

HOPE-FULL LIVING

• *Daily Devotions for Christian Seniors* •

April • May • June • 2014

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Rich Bimler, Mark Zimmermann, Editors
Carol Geisler, Kasey Nugent, Editorial Assistants

Hope-Full Living Mission Statement

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

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Tuesday, April 1, 2014

Even You!

So that your trust may be in the Lord, I teach you today, even you.

Proverbs 22:19

Strange, isn't it, that the Lord seems to be suggesting that we older adults still need to be taught something? After all of our experiences and years of learning and even teaching others, he says to us, "... even you"?

"Even you" means that God's grace comes to us even when we do not know everything. "Even you" means that we need not rely on our knowledge of life but should continue to cling to the Lord's love and forgiveness! "Even you" means that even when we become too busy doing other things, the Lord is never too busy to grace us with his presence. Even you (and I) trust in God's promise this day because his presence has nothing to do with how much we know, but on whose we are. And we know, in Christ, that we are the Lord's!

Lord, keep us learning and sharing your love and forgiveness with others. Help us to continue to learn and grow and trust in you. Amen.

Learn: Learn something new this day about the Lord and even about yourself!

Read: 2 Timothy 3:14-17; Colossians 3:16-17

*Rich Bimler
Bloomington, IL*

Wednesday, April 2, 2014

Wisdom for the Aged

Is not wisdom found among the aged? Does not long life bring understanding?

Job 12:12

Chronologically, I am an old man. 75. Wow! Where did the time go? I don't feel old—well, at least mentally.

But age does have its advantages. I get discounts at movies. Occasionally I'll be offered someone's seat. Sometimes memory lapses come in handy. People offer other kindnesses. Clearly, God has arranged certain advantages for every age.

Furthermore, God continues to have a purpose for every life regardless of age. In congregational life one can teach a Bible class, take on a leadership role, sing in the choir and volunteer.

The old bromide says there's a difference between four years of learning and one year of learning four times. Hopefully, rather than stagnating, one's life continues to add knowledge through experience. Make the most of every moment God provides.

Dear Lord, keep my mind active and make me a blessing to your Church. Amen.

Find: Find a way to use your talents to help someone today.

Read: 2 Chronicles 1:7-13; Matthew 11:18-19

*David. W. Eggebrecht
Grafton, WI*

Thursday, April 3, 2014

Bask in the Son

I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.

John 15:5

The flowers were beautiful when I brought the pot home from the greenhouse. I placed it in a prominent spot near the door where visitors could admire it. However, as time went on, the plant produced fewer blooms and received less praise. It seems that I had placed it in the shade when it needed sunshine. I moved it into a sunny area, and gradually the plant returned to its original splendor.

I am like that pot of flowers. I'm at my best when I have daily contact with the Son, but I fade when I'm away from his light. The nourishment of the Son causes my life to bloom with his love. And, like that potted plant, others notice. They see the light of the Son shining through.

Lord, thank you for your Word and for prayer. This is where we can meet with the Son every day. Amen.

Read: Read a passage of Scripture every day.

Read: 1 John 1:7; Psalm 19:7-11; Psalm 119:105

*Lynne Waite Chapman
Fort Wayne, IN*

Friday, April 4, 2014

Sprinkle with Salt

You are the salt of the earth.

Matthew 5:13

For years I used table salt. What else was there? A few years ago sea salt became the “new” salt. At our son and wife’s table we were introduced to pink Himalayan Crystal Salt. Salt of any kind seasons our food.

Jesus tells us, “You are the salt of the earth, but if salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltiness be restored?” (Matthew 5:13). As the salt of the earth we are to be useful, seasoning the lives of friends and family and anyone who walks into our lives. Seasoning may take the form of encouraging words, smiles, hugs, visiting, calling, emailing and sharing his steadfast love and faithfulness. To keep the flavor fresh, go to God’s Word, ask for forgiveness when you fail and pray for his guidance.

Lord, keep us salty. Amen.

Action: Sprinkle salt each day as a witness of his steadfast love, grace and mercy.

Read: Matthew 5:13; Luke 14:34-35

*Naomi Weslock
Lake in the Hills, IL*

Saturday, April 5, 2014

Remember His Works

Sing to the Lord, all the earth! Tell of his salvation from day to day.

1 Chronicles 16:23

Remember when you were a little kid? Remember the joy of catching lightning bugs in an old mason jar? Maybe playing “Mother, May I” with your sisters? Memories of those innocent and carefree days spent outside in God’s marvelous fresh air, warm sunshine and his cool grass beneath your bare feet just seem to evoke more and more good memories. Surely the most precious memory you have is that time that you realized for the first time that he created you, loves you and gave himself for you. How special you felt that day. Close your eyes, take a deep breath and feel the wonder of his marvelous love for you one more time. Then tell someone else so they, too, can bask in such joy!

