.

You're like that doughy mass of nothingness. The right ingredients are there, but change is needed. Christ changes us: our behavior and our thoughts. You're forgiven! You're worth it! You are loved! The world may at times see you as a gloppy mess of stuff, useless to it, incapable, insignificant. But Christ views you as a life changed. He warms you with his love for you.

Thank you, Lord, for changing me with the warmth of your love. Amen.

Think: Who needs a slice of your bread?

Read: Romans 12:1-2

*Neal A. Orabka
N. Las Vegas, NV*

Saturday, May 18, 2019

Listen Up!

Truly, truly, I say to you, he who hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life, and does not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life.

John 5:24

The memory of days in the military brings a vivid memory of the drill sergeant, stomping his feet loudly and saying, “All right, listen up!” Without hesitation, and out of concern for being called out, everyone stood up by their bunks at attention, listening closely for fear of being called out later because they did not follow the instructions just given.

Jesus, during his short earthly ministry, used the words “Truly, truly” or “Verily, verily,” emphasizing to all that his words were totally accurate. It was, and is, important to listen closely, with total faith and confidence in every word, because they are true words from God.

Our Teacher, our God, help us to be attentive listeners to your Word and to follow them, trusting you to guide us on the path to everlasting life with you. Amen.

Listen up: Read God’s inspired words in your Bible each day. Let his Word be your guide.

Read: John 5:19

*Don Hollmann
Ballwin, MO*

Sunday, May 19, 2019

Soar with the Spirit

Be filled with the Spirit.

Ephesians 5:18

Spring is the season for flying kites. I never had much success flying kites with our children or grandchildren. Charlie Brown's kites were always getting tangled in trees. Mine seldom got that high. One essential for getting a kite off the ground is wind. Once when the wind died down, our daughter tried blowing on her kite to get it rising again. But it takes much more than our breath to get a kite soaring in the sky.

Similarly, our efforts alone will never get our faith off the ground. It takes the breath of the Holy Spirit to lift our spirits and renew our faith, so that we are able to soar with the Spirit in the service of our Savior and his people in need. Open your Bible each day and let God's Spirit fill you anew with power from on high. Then soar with the Spirit, as you go about your daily routine.

Loving God, you once breathed into me the breath of life. Fill me anew each day with the breath of your Spirit. Amen.

Inhale: Fill yourself with the breath of God's Spirit, as you read God's Word.

Read: Ephesians 5:15-20

*Gil Duchow
Muskego, WI*

Monday, May 20, 2019

Serve the Lord

Serve the Lord with gladness!

Psalm 100:2

How do we “serve the Lord with gladness”? Paul and Silas give us a good example of how they served God with joy and gladness in the midst of terrible circumstances. Paul and Silas were out on the streets preaching when they were brought before the rulers, beaten with rods, thrown in prison and had their feet placed in stocks.

What would be a normal reaction to such conditions? Most people would probably not react the way Paul and Silas did. They were “praying and singing hymns to God” at midnight (Acts 16:25). Even in the toughest of circumstances, we should follow their example and trust God that he will supply whatever we need. This is how we “serve the Lord with gladness!”

Dear Father, grant us the courage to serve you with gladness in every situation we face. Amen.

Plan: Consider ways that you can serve the Lord with gladness.

Read: Acts 16:16-40; Psalm 100

*Celeste Cummins
Storm Lake, IA*

Tuesday, May 21, 2019

Always Visible

The eyes of the Lord are toward the righteous.

Psalm 34:15

A woman made the serious claim that senior citizens are invisible to younger generations. “If you don’t believe it, then wear two different shoes or two different earrings. No one will notice.” Regardless of our age, we may sometimes feel “invisible” to others. We may, at times, even feel unloved.

God sees us. In Scripture he informs us that from the days of the Old Testament to those of the New Testament, he has promised to watch over us. From Laban’s statement (Genesis 31:49) to those written by David (Psalm 34:15) and Job (Job 36:7) to Peter’s proclamation (1 Peter 3:12), our Lord pledges to keep us in his sight. We know why he watches over us. No, not because we deserve his attention, but because he loves us! Happiness fills our souls. We are not invisible! We are always visible to our Lord!

Father, accept our joyful thanksgiving for your loving attention. Amen.

Learn: Memorize verses from God’s Word that assure you of his watchful care.

Read: Psalm 33:16-18

*David Bernthal
Juliette, GA*

Wednesday, May 22, 2019

Glad Service

They received their food with glad and generous hearts.

Acts 2:46

Witness the cascade of glad service: A Wednesday morning women's Bible study group led by God to choose, "with glad and generous hearts," twelve families for Christmas gifts: twelve empty laundry baskets for contributions from class members, assembly and wrapping with husbands helping and the personal delivery of wrapped presents to families in need.

How similar to the early fellowship of believers after Pentecost! Regular gatherings to study the Scriptures and receive the Sacrament, temple worship, caring for physical needs and eating together as the fellowship of the crucified and risen Christ grew and grew—a cascade of glad service!

Lord Jesus, fill my heart with generosity to serve others. Amen.

Plan: Consider how you might join Christian friends in glad service as you grow in the Word of Christ.

Read: Acts 2:42-47

*Stephen J. Carter
Oakville, MO*

Thursday, May 23, 2019

Ministering Angels

There stood by me this night an angel of the God to whom I belong and whom I serve.

Acts 27:23

In our senior years we sometimes feel isolated and alone, but Jesus will never forsake us. His constant presence is our greatest comfort. God also sends his holy angels to minister to us.