Almighty God, you have blessed me beyond my understanding. That is a gift too precious not to share! Amen.

Sing: Sing a song of thanks and praise to your precious Redeemer as you recall the many wonderful things he has done for you.

Read: 1 Chronicles 16:8-36

Terry Weber
Williamsburg, VA

Sunday, April 6, 2014

The Pictures We Paint!

Rather, we have renounced secret and shameful ways; we do not use deception, nor do we distort the word of God.

2 Corinthians 4:2

I've always enjoyed trips to art museums over the years. I'm fascinated by the different styles of artists over the centuries. Impressionism, realism and cubism are just a few examples. Each artist had their own painting style. Some painted realistically like Michelangelo, while others such as Pablo Picasso painted a distorted image.

When others view your life, what impression do they receive? How do you "paint" the picture of your life? Is it an accurate portrayal of you and your life and faith? Are you living your life honestly and according to God's plan?

Dear God, help me to accurately paint my life's portrait so that I may give honor and glory to your holy name. Amen.

Reflect: What do your actions in life say about you and your faith?

Read: 2 Corinthians 4:1-7

Betsy Becker Niedringhaus
Ballwin, MO

Monday, April 7, 2014

What Do You See?

Man looks on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart.

1 Samuel 16:7

A friend of ours is an artist. She takes a verse of Scripture and paints a picture around that word. In layer upon layer of images the story unfolds, and the closer you examine the picture the more you see. Her works are wonderful conversation-starters, opening up precious opportunities to share the message of Christ.

Jesus also drew people in with simple images and stories. He invited people to look further, to linger with him longer. He wanted people to discover the mystery that lay within him.

God has painted image upon image in your life and mine, images that point back to him. He wants us to invite others in, to share those images, that they, too, might find the Christ within us.

I thank you, Lord, for the way that you have shaped my life. I see Christ within. May others also see in their lives images of Christ at work. Amen.

Write: Write down the images of Christ at work in your life that make the picture of you.

Read: 1 Samuel 16: 1-13

*Lionel Otto
Adelaide, Australia*

Tuesday, April 8, 2014

To the Rescue

The Lord will keep your going out and your coming in from this time forth and forevermore.

Psalm 121:8

Westerns and adventure TV shows in the 1950s and '60s featured many an unfortunate character who got trapped in an abandoned mine, fell down a well or stepped into quicksand. In the quicksand scenario, someone invariably extended a rope or branch, and the hero (person, dog or horse) rescued the victim in the nick of time.

Life sometimes feels like quicksand. Life can drag us down and keep us from moving. Our Lord knows every pitfall and offers us his lifeline. Jesus is the hero who tosses the rope and pulls us to safety. Again and again, Scripture assures that God will rescue and care for us lovingly, now and forever. Watch for his words, and welcome his rescue.

Dear Jesus, help me hold firmly by faith to your lifeline. Amen.

Share: Offer the lifeline of God's gracious Word to someone who is sinking.

Read: 2 Timothy 4:18; Matthew 7:24-29

*Marj Maynard
Billings, MO*

Wednesday, April 9, 2014

Rooftop Retreat

Be still and know that I am God.

Psalm 46:10

When I lived in Buenos Aires, Argentina, as a study abroad student, my apartment building had a roof where I often spent my afternoons doing homework. It was peaceful, quiet and had a great view of the sky. It was a perfect place to focus, think and pray when I felt distracted by work and class. The roof was a place of tranquility when I needed to listen for the Lord. Sometimes we struggle to be still. We have commitments—meetings, luncheons or tee times—that ask for our concentration. But if we listen and take a moment to be still, the Lord will provide the calm and clarity we need. What a blessed relief!

Dear Lord, help me turn to you when life gets chaotic. Make me quiet in your presence and bring me your peace. Amen.

Find: Find a quiet place where you can spend a few moments with God today.

Read: Job 22:21; Psalm 29:11

*Allison Lewis
Columbia, MO*

Thursday, April 10, 2014

See?

Then Peter came to himself and said, “Now I know without a doubt that the Lord sent his angel and rescued me ...”

Acts 12:11

Peter is imprisoned under heavy guard. An angel comes, helping him to escape. Peter doesn't believe it. "Is it a vision?" He runs to Mary's house; they almost don't let him inside. "It can't be him," say those who've reverently prayed for his release. But it *was* him. Peter had been miraculously rescued by God.

We all pray and abide. Suddenly things happen in a bigger, better, unimaginable way. We are rescued! We rejoice at God's greatness and shake our heads at our low expectations. Will we ever see, without a doubt, that God's vision is our reality?

If I cannot see your vision, Lord, at least help me to catch on quicker! Amen.

Write: When's the last time God came through for you in a big way? Write your story in a letter. Mail it to someone needing encouragement.

Read: 2 Kings 4:1-7; John 11:1-44

*K.S. Wuertz
Leslie, MO*

Friday, April 11, 2014

Hold My Hand

[Jesus] touched her hand, and the fever left her, and she rose and began to serve him.

Matthew 8:15

I have a habit. I fold my thumb into the palm of my hand. Then I curl my fingers over that thumb. I do this unconsciously. Somehow it makes me feel better. I wonder if, in a sense, I'm holding my own hand. Touch is so reassuring!

My friend is 99 years old. Her only living relative is far away. Sometimes when I visit her, I hold her hand. I think this reassures her that someone loves her, someone cares. My doctor did something similar for me once, holding my hand briefly before I went into surgery. Touch is so reassuring!

Jesus touched people, healing, assuring, loving them.

You can be Jesus' hands. You can hold a hand today. His love can flow through you!

Jesus, let your love flow through my hands. Amen.

Hold: Hold a hand today.

Read: Matthew 8:14-15, 9:20-22; Luke 24:36-43

*Donna J. Streufert
South Bend, IN*

Saturday, April 12, 2014

Vision

I was blind but now I see!

John 9:25

An old friend from college recently told me that he'd just been to Europe. Since he is blind, I silently questioned what he could have experienced. He walked on the beach at Normandy and felt the courage of the GIs on D-Day. At Salisbury's cathedral he heard a children's choir with voices like angels. The British Museum allows blind visitors to touch the Parthenon Marbles. He put his fingers in one of the horse's hooves, and it was amazing.

I initially couldn't see how my old friend could enjoy a trip to Europe, and we sometimes can't see the gifts and opportunities Jesus places right in front of us. The blind man's story in chapter 9 of John's Gospel shows us that people with sight also can be blind. The man's parents were blind with fear, and the Pharisees were blind with arrogance. But the blind man saw with clarity: "He opened my eyes!" (v. 30). Then he said to Jesus, "Lord, I believe" (v. 38).

Lord, grant me, too, the clear-sighted joy that you gave the blind man. Amen.

Look: Look for opportunities to share the eye-opening love of Jesus.

Read: John 9

Sally Beck
University City, MO

Sunday, April 13, 2014

Jesus Lives Here!

Whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of you that you are standing firm in one spirit

...

Philippians 1:27

Does your home reflect the presence of Jesus? In many homes, a popular portrait of “The Head of Christ” is displayed. It is said that the artist, Warner Sallman, desired to reflect two basic emotions in this painting—sorrow and joy. His inspiration for the portrait is Luke 9:51: “When the days drew near for him to be taken up, he set his face to go to Jerusalem.”

There was indeed sorrow as Jesus contemplated the pain of the cross, the derision and ridicule of men, the loss of disciples and friends as they would forsake him and flee. However, there was also joy as he realized that his death was God’s plan of salvation for all men, and beyond the cross is heaven and eternity.

May your life and death supply grace to live and grace to die, grace to reach our home on high. Hear us, holy Jesus. Amen.

Surprise: Surprise an acquaintance in assisted living or a nursing home with a greeting.

Read: John 16:16-20

*Claire Kuddes
Independence, MO*

Monday, April 14, 2014

Go to Dark Gethsemane

Watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation.

Matthew 26:41

The words of a familiar hymn evoke memories of childhood, sitting in a darkened church during Holy Week. In my childish way I pictured Jesus leaving the Upper Room and walking to the Garden of Gethsemane asking me to pray with him from a heavy heart. My eyelids were drooping in that darkened church as I wanted to watch and pray with him but wasn't doing very well. Somehow in those worship days I followed to the Judgment Hall and climbed Calvary's mournful mountain. I saw him dying for me and everyone. On Easter I early hastened to the tomb and learned that Christ is risen to give me life and joy.

How about you? Does a familiar Lenten hymn still help you pray, follow, climb, die to sin and rise to a new life of service? His life, death and resurrection are real for us and the world.

Lord, teach me to pray with you this Holy Week in thanksgiving for your suffering, death and resurrection. Amen.

Meditate: Meditate on a favorite Lenten hymn.

Read: Matthew 26:36-46

*Stephen J. Carter
Oakville, MO*

Tuesday, April 15, 2014

Righteous Acts

All our righteous acts are like filthy rags ... Yet you, Lord, are our Father ... do not remember our sins forever.

Isaiah 64:6, 8, 9

I am a director of actors. I tell them what to do, and they do it. God is the director of our world, but he gives his actors much more freedom. Unfortunately, they create serious problems; in short, they sin.