Angels play an active role in God's plan of salvation. The angel Gabriel told Mary that she would be the mother of the Messiah (Luke 1:26-38). An angel told shepherds about Christ's birth and a multitude of angels sang glory to God (Luke 2:8-14). An angel at Christ's tomb announced, "He has risen!" (Matthew 28:2-5). At Jesus' ascension, two angels said, "This Jesus ... will come in the same way as you saw him go" (Acts 1:11). Angels are "ministering servants sent out to serve for the sake of those who are to inherit salvation" (Hebrews 1:14). The angels of God are busy ministering for your sake. You are never alone.

Thank you, dear Lord, for the angels and the messages of hope they brought to us. Amen.

Look: Pay more attention to the service of angels as you read your Bible.

Read: Psalm 91

*Chuck Conner
Festus, MO*

Friday, May 24, 2019

Kick It Up a Notch!

Do not be slothful in zeal, be fervent in spirit, serve the Lord. Rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer.

Romans 12:11-12

If you enjoy cooking for loved ones, you don't just boil chicken parts in a pot of water then slap the meat on a platter. You kick it up a notch with other ingredients—baking the chicken with carrots and potatoes—seasoning with grated orange zest, paprika or lemon pepper. Yummy, right?

Likewise, if we love God with our heart and soul, we don't skimp on holy ingredients when serving God. Our good deeds are seasoned with humility and gratitude, for work is a gift from God. Our acts of kindness are unconditional, helping others see God's love in their lives. We can serve with joy and generosity. We can bring others hope. We can kick it up a notch!

Jesus, move me to help others in new ways with zeal. Amen.

Look: With God's love in your heart, search for new recipes to delight family, friends, and neighbors.

Read: Philippians 2:14-15

*Catherine A. Welch
Southbury, CT*

Saturday, May 25, 2019

Friends of Mine

[Jesus said,] “You are my friends.”

John 15:14

For years, when I began a sermon, I would greet God’s people with the greeting, “Friends of mine!” And then I would add, “Indeed you are my friends. Even though I do not know all of you, and you do not know me, we are friends. How? Because Jesus is our friend and so we are friends of one another.”

Friendship is a great gift. It is an antidote against loneliness. Friends listen. Friends understand our struggles and pain. Friends serve and support us. Friends celebrate life with us and bring us joy. Friends travel down the road of life with us, hand in hand. Remember that Jesus is our friend, and he is with us always.

*Lord Jesus, be our friend day in and day out.
Amen.*

Enjoy: Spend time rejoicing in your friendship with Jesus and your earthly friends.

Read: John 15:9-17

*Walter M. Schoedel
Webster Groves, MO*

Sunday, May 26, 2019

Your Shepherd

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

John 10:27

Friends recently enjoyed a trip to Ireland. They delighted in seeing many herds of sheep. After reaching the top of an incline, my friend exited his car and soon a large group of sheep approached him. Within a few minutes, a similar car drove up. The sheep immediately turned and followed that car. The driver then fed them some grain. It was obvious they recognized their true shepherd, even when he was in a vehicle.

It's easy to occasionally lose sight of our shepherd, especially during times of stress, illness or some other changes in our life. We become distracted and begin to follow ideas and thoughts that give us no peace. When we turn and go back to our true shepherd, he welcomes us and feeds us, and we are secure in the knowledge that he loves us and cares for us.

Jesus, help us remember that you are the true shepherd and always tend your flock. Amen.

Learn: Research the habits of sheep and share the knowledge with a friend.

Read: Psalm 23; Matthew 9:36

*Gloria Doty
Fort Wayne, IN*

Monday, May 27, 2019

Remembering

We all have different gifts, according to the grace given us ... If it is serving, let him serve.

Romans 12:6-7

“Grandma, did you serve in the war?” Well, your grandpa was in the Army. He served in England and France, and even in the Pacific. “Wow! What about you, Grandma? Where did you serve?” Well, I had you and your brother to take care of. I guess I served right here at home.

In May we honor all those who served in the armed forces of our country. We thank God for every one—those who died and those who survived. But we also thank God for the spouses and neighbors and others who served in different ways. Not everyone can be a soldier. But everyone can serve. Jesus himself came “not to be served, but to serve and give his life as a ransom for many” (Mark 10:45).

Thank you, Lord of the nations, for all who serve you by serving our country and serving one another in love. In Jesus my Savior. Amen.

Thank: Thank someone for their Christian service in the military or here at home.

Read: Matthew 20:17-28; 1 Corinthians 12

*Lonie Eatherton
Fenton, MO*

Tuesday, May 28, 2019

Just a Little While

A little while, and you will see me no longer; and again a little while, and you will see me.

John 16:16

Jesus attempts to prepare his disciples for the not-too-distant day when they will see him ascend into heaven, but it is more than they can comprehend. In John 16:22, Jesus relieves their sadness and confusion with these words, “So also you have sorrow now, but I will see you again, and your hearts will rejoice.”

The disciples’ sorrow at losing the earthly presence of Jesus is much like our emotions at losing a loved one. But Jesus has promised to come back in a “little while,” and he won’t be alone. “Even so, through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have fallen asleep” (1 Thessalonians 4:14). Just as Jesus ascended into heaven, he will return, bringing with him the angels and all those who have gone before us. Finally he will reunite all believers, body and soul, in our eternal home. What rejoicing!

Bless us, Father, as we wait a little while. Amen.

Keep going: Stay busy with the Lord’s work, as you are able, and feel time pass more quickly.

Read: Luke 24:50-53; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18

*Marj Maynard
Pipe Creek, TX*

Wednesday, May 29, 2019

New Every Morning

His mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning.