Since Adam and Eve, every human being has been a sinner. But, like the response to the conflict of a play, the hero, Jesus, comes to the rescue, restoring the world.

Jesus came to the rescue of mankind and sacrificed himself so that for every believer the curtain falls on a restored soul that will spend eternity with him. There is no tragic ending for those who believe in Jesus, only the happy ending of eternity with him.

Lord God, heavenly Father, thank you for rescuing us through your Son, Jesus. Amen.

Write: Write a two-page script with you as the hero overcoming a temptation.

Read: Isaiah 64:8-12; John 17:20-26

*David W. Eggebrecht
Grafton, WI*

Wednesday, April 16, 2014

The Cup

Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from me. Nevertheless, not my will, but yours, be done.

Luke 22:42

As the years sneak up on us, we are seeing that cup in various ways—perhaps in the form of weakness, pain, indecision, loss of loved ones or failing memory.

Jesus in his agony gives us the best possible prayer lesson. We can, as Jesus did, place our will under God's will, for we are sure that God only knows what is best for us and will make "all things work together for good for those who fear him" (Romans 8:28). We can live our days joyfully with the assurance that our loving Father will stay beside us to strengthen us and give us hope, even if our dire situation seems not to change. "I know the plans I have for you ... plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope," God says (Jeremiah 29:11).

We must not forget that God not only gives us a cup of suffering, but a cup of blessing. In that cup is our forgiveness and peace.

Loving Jesus, let us live each day in the assurance of your promise of peace. Amen.

Help: Help someone drink today from the cup of Jesus' forgiveness and peace.

Read: Jeremiah 29:11; Luke 22

*Connie Bretscher
Valparaiso, IN*

Thursday, April 17, 2014

Loneliness

He departed and went out to a desolate place, and there he prayed.

Mark 1:35

Val is 94 and has been a friend of the family for almost 20 years. When Val answers my phone call, her voice lacks energy. Then we talk. We fill each other in on our families. We mention the weather, for our bones tell us of weather's importance. Then Val shares what she does with her loneliness. Though she drives very little, she regularly makes it to church. Though Val's days may pass slowly and her nights even more so, she prays to Jesus faithfully. Now her voice has more energy. And so do I.

Regardless of age, we all have our lonely times. Jesus' prayer time on Maundy Thursday at Gethsemane was during a lonely time. Our Lord Jesus, a king named David and a friend named Val remind us that God does turn to us and he is gracious.

Dear Lord God, thank you for encouraging the lonely. Amen.

Learn: Learn from and teach others about God's graciousness in their lives.

Read: Psalm 25:1-7; Matthew 26:36-46

*Harry Edenfield
Brownstown, MI*

Friday, April 18, 2014

Redeemed

For I know that my Redeemer lives, and at the last he will stand upon the earth.

Job 19:25

When I was growing up, we saved green stamps. I licked countless stamps and glued them in saving books to be redeemed for various items. But they had an expiration date, and if they weren't used by that date they were useless.

To redeem something means to buy it back, and the person who does the buying back is called the redeemer.

Jesus is called the Redeemer because he bought us back from sin and Satan with his very own blood, shed on the cross. Now we are forgiven and free to live a redeemed life. There's no expiration date on our redemption. It lasts forever, because after we die we will live eternally with our Redeemer in heaven.

Jesus, thank you for redeeming me from sin, death and the devil. Amen.

Read: Read or sing the hymn "I Know That My Redeemer Lives" and really think about its message.

Read: Galatians 3:10-14

*Jeanette Dall
Batavia, IL*

Saturday, April 19, 2014

What's Around the Corner?

Therefore do not be anxious about tomorrow ...

Matthew 6:34

“You never know what’s around the corner!” How often we hear or think those words as we grow older. And it is natural.

On Good Friday when soldiers nailed Jesus to the cross, the disciples ran and hid. They did not know that just around the corner was Easter and victory.

Jesus’ word of encouragement to not worry about tomorrow is especially significant for us. It stands on the foundation of all of God’s promises won for us in Jesus’ death and resurrection.

We may not know what lies immediately around the corner, but we do know that the corner leads to God’s promised and secure future.

Lord Jesus, when I fear the unknown, remind me that you are with me and nothing is unknown to you. Amen.

Remember: Think of the many corners you were afraid to turn, only to find that God was already there with you.

Read: Psalm 139

*Lionel Otto
Adelaide, Australia*

Sunday, April 20, 2014

The Empty Tomb

Because I live, you shall live also.

John 14:19

It's the third day. Hearts are heavy with sadness and apprehension. The shadows of dawn creep over the countryside as light begins to break through. Mary Magdalene, in the company of other women, approaches the tomb and sees the stone rolled away. Without hesitation, she retreats, and by God's desiring she meets Peter and John. The race is on, and what do they find? Inside the tomb, burial cloths are neatly folded and rolled together. There's no sign of haste or destruction, which would have signaled the violation of a body stolen. The angel tells it all: "He is not here; he is risen!"

Our hearts leap with joy as Christians worldwide celebrate the miracle of Christ's resurrection. The victory of the grave is turned to defeat; the sting of death is taken away. The victory is ours!

He lives, he lives, who once was dead! He lives, my ever-living head. Amen.

Take: Take someone's hand and share with joy the Easter greeting, "Christ is risen; he is risen indeed! Alleluia!"

Read: John 14:1-7; John 20:1-18

*Claire Kuddes
Independence, MO*

Monday, April 21, 2014

Easter Eyes!

She turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not realize that it was Jesus.

John 20:14

Oh, how many times are we like Mary Magdalene! We know that Jesus is with us, but we fail to really “see” him. We fail to hear him speaking to us through his people, the Church. He is with us in all creation, yet we notice him not.

But he loves us still and continues to woo us back to him, through the Word and the sacraments. His death and resurrection give us “Easter eyes” to see him and to see others the way Christ sees us—as forgiven people in him! In another sense, we are cross-eyed people as we serve and celebrate Christ through the cross and the empty tomb!

Look around you today, and see Jesus in the little child, in your new neighbor, in patients at the doctor’s office, in those you love and even in those you only hear about in the daily news.

Lord, thanks for giving us Easter eyes as we go about Easterizing the world. Amen.

See: Enjoy seeing others today through your Easter eyes. And remind others that they have Easter eyes as well!

Read: Matthew 25:31-40; Luke 24:36-53

*Rich Bimler
Bloomington, IL*

Tuesday, April 22, 2014

In God We Trust

Dear children, let us not love with words or speech but with actions and in truth.

1 John 3:18

“In God We Trust” became an official motto of the USA by an act of Congress on April 22, 1956. The phrase had already appeared on U.S. coins since 1864!

“In God We Trust” is a phrase that rises from the voices of all God’s people of every age and from every nation. God who created us also saves us from eternal death by the gift of Jesus, who gave his life for us. God is faithful. We trust in him.

Is “In God We Trust” just a nice phrase? Or is it really a motto we live by? When our strength fails, when our days are numbered, God is still faithful. He blesses our lives now and into eternity. We say “In God We Trust!” with every kind response, with every thoughtful action, in all patient waiting. We don’t just say the words. By God’s grace, we live “In God We Trust!”

God of the Nations, bring your peace and forgiveness to all people that they might trust in you. Amen.

Check: Check your bills and change for “In God We Trust.” Give some of it away!

Read: Matthew 6:25-34

Lonie Eatherton
Fenton, MO

Wednesday, April 23, 2014

Easter Eggs

Whoever believes in him should not perish, but have eternal life.

John 3:16

Picture an Easter basket full of eggs. Eggs originally were a symbol of spring and new life. But these eggs promise something different.

Some are the kind that open, usually with candy inside. I open one, and inside I find a Christmas ornament—a reminder of how God showed his love at Christmas. I open another egg and see a cross—a reminder of the death Jesus died to redeem us. It shows God is just. I open a third egg and find a flower.

Flowers are often used as symbols of life. This flower is a special kind of lily. First, a bunch of leaves grow but soon die; the plant seems completely dead. Later a stem shoots up, and at the end of the stem is a cluster of beautiful flowers. It is called a resurrection lily. So I am reminded that God is a God of PROMISE, who is LOVING and JUST. Each Easter egg reminds me of God's faithfulness.

Loving and just God, help me to always believe in your promise of life eternal. Amen

Do: Give someone an Easter egg and tell how it reminds you of God's promises.

Read: 1 John 4:7-12

*Eldor Kaiser
Lenexa, KS*

Thursday, April 24, 2014

The Whole Story

Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory?

Luke 24:26

We teach youngsters early in their lives that God loves them. Jesus has the same message for people once they grow into adults, tying nature studies of birds and flowers to a powerful, wise and caring God. But there's so much more that God would have us know. The gospels tell us of people who came out in the thousands to receive his teachings. And there were Twelve who signed on for a three-year walking course with him. And yet, at the climax of his life and the ultimate moment of self-sacrificing commitment for all people of all times, they stumbled.

Two of these were Emmaus bound. It was late on Easter Day. Discussing the day's happenings came easy. Believing it was something else. Shaking his head, Jesus expressed his disappointment at their doubtings, but patiently told how what he had come to achieve he had now accomplished.

Lord, keep us sharing the genuine joy of Easter, remembering you know us each by name. Amen.

Share: Tell someone something you discovered anew in this reading from Luke 24 below.