Lamentation 3:22-23

Waking up to aching joints is no fun. Facing the new day requires courage. A hot bath, an ibuprofen or nursing care can lift spirits and relieve some pain. But our ultimate deliverance from sickness, sin and evil is the good news tucked in the lament of Jeremiah: “The steadfast love of the LORD never ceases; his mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness” (Lamentations 3:22-23).

We have been born anew with Jesus’ resurrection power. He wakes us to his love, guides us with his Word and heals us by his Spirit. Just as the glory of God led Israel through the wilderness, the Lord’s presence leads us through the wilderness of aging.

Yahweh, lift us with your loving kindness far above the burdens and pains of aging. Renew us daily with your baptismal promises. Amen.

Praise: Each morning give thanks for the mercy of God in Christ Jesus.

Read: 1 Peter 1:3-11; Ecclesiastes 3:1-11

Rodney Otto
Grand Rapids, MI

Thursday, May 30, 2019

Above the Clouds

And when he had said these things, as they were looking on, he was lifted up, and a cloud took him out of their sight.

Acts 1:9

Luke gives us a clear description of the scene on the ground: eleven disciples gazing heavenward. But can you imagine what was happening on the other side of that cloud? Picture the welcome home parades for victorious armies, the ticker-tape extravaganzas for astronauts, the celebrations for World Series or Super Bowl winners. Multiply exponentially, and you still fall short of the heavenly victory celebration for Jesus, who had conquered death and the devil through his own death and resurrection.

By Baptism we are united with Jesus in his death and resurrection. We will one day be called home to our Father in heaven, where the welcoming celebration will never end.

We praise you, Jesus, for your death, resurrection and ascension, and we look forward to the day you will welcome us home to be with you forever. Amen.

Rejoice: Jesus' ascension points to our eternal life in heaven!

Read: Acts 1:6-11

*Eileen Ritter
Byron Center, MI*

Friday, May 31, 2019

In Our Prime

I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God.

Romans 12:1

There's no doubt aging takes a toll on our bodies. As our bones, muscles and senses deteriorate, we succumb to the reality that there are some things we can't do anymore. But never believe Christian service is one of them! "In view of God's mercy," our old bodies are at their prime for exercising faithful service.

When eyes fail, we can still perceive others' needs and pray. When ears fail, we can recall God's Word and share his promises. When hands fail, we can grasp the love of Jesus and extend it to the broken-hearted. When feet fail, we can run the race with perseverance, witnessing to God's faithfulness for those who doubt. When speech fails, our countenance can relay our joy in Jesus. When backs fail, we can bear someone's burden and assure them of Jesus' forgiveness.

Jesus, I offer you my body as a living sacrifice. Help me to serve faithfully. Amen.

Work out: Call on God's strength to overcome your weakness and put your body to work for him.

Read: 2 Corinthians 12:9; Luke 2:36-38

*Sandi Geis
St. Louis, MO*

Saturday, June 1, 2019

Serving Like Mary

“I am the Lord’s servant,” Mary replied.

Luke 1:38

This is not only a December verse. Mary, the mother of our Lord, is a model of humble service throughout the year. In the kingdom of God, we serve by the grace of God. We do not serve exactly like Mary—she bore the Christ into the world once for all. But, serving by God’s grace, we do serve like Mary—we bear Christ to the world in word and deed.

That kind of Christian service is not a once-for-all-time work. The world needs our Savior. The world needs God’s servant people to live as Christ. People need your service in the Lord for them today. We serve them by living kindly, humbly, lovingly, peaceably and prayerfully in the name of Jesus. We live the Christ-life.

O God, help me to serve Christ today in all whom I meet. Amen.

Offer: Ask someone you know how you may serve them today.

Read: Psalm 103

*Don Schatz
Kenmore, WA*

Sunday, June 2, 2019

Seeking Service

Be fervent in spirit.

Romans 12:11

The desire to please Christ motivates service to others. My wife and I are both retired, so there are many opportunities for serving God. The Lutheran school that we taught at operates a thrift store where we serve on Wednesday afternoons. We have met many volunteers who serve God with an intense and fervent passion.

Paul is telling believers to be diligent when serving. He tells us not to be lazy but to work hard since we are serving God. We are to work for Christ with a burning desire to serve. All believers are called to serve the Lord. When we serve the Lord, we need to aim at pleasing him instead of serving simply to gain favor from others. Be wholehearted and passionate when helping someone in need. Be eager for those times when you can serve God and be fervent in that service.

*Lord, help me to be motivated for serving you.
Amen.*

Serve: Look for a place where you can serve someone in need.

Read: Luke 6:38

*David Bever
Las Vegas, NV*

Monday, June 3, 2019

Ordinary Joy

Can anything good come out of Nazareth?

John 1:46

If you haven't noticed, superheroes are big today. In our day they were big too; Superman, remember? No one wants to be ordinary. Ordinary means you're ignored. Scant praise comes to the ordinary one.

Phillip told Nathanael, "The Messiah is here, he's from Nazareth." Nathanael didn't bite. "Nothing good comes out of that ordinary place." Turns out that the one we deemed as ordinary, was the extraordinary Son of God come to spend six extraordinary hours on two pieces of ordinary lumber.

Paul urged God's people to live "peaceful, quiet (ordinary) lives, godly and dignified in every way" (1 Timothy 2:2). It's a peaceful, quiet, ordinary life our neighbors are desperate to see in us today. We live that way of life not because we are extraordinary, but because Jesus' extraordinary love produces in us ordinary joy.