Read: Luke 24:13-47

Karl E. Lutze
Valparaiso, IN

Friday, April 25, 2014

Reminders

Dust returns to the earth as it was, and the spirit returns to God ...

Ecclesiastes 12:7

We call them couches, sofas or sectionals. Over many years, our home has had only a few. Recently, we ordered a new one from a friend's store. It occurs to me that this may be the last one we will ever purchase.

I'm moving toward that point that Mom, Dad and Brother have already reached. It is the point that my Savior Jesus willingly met on a Good Friday cross 2000 years ago: death.

Jesus had reminders of his coming death too. I am one of them. So are you. We are sinful dust returning "to the earth." We need the death of God's sinless Son to receive forgiveness. Only then can our spirits "return to God," who first gave life to dust.

Reminders of my death remind me of Jesus' death. And that reminds me of Easter. And eternity. And heaven. And reunion. So what if it's my last couch?

Dear Lord God, as my dust settles, may I always see Jesus. Amen.

Remember: Remember that Good Friday + Easter = victory.

Read: Ecclesiastes 12:1-7; Luke 24:1-12

*Harry Edenfield
Brownstown, MI*

Saturday, April 26, 2014

Not One Will Be Missing

Can a woman forget her nursing child, that she should have no compassion on the son of her womb? Even these may forget, yet I will not forget you.

Isaiah 49:15-16

During recent travels in England, my wife and I wandered through many ancient church cemeteries. Often the church buildings had been abandoned; the cemeteries appeared neglected. The grave markers were so weathered that you could not read names or dates. Who were these people laid to rest here? Does anyone know? Does anyone care?

Well, there is One who knows and cares. The Sovereign God makes it a point to remember. And when Jesus returns to gather the faithful, not a one will be forgotten, nor fail to enter the eternal Kingdom as a ransomed body and soul!

Lord, you have written our names in your heart, upon the palms of your hands and in your Book of Life. Remind us of that when we feel passed over. Amen.

Write down: Have you written out your wishes for your funeral service for your loved ones? This is a chance to shape your final witness to the hope that is within you.

Read: Isaiah 49:8-16; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18

*Ted Zimmerman
Napa, CA*

Sunday, April 27, 2014

Thanks, Thomas

And [Thomas] said, "Unless I see ... I will never believe."

John 20:25

Thomas. I love the guy. The disciples were holed up in a room scared witless after the death of Jesus. Not Thomas. He was out and about, no doubt looking for some hard evidence that would make sense of the recent, apparently disastrous events now compounded by a disappeared corpse. But for his effort all he got from the Church was a label: "doubting." Yet he raises the absolutely correct issue: "Did you guys see the crucified one or some wished-for mirage?" If what the disciples saw was not the very one who wore the wounds of crucifixion, Thomas knew they still didn't have a Savior. He didn't doubt Jesus: he disbelieved the testimony of his brothers and sisters. So Jesus' correction of Thomas is not a scolding but the good news: when God's people proclaim that they have "seen the Lord" active and operating in their lives, it is real, or as the Gospel of John says it: the truth (John 19:35).

Lord, help me to be strengthened and made joyful through the faithful witness of others. Amen.

Talk: Talk with others about your faith in Jesus.

Read: John 20

*Mike May
Kansas City, KS*

Monday, April 28, 2014

Behold, a White Horse!

Behold, a white horse! The one sitting on it is called Faithful and True ...

Revelation 19:11

Sitting in our seasonal room at the back of our suburban house, I was startled to see a white horse with a rider on our front sidewalk. Later, as my wife, Gail, checked for our mail, she saw three horses with riders returning and learned they were bringing a horse for a neighbor to ride. What a startling experience for both of us!

I was reminded of the white horse in John's vision, a vision filled with startling images of God's unfolding plan of salvation in a wicked and rebellious world. When Christ returns at the Last Day, he is described as the rider on a white horse, called Faithful and True, having won our salvation humbly on a cross, risen and ascended, now returning in glory to bring all believers home to heaven. The white horse suddenly appearing at our house reminds me to be ready in faith for that Second Coming.

Lord, help me welcome your Second Coming and invite others to be ready in faith. Amen.

Question: What startling reminder of his presence and plan might God have in store for you this week?

Read: Revelation 19:11-16

*Stephen J. Carter
Oakville, MO*

Tuesday, April 29, 2014

You Are God's Fruitful Tree

That person is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither—whatever they do prospers.

Psalm 1:3

When I was a junior in high school, our chemistry teacher told us one day that all original contributions were made by the time one was 25. Thank God the psalmist sees me in a very different light than my chemistry teacher.

Psalm 1:3 says we are vital, no matter our age. We are trees, planted by the stream of God's river of love. The fruit of the Spirit (love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control) is growing in us. Though on occasion we may feel like we are withering, our "leaves do not wither."

How much does God love us? A lot! What a wonder his love is for us. What a blessing the fruit of our lives will be to those around us today.

Holy Father, thank you for causing me to be fruitful. Allow me to be a blessing to others today. Amen.

Plant: Plant the seeds of Jesus' love in your conversation with others.

Read: Psalm 1; Galatians 5:22-23

*Don Schatz
Arcata, CA*

Wednesday, April 30, 2014

Useful

Set apart as holy, useful to the master of the house.

2 Timothy 2:21

You may not feel very useful. You may, at times, feel useless. Christians all around you are busy serving the Lord. They are impressive! They are so talented and capable. Perhaps you want to be like that—glittering and shining in service to Christ. But not every dish in a house shines like fine china. Some dishes are pottery or plastic. The outside of the dish is not what matters. What matters is on the inside.

If you feel like a not so shiny—and somewhat useless—dish of pottery or plastic, remember that you have been made clean in Christ. You are set apart as holy. Being shiny and noticed is not what matters. What matters is being forgiven and “ready for every good work,” however simple or small. What matters is being useful to the Master.

Lord Jesus, forgive my sins and make me useful to you, the Master of the household of God. Amen.

Remember: You are a useful vessel, clean and forgiven, in the Lord's service.

Read: 2 Timothy 2:20-22

*Carol Geisler
Manchester, MO*

Thursday, May 1, 2014

Project Time

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!

2 Corinthians 5:17

When May comes around, my wife has me thinking about flowers and gardening. Personally, I'm thinking painting and mowing. It doesn't matter, because either way it is project time. It is good to keep busy with projects, to have something to do, anything, even if it is tedious and mundane.

Projects give us reasons to stay active. God stays active too. We are constantly being worked on by him. We are his project. The biggest project was the sending of his Son, Jesus, to die in our place and be raised to new life for us. That project transformed you and me. It is still transforming us this day.

As you go out and clean up the flower beds, plant the garden or even mow the lawn or paint, recall God's work in your life and how you are his project.

Holy Father, thank you for making me your project by making me a new creation through your Son, Jesus Christ. Amen.

Ask: Ask your church about doing a project, and share this verse with them as you do.

Read: 2 Corinthians 5

*Cory A. Wielert
Crown Point, IN*

Friday, May 2, 2014

Practical Patience

As God's chosen people ... clothe yourselves with ... patience.

Colossians 3:12

Our prayers for patience become very specific in our latter years.

When we are asked the same question after breakfast for the third and fourth time, or told the same story as yesterday, we pray for patience to respond as if we were hearing it for the first time.

When some dishes are missed and not loaded into the dishwasher or a few of the plants weren't watered, patience is to follow up and complete the task ourselves without comment.

With determined prayers it's amazing how the Spirit can soften hard hearts and change long ingrained responses to take the edge off our instinctive impatience.

And when we fail and snap at our beloved, we pray for patience with ourselves, forgive ourselves (as God forgives us) and return to caring.

Lord, give me a moment's pause to think and then a gentle voice to speak. Amen.

Act: Go over to, smile at and pat a loved one on the shoulder without any particular reason.

Read: Colossians 3:1-17

*Robert Hereth
Grayslake, IL*

Saturday, May 3, 2014

Mountain in the Distance

He who removes mountains, and they know it not ...

Job 9:5

When traveling from the Midwest to the West Coast, the mountains suddenly become visible in the distance, although you are still on level ground.

As a child, I could not take my eyes off those far-away mountains. I was certain we would be close to them by nightfall. Sometimes it would be days before we actually reached the foothills. I would miss the scenery where we were, while waiting to reach the mountains.

I do that in my life. The “mountain” in the distance might be a problem or concern. I am fearful of having to climb that mountain. Occasionally, God leads me around the mountain and I never have to climb it, or he takes my hand and climbs it with me. One thing is certain: I miss the joys and experiences in my everyday life if I won’t take my eyes off the mountain in the distance.

Father, help me enjoy today and not be fearful of the mountain I may never reach. Amen.

List: Make a list of the mountains in your life. Then pray about them.

Read: Mark 11:23

*Gloria Doty
Fort Wayne, IN*

Sunday, May 4, 2014

Rising And Shining

Arise, shine, for your light has come, and the glory of the Lord has risen upon you.

Isaiah 60:1

Seniors are experts on aches and pains! Arthritis, stiffness, muscle weakness, joint problems—the list can be long for us.

So the invitation to rise and shine in the glory of the Lord may give us pause. The challenges of just getting out of bed in the morning can be daunting.