Jesus, help me to live a quiet and peaceable life before you and my neighbor. Amen.

Consider: How might a peaceful, quiet life be an extraordinary way to serve Jesus?

Read: 1 Timothy 2:1-4

*David Boyd
Staunton, VA*

Tuesday, June 4, 2019

Whatever You Do

And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus.

Colossians 3:17

I often visit people who can't do as much as they used to. They say, "I just wish I could do more for people and for the church." These are the people who were always at the church, serving the Lord and others with their legs, hands and feet, but now they can't because their bodies won't let them. Maybe you're one of them.

Can you listen? Pick up a phone and call the people you love and ask them how they are doing. Can you still write or type? Use your computer or get a pen and paper and write some encouraging notes. Can you pray? This world, and everyone you know, needs prayer! It doesn't matter what you do—you are doing it for the Lord!

Lord, give me something to do today. Amen.

List: Make a list of five people who may need your encouragement.

Read: Colossians 3

*Jeremy Klaustermeier
Warrenton, MO*

Wednesday, June 5, 2019

A Brighter Place

They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world.

John 17:16

Have you ever felt out of place in this world, as if you did not fit in? The older we become it seems the fewer things that are familiar to us. With all of the world's darkness, corruption and injustice it's a difficult and challenging environment for Christians to live in. It can be a hostile environment, yet it is the very place God wants and needs us to be! Wherever we are, God is, and wherever God is, that is where we should want to be. Through us God makes this world a better, brighter and more hospitable place. We can share the love of God in Christ Jesus with the people we meet. We are God's light and grace to everyone living in darkness.

Lord, let my light shine brightly in this dark world! May someone experience your love and nearness through me today. Amen.

Shine: Spread God's warmth and love everywhere you go this week.

Read: John 17:14-23; Matthew 5:14-16

*Cheryl-Ann Lewie
North Ridgeville, OH*

Thursday, June 6, 2019

The Yolk's on Me

For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.

Matthew 11:30

The grandchildren and I were in the kitchen making a cake. We were laughing and sharing jokes as we did so. An egg rolled off the counter, fell and broke on my shoe. After a moment of shock, I exclaimed, “I guess the yolk’s on me!” Laughter ensued.

Then we began to chat about the homonym “yoke” and how it was a signal for work and service. When a heavy yoke was placed on an animal, it was time for labor to begin, time for service. When a stole is placed on a newly ordained minister, it is a symbol of a yoke, time to get to work. A yoke is placed on each of us, whether a child or an older adult. But Jesus says that his yoke is easy and that there is great joy in working alongside of him in ministry.

Lord, what joy fills my heart as you walk with me in service. Amen.

Guide: Take the hand of a child and together be a blessing to someone the Lord sets before you.

Read: Matthew 11:28-30; Hosea 11:4

*Don Luepke
Fremont, IN*

Friday, June 7, 2019

Pleased to Meet You

You are the Holy One of God.

Luke 4:34

Have you ever met God? In Moses' day to see God meant death. If the children of Israel viewed God, they would die (Exodus 19:20-21). Who would want to see God? In Isaiah's day to meet God meant judgment. Isaiah, at that point, felt that God's judgment was a significant and imminent threat (Isaiah 24:1-3). In Luke's day a meeting with God meant blessing and life. The disciple's fears were calmed. Zacchaeus understood that he was forgiven. The thief on the cross received salvation. All of them received what they needed most. Who wouldn't want to meet this God?

Today what do you expect from your encounter with the living God? Judgment? Of course not! Death? No way! Rather, when you meet the living God, you receive life and forgiveness and salvation. You don't need to wait to meet this God. You've already met him. And he's already given you what you need. And yes, God is so pleased to meet you!

Lord I'm so thankful you've met me! Amen.

Ask: Who needs to meet my loving God?

Read: Luke 4:16-21; John 1:43-51

*Neal A. Orabka
N. Las Vegas, NV*

Saturday, June 8, 2019

A Servant's Heart

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

Joshua 24:15

As we age, life indeed becomes more challenging as our time and energy are valued more with each passing year. However, simple acts of kindness make such a difference in the lives of others.

We often think that serving others involves a long, time-consuming commitment. But in reality, we can serve in little ways that don't require much time and yet have a positive impact in the lives of others. You may think to yourself, "What can I do?" Here are some suggestions: Send a "thinking of you" note to a shut-in or give them a call to chat. Perhaps you'd like to volunteer to tutor a school-age child who is struggling with reading or math. Serve others and enrich someone's life in the process. Who knows? It may have a positive impact in your life, too!

Dear Father, show me ways I can serve others in your kingdom today. Amen.

Action: Find ways to serve others with gladness!

Read: Joshua 24:14-28

*Betsy Becker Niedringhaus
Ballwin, MO*

Sunday, June 9, 2019

Gladness or Sadness?

You have made known to me the paths of life; you will make me full of gladness with your presence.

Acts 2:28

The Pentecost Lord came to his Church at that first Pentecost to fill the faithful with faith, hope and joy. The Pentecost Lord comes to us today with that same gift of gladness as we make our way through this turbulent, troubling and testing time. It is so easy, at least for some, to lose the Pentecost gift of gladness and focus on the world's gift of sadness. Just listen, if you can, to the daily news, as the commentators begin with, "Good evening," and then bombard us with how bad the evening really is!

But there really is good news in Christ Jesus, in spite of what the world says. Even when we are saturated with our own sadness of sin, the spirit of Pentecost points us once again to the cross and the resurrection—and miracle of miracles—our sadness become gladness in Christ!

Lord, thanks for your presence through your Spirit, allowing us to be glad in you. Amen.

Encourage: Visit with glad people this day so you are prepared to visit and bring hope to some sad people this week.

Read: John 14:25-26; John 16:22-24

*Rich Bimler
Bloomington, IL*

Monday, June 10, 2019

The Chase

Anxiety in a man's heart weighs him down, but a good word makes him glad.

Proverbs 12:25

On a breezy day a little boy ran across the pavement to his mother, very fearful of the small creature scurrying closely behind him. "Help! It's chasing me!" "Oh, darling, it's not what it looks like! That's just a tumbleweed, blowing with the wind! See, it's just a ball of dry brush! It cannot hurt you."

When have you been able to comfort someone by pointing out the truth of their circumstances? God does not want us to be afraid or worry. He is present with his love and care for us at all times. We can comfort others in their fear by showing that the "monsters" chasing them are mere "tumbleweeds" in the face of God's mighty power.

Lord, help me to share your love and hope with those who are fearful. Amen.

Seek: Look for opportunities to give someone a peaceful insight in a troubling situation.

Read: 2 Corinthians 4:16-18; Deuteronomy 31:6-8

*Lisa Heule
Littleton, CO*

Tuesday, June 11, 2019

God's Calling

If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him.

James 1:5

A few years ago, a trend of asking, “What would Jesus do?” emerged. This occurred when people were facing morally difficult problems. They tried to determine how Jesus would act and follow his example. I’ve learned to ask myself what God would want me to do. Sometimes it means being called to be brave by reaching out to someone suffering who might reject my help. At other times, it means humbling myself to seek another’s forgiveness. In some cases, I simply need to let God handle the situation. Yet always I need to pray to ask for God’s direction. And I always remember what Jesus did. He gave his life for me!

*Lord, please help me to seek your will at all times.
Amen.*

Pray: Ask God to lead you as you look for ways to help others in need.

Read: Romans 11:33; Matthew 7:7

*Jan Kilby
San Antonio, TX*

Wednesday, June 12, 2019

What About Love?

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

John 3:16

At what age did you first hear this famous passage? Were you in Sunday school? First grade? Vacation Bible School? You might ask, “What kind of love is this?” You learned that this love is the sacrificial love of Jesus on the cross.

What about the word *world*? In the original language it is the word *cosmos*. That means God, through his Son, loved the entire universe, including all the stars of the heavens, the earth and the entire solar system. *World* means the entire human community, including all of us, we who do not want to live a life dependent on God’s love. All this is included when Jesus showed his love as he died on the cross for all and rose from the dead on the third day for all who live under the curse of death.

O Lord Jesus Christ, enable me to live each day in your love. Amen.

Think: How shall I express Jesus’ love today?

Read: Luke 10:38-41; John 12:1-8

Gordon Beck
Williamsburg, VA

Thursday, June 13, 2019

I Will Be Your Server

Jesus ... began to wash his disciples' feet, drying them with the towel that was wrapped around him.

John 13:4-5

Recall a time when you served someone else. Perhaps you drove someone to their doctor's appointment, the grocery store or a worship service.

Now recall a time when someone served you. Do you remember what you said when someone offered to help you? "Thank you, but I can do that myself."

When we give others the opportunity to help us, the Lord indicates they are actually serving him. People give thanks to the Lord by taking the role of a server, who wants to serve the Lord and you at the same time.

Precious Savior, I am thankful that you not only meet my outward, physical needs, but that you also wash me inwardly, washing away my sins. Thank you for being my personal "valet" who provides for all my needs of body and soul. Amen.

Consider: How you can prepare yourself to allow other people to "wait on you hand and foot."

Read: John 13:1-17

*Jerrold Lloyd Nichols
Fort Wayne, IN*

Friday, June 14, 2019

With Interest

Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others.

Philippians 2:4

Scripture tells us to look “to the interests of others,” but we find that very difficult to do. It is much easier to advance our own agendas and blame neighbors or co-workers or politicians—or just about anyone—for putting their interests ahead of our own. Yet we are the ones to blame. Turned inward in sin, we daily put our interests and our needs ahead of the needs of others. The only answer to our wearying self-centeredness is the one who truly did put our interests ahead of his own, our Savior Jesus Christ.

We, now, are to have the mind, or attitude, of Christ Jesus, who “emptied himself ... becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross” (Philippians 2:7-8). Jesus put our interests ahead of his own and we are forgiven and free—to serve.

Lord, help me to look to others’ needs and not only my own. Amen.

Serve: Look for ways to put others’ interests ahead of your own. With the help of the Holy Spirit, put your mind to it!

Read: Philippians 2:1-11

*Carol Geisler
Manchester, MO*

Saturday, June 15, 2019

Success to Significance

They still bear fruit in old age; they are ever full of sap and green.

Psalm 92:14

He was young, just 15, doing an assignment for school: “Young and old together.” We were the older ones, all retired.

The assignment opened up the relationship between the young and old by asking, “What was now important to us and what could our generations offer each other.” It made us look at the question of whether our former work was still the center of our lives and identity. If not, then what had become the center of our lives?

To a person, success was no longer the criteria by which we evaluated our lives. Rather, it was the value we could be to others. Who we had become in Christ and what we could do for others was now the focus of our attention and hopes. Life’s priority had moved in the Lord from success to significance.

Lord, thank you that especially in old age, we can be of value to those around us. Amen.

Give: Share your present values with the young people in your life.

Read: Psalm 92:12-15

*Lionel Otto
Adelaide, Australia*

Sunday, June 16, 2019

Leave a Legacy

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

Psalm 78:5-6

We are setting our young up for spiritual and moral disaster if we, the older generation, fail to teach them the lessons of faith. Every one of us has a responsibility to share the love of Jesus with every generation. We each must think about the legacy that we can leave. What is it that we are sharing with the younger generation? Do they know the love we have for Jesus?

Jesus would have us share his message with the next generation. In other words, we must be focused on the future. The young must hear it from us. How else will they learn the things of faith? The Lord reveals. We teach. God has spoken. The next generation learns from the previous. That's God's plan.

Lord, give me opportunities to share my faith with the next generation. Amen.

Watch: Look for ways to share your faith with the younger generation.

Read: Psalm 78

*Mike Lutz
Shelby Twp., MI*

Monday, June 17, 2019

Give Glory

In the same way, 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

In this Bible verse Jesus encourages us to do like he did and let our light shine for others to see. As believers in Jesus, we hope to follow his command, but how?

Our words and acts of kindness give warmth, light and even radiance in dark and difficult surroundings. What we say and do—feeding the poor, helping the sick, being content and speaking well of others—reflect Jesus' words and actions. With the Holy Spirit guiding us, we beam the light of goodness to others through joyful worship, charitable service and forgiving those who have sinned against us. Even a smile shows God's love.

Dear Jesus, help me show your glory today and every day. Shine brightly and warmly through my words and actions. I pray that all see you when they see me. Amen.

Visualize: Think of ways in which God's glory and love can shine through you.

Read: Matthew 5:14-16

*MaryAnn Sundby
Castle Rock, CO*

Tuesday, June 18, 2019

Encouraging Words

And Hezekiah spoke encouragingly to all the Levites.

2 Chronicles 30:22

We recently went hiking near Sedona. The red mountains, the flowing streams and the gigantic trees are awe-inspiring. Instead of preparing, we just began to walk. Soon we came to a stream to cross. Halfway across that first stream, I froze. The next rock seemed at an awkward angle, unsteady and too far to reach. I'd start to step out to it and then pull back.

People on both sides of the stream, none of whom I knew, started calling out to me with encouragement: "You can do it! You are already halfway there! I did it. You can too." Their words gave me the encouragement to believe that I could do it. Without that encouragement I might have given up and turned back. Each day people cross our paths needing some simple words of encouragement. Just like Hezekiah, you and I can be those encouragers.

Lord, help me regularly to seek to encourage others along the path. Amen.

Uplift: Every day look for ways to encourage others.

Read: 2 Chronicles 30:21-23

*Glen VanderKloot
Springfield, IL*

Wednesday, June 19, 2019

Your Prayer Ministry

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

James 5:16

Do you see yourself as a minister of God? If you are praying for others, you are already on God's ministry team! One of the great privileges we have as Christians is to pray for others. Even if you are homebound or dealing with sickness, you can commit a portion of your day to prayer. The prayers you say have great power to bless others and effect positive changes.

Every time you pray, remember that God delights in hearing your prayers. You could literally change the world by being the one person faithfully praying over a specific matter. Your prayer ministry may be private, but it could be one of the most important things you'll ever do. Time to pray!

Lord Jesus, I'm ready to serve on your ministry team. Help me faithfully set time aside to pray for others. Amen.

Write: Make a list of people for whom you can pray this week.

Read: Philippians 1:9-11; 1 Thessalonians 5:17

*Sarah Geringer
Jackson, MO*

Thursday, June 20, 2019

Together

So we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another.

Romans 12:5

The church, as always, is under frontal attack. However, Satan often chooses subtle lies to do the most damage. Here are a few: “My relationship with God is between him and me” or “I’m just not suited for church. I’m an introvert” or “I can worship God wherever I am. I don’t need a church.”

We are the body of Christ, and the body suffers when not functioning as a whole. “Do not forsake the gathering of yourselves together” (Hebrews 10:25), the early Christians were cautioned. Join a church if you are not already a member. If you are a member, enjoy the fellowship of other Christians. Christ died in order to present the church to himself holy and without blemish, and we believers are the church, each member belonging to all the others.

Dear Father, lead your church to be the hands, eyes, feet and ears of Christ, who is the head. Amen.

Seek: Enjoy the fellowship of your brothers and sisters in Christ.

Read: 1 Corinthians 12:12-27

*Katherine Klempe
St. Paul, MN*

Friday, June 21, 2019

With Humility Comes Joy

For what we proclaim is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, with ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake.

2 Corinthians 4:5

A life lived grounded in Jesus is a life filled with love and joy. Jesus calls us to servanthood, which involves making another's needs as important as our own. "I will strengthen you, I will help you," God tells us (Isaiah 41:10), lest we think we are not up to answering God's call of service. We are all called by God; we are chosen to follow Jesus. Our service can be as simple as offering a cup of tea to a friend or inviting a lonely person over for a game of cards.

Jesus gave himself for us and now we do his work in the world by the means we have available to us. We share with others the love Jesus has shown to us.

Jesus, help me to answer your call of service. I am ready and willing to do your will. Amen.

Help: Look for opportunities today to be of service to others.

Read: Isaiah 6:8

*Sally Macke
St. Louis, MO*

Saturday, June 22, 2019

This Is Who We Are

This is how one should regard us, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God.

1 Corinthians 4:1

Identity is so critical to our lives. It motivates our living and informs our lives from day to day. Loss of identity can be destructive. The loss of a loved one, the loss of a job and retirement can all lead to a loss of identity, putting us in a dark place.

How important it is then to have a strong identity as a child of God. In the passage above, Paul was speaking of his identity as an apostle of Christ. It was not something achieved but given by God. That is important also for us to carry in our hearts. Because of Jesus, our heavenly Father has given us the identity of children of God—and more! We are also servants of the living Lord Jesus and custodians of the mysteries of God. What wonders in Christ we are given to share, as we can become people of blessing to those around us.

Dear Father, help me to carry my identity in Christ with humility and trust in service of others. Amen.

Pray: Thank God for who he has made you in Jesus.

Read: 1 John 3:1-3

*Lionel Otto
Adelaide, Australia*

Sunday, June 23, 2019

Transitioning

A doer who acts, he will be blessed in his doing.

James 1:25

My wife remarked recently that I was “having trouble transitioning.” It’s true. Sometimes I sit on the edge of my chair as if gazing into the flames of some distant campfire: not enough thought and even less movement. This challenge with transitions creeps into my servant life and maybe yours, too. We remember someone who needs a word of encouragement. But we don’t make the phone call. We see greeting cards for all occasions. We don’t choose to send the needed words. We know of loneliness, despair, grief and comfort. We don’t make the time for an actual visit.

Jesus encourages us. He had no trouble with transition. God “chose us in him before the foundation of the world” (Ephesians 1:4). This Doer acted! He visited. He died. He arose. You and I have redemption, forgiveness, union in him and an inheritance with future possession. We are blessed because the Son of God acted on our behalf. Others will be blessed as God acts through us.

Holy Spirit, please inspire us to action. Amen.

Act: Douse some of those distant campfires.

Read: Ephesians 1:1-14

*Harry Edenfield
Brownstown, MI*

Monday, June 24, 2019

The Unselfish Virtue

May you be strengthened ... for all endurance and patience with joy.

Colossians 1:11

The typical prayer is “Lord, give me patience and give it to me right now!” Patience is a service which any of us can do. “You also, be patient ... Do not grumble ... As an example of suffering and patience ... take the prophets” (James 5:8-10). Patience takes daily practice and prayer. As care givers or care receivers we must patiently adjust to changes to which we are not accustomed.

Patience puts others first, like the aggressive lady in the checkout line or the honking driver behind us at the stoplight. My colleague had a sign on his desk: “Be patient with me. God is not finished with me yet.” Patience is also a witness, as we show others by our restraint that it is the Lord who holds us by the hand.

Lord, hold our hands, our tongues and our thoughts as true followers of your love. Amen.

Practice: Exercise patience in a frustrating situation.

Read: Ecclesiastes 7:8-9; 2 Corinthians 6:4-6; Colossians 1:11-14

*Connie Bretscher
Valparaiso, IN*

Tuesday, June 25, 2019

A Newborn Cry

He saved us ... by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit.

Titus 3:5

The first breath is miraculous and amazing beyond understanding. Mom breathes for baby. The fetus grows and lungs develop. At birth, a newborn gives a first cry. Our loving Creator once again creates new life!

Yet the greater miracle and mystery is our second birth. We were born again in baptismal waters. The angels in heaven rejoiced at our rebirth. The Holy Spirit sealed our faith in baptismal water. Daily we renew our second birth with the sign of the cross. In our evening years we still praise God for every breath since that first breath we took, long, long ago. But we marvel even more at our new life in Christ, begun in baptismal waters.

*Come, Holy Spirit, fill our hearts with baptismal joy in the forgiveness of sins, life and salvation!
Amen.*

Remember: Call, text or Facebook your children or others in God's family, asking about memories of their Baptism.

Read: John 3:1-16; Titus 3:4-7; Romans 6:4

*Rodney Otto
Grand Rapids, MI*

Wednesday, June 26, 2019

Your Amazing Power

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

Ephesians 3:20-21

The other day when I was working out in the fitness center, a man said, “Soon you’ll be like Charles Atlas.” No, at my age, I only hope to maintain a little of the strength I once had. To be honest, even my mind is getting weaker. So how can I have “power at work” in me? Am I really powerful?

The power that you and I have is the power of the Spirit. Jesus promised that the Spirit will be in all who believe in him. The Spirit is “able to do far more abundantly than all we ask or think.” It is not we who have that abundant power, but the Spirit that is in us.

O Lord God, thank you for the Spirit who has called us to faith and keeps us in the faith. We pray that the Spirit may guide our words and actions today so that we may be strong. In Jesus’ name. Amen.

Remember: “[God] saved us ... by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit” (Titus 3:5).

Read: Ephesians 3:14-21

*Eldor Kaiser
Lenexa, KS*

Thursday, June 27, 2019

Crossroads of Learning

For though I am free from all, I have made myself a servant to all, that I might win more of them.

1 Corinthians 9:19

Holidays were exciting times for my wife and myself, especially when we travelled into the Australian Outback. Sometimes, though, uncertainty crept into our journeys when we came to a crossroad that did not appear on our map. Which road do we take? Where will it lead?

Living in the second half of our lives can also seem a bit like that. Crossroads appear from a whole number of circumstances. Even old age can appear as a crossroad where we have to pause and choose. Uncertainty wells up within us. But as we learned on our holiday journeys, crossroads can also lead us to new and wonderful discoveries. The Lord is as much a part of our lives as we age, as he was at our birth and in our formative years. Now, freed from work, we can stop and allow our maturity in the faith to focus our daily living on Christ and others.

Father, thank you for the turns in life that bring so many blessings. Amen.

Remember: Think of what you have learned from the many crossroads you have met in life.

Read: 1 Corinthians 9:19-23

Lionel Otto
Adelaide, Australia

Friday, June 28, 2019

Gifts for One Another

As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace.

1 Peter 4:10

How fortunate we are that God has blessed us with talents and gifts given “for the common good” (1 Corinthians 12:7). Some of us are good at making newcomers feel welcome, while others are generous with their time. There are those whose sense of humor keeps people around them smiling.

As we thank God for the gifts we have received, God instills in us a sense of gladness, and we are inspired to give of ourselves even more. In this way we share in God's goodness, and answer God's call to love and serve others with joyful hearts. When we use our gifts for the good of others, we inspire others to do the same, and a positive ripple effect keeps happening. Glory be to God!

Thank you, Lord, for all of your gifts for us. Amen.

Ask: How has God, the author of all life and goodness, blessed me? How will I use that gift today?

Read: Matthew 25:23; 1 Corinthians 12:4-7

*Sally Macke
St. Louis, MO*

Saturday, June 29, 2019

The Plan

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

John 3:16

I remember watching *The A-Team* on television. Hannibal, leader of the group, would say, “I love it when a plan comes together.” I still recall that line when I read these words from St. Paul: “When the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son” (Galatians 4:4).

God has big plans too. He wants all people to be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth (1 Timothy 2:4). That means that he wants all people to know Jesus Christ as their personal Savior and Friend, and that’s the truth.

But how could God pull off this plan? There was only one way: God gave his only begotten Son so that whoever believes in him would have eternal life. Don’t you just love it when a plan comes together?

Lord, I thank you that your great plan for the world included me. Amen.

Ask: What do you have planned for today?

Read: Galatians 4:4-7

*Edward Arle
St. Charles, MO*

Sunday, June 30, 2019

A Paisley Shirt

Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst."

John 6:35

I asked my daughter what she wanted from her grandmother's things. She wanted only one thing, a washed-out paisley shirt that Grandma wore when she worked in the vegetable garden. It represented the essence of Grandma, a farmer's daughter.

What is the essence of our faith? The obvious answer is Jesus, but knowing that answer and keeping it central in our lives is a challenge. When Jesus said that he was the bread of life, the crowd went away confused and indignant. Little did they know how different he was from the manna their forefathers ate in the desert, or how true his teaching is. We are blessed with those same words and know that he went to the cross for us. We follow him not for earthly bread alone, but for the eternal bread.

Lord, thank you for our daily bread. Amen.

Meditate: Think about "the bread of life." What does it mean to you?

Read: John 6:35-40; Psalm 27:4-5

*Judy Scherr
Lemay, MO*

HOLY HABITS for **HOPE-FULL HEALTH**

Psalm 100:2 says it so well: “Serve the Lord with gladness.” Let us count the ways we can do this:

- S **SERVE** the Lord by first being fed God’s Word and Sacraments at worship **SERVICES!** We need to be fed before we can **SERVE** the Lord!
- E **ENABLE** others to serve where you are unable to do so through your financial gifts and prayers for God’s people and your favorite ministries.
- R **REMEMBER** that “They also serve who only stand and wait!” If we are unable to physically serve others, the power of prayer is always with us!
- V **VINTAGE**—Older adults are valuable resources as we share our stories of both success and failure. Seek out the younger people around you to guide and counsel.
- E **EncourAGE**—So many people need more **YES** people around them than **NO** people! Serve by giving “Holy Hugs” through your words and actions!

And remember, Psalm 100:2 states that we are to “Serve the Lord with **GLADNESS**,” not **SADNESS**. Celebrate the fact that we serve others, not because we “have to” do it but because we “get to” do it! Hooray in the Lord!

Hope-Full Praying

Praying for Healing

Lord of healing, our friends and family continue to grow restless and weary because of poor health. The list of “Prayers for the Sick” continues to grow in our congregation. Disease and despair are all around us. Bring healing, Lord, to us and to the others. Renew in us the hope we have in you as the one who can heal all. Grant us your healing power also, Lord, so that we may share comfort and hope with those who are struggling around us. Amen.

On Being a Servant

Lord, you came to serve us so that we are empowered to serve others. As we serve and celebrate our faith in you, bring comfort and hope to us so that we can truly serve and celebrate our life in you. Give us the patience to care for others and give others the patience to care for us. Lead us, Lord, to serve and care for others. Amen.

Staying in the Word

Words, words, words, Lord! We are constantly bombarded with words—of sorrow and hope, of anger and greed, of failure and success. Help us to sort out these words, Lord, so that our words are your words of peace, hope, forgiveness and love. Help us always, Lord, to see you as our Word made flesh. In your name we pray. Amen.

Hope-Full Praying

Thanksgiving for Loved Ones

We pray today, Lord, for family and friends near and dear to us. We pray that you will watch over them, guide and direct them, and continue to bring hope and forgiveness to them. When they stray, bring them back to your fold. When they rejoice, help us to rejoice with them. Enable us, too, to love, forgive and support them, as you do for all of us. Amen.

Graduations

What grand celebrations occur when family and loved ones complete a stage of their education. Lord, today we ask you to bless and guide all such graduates, from the smallest in kindergarten to the wisest in grad school. As they each receive their sheepskin diplomas, let them never forget you, the true Shepherd of the flock. Amen.

Enjoying Nature

Lord, bring to us this day a renewed appreciation and excitement of the gift of nature. Make us kids again, O Creator, as we admire the ant, listen to the buzzing of the bee, play with the animals, and even welcome the growing of the fresh green grass! Do not only let us just “smell the roses,” but let us also stop to admire and worship their Creator, in Jesus’ name. Amen.

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