But Isaiah's encouragement to the people of Israel to rise and shine is regarding a spiritual attitude, to an orientation of our life each morning toward God, even in the dark places of life. His encouragement applies to us as well. Even if you are confined to bed so that physical rising is not actually possible, the start of the day is always an opportunity to be flooded with God's gracious light. No matter how many aches we have, each morning we again receive God's loving embrace in Jesus.

Holy God, fill me with the grace of your light, that overflowing with your love I may show it in all I say and do. Amen.

Shine: Find a special moment today to allow God's glory to rise inside you and shine outside of you.

Read: Matthew 4:12-17; 2 Corinthians 4:5-6

*Paul Metzler
St. Louis, MO*

Monday, May 5, 2014

The Wonder of It All

My heart is not proud, Lord, my eyes are not haughty; I do not concern myself with great matters or things too wonderful for me. But I have calmed and quieted myself, I am like a weaned child with its mother; like a weaned child I am content.

Psalm 131:1-2

I continue to wonder about things. I still marvel at how a germinating seedling always manages to grow upward. Through the dark soil it wiggles upward, emerging into the light. Science tells me that by years of chance and trial, certain seeds survived by evolving to reach this point. But my Bible tells me it is because of the “Wonder-full” Creator. This same Creator came to earth, died a horrible death and ended up being planted in a dark tomb. Yet he, too, emerged from the darkness of death. What I wonder is why he would do that for me. It is beyond my understanding. This I accept by faith and so find great joy in the wonder of it all—creation, Creator and Redeemer.

O Jesus, may we always be held in the wonder of your majesty and love. Amen.

Wonder: Does your life reflect contentment as a young child, composed and quieted by the wonder of his power and grace granted to you?

Read: Matthew 13:31-32

*Peter Ward
Ottawa, IL*

Tuesday, May 6, 2014

Encourage One Another

Therefore, encourage one another and build one another up ...

1 Thessalonians 5:11

I had lunch today with a friend. I told him I was going to undertake a research project. I must've sounded excited because he said, "You really got your blood up about this, don't you?" "I guess I do!" He tapped his finger on the table and said, "Then do it!"

"Then do it!" Those three words encouraged me more than any others I had heard for a long time. "Then do it!" My buddy asked no questions, never indicated I was reaching beyond my grasp, never voiced an opinion about my planned research. Just smiled and said, "Then do it!" As if he knows I can.

We talk ourselves out of doing many things. It's good to be reminded we have the power to talk ourselves and others *into* doing things they are excited about too!

Lord Jesus, help me to encourage others as you encourage me in hope. Amen.

Encourage: Encourage someone this week.

Read: 1 Thessalonians 5:1-11

*Al Schenk
St. Louis, MO*

Wednesday, May 7, 2014

Burden-Bearers

Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.

Galatians 6:2

One time President Lincoln asked a crying girl why she was sad. She said her family needed to catch a train, but the wagon hadn't come for their trunk. They couldn't carry the trunk, and it was getting late. Lincoln lifted the trunk to his shoulder, took the girl's hand and walked to the train. Because of Lincoln's help, they got there in time.

We carry one another's burdens when we listen to a worried friend, lend a helping hand or cheer up a lonely person. Christ is the prime example of being a burden-bearer. He helped all kinds of lonely, sick and unloved people. He was also the supreme burden-bearer when he took on the heavy load of our sins and died on the cross for us. Now our burden of sin and eternal death is gone.

Lord, help me to follow your example and be a burden-bearer for others. Amen.

Ease: Ease the burden of someone in need.

Read: Galatians 6:1-10

*Jeanette Dall
Batavia, IL*

Thursday, May 8, 2014

My Friends

You are my friends ...

John 15:14

As I grow older, I count St. Luke, St. Francis of Assisi, Mother Teresa, Dietrich Bonhoeffer and Thomas Merton among my good friends. Slowing down has given me more time for reading, deepening my affection for favorite authors. I have yet to meet them face-to-face, but I feel very close to them; it's as if they know my deepest thoughts.

Come to think of it, we know our best friend, Jesus, primarily through the printed page as well. Our relationship with him deepens as we have more time for Scripture and devotions. Yet Jesus is much more than just another author. He is alive and lives in our hearts as Savior and Lord.

We have heard him whisper in our ears by faith. He guides us daily as our Good Shepherd and never leaves us as Immanuel, God-with-us. We sing with much affection for our best friend: "What a Friend we have in Jesus!"

Jesus, thank you for being my best friend. Amen.

Spend time: Spend some time with your best friend, Jesus, today in prayer and Scripture.

Read: John 15; 1 John 4

Rodney Otto
Grand Rapids, MI

Friday, May 9, 2014

Suspicion's Antidote

The only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through love.

Galatians 5:6

A good way to bond with people your age is to review a classic movie that was popular when you were young and ask whether they now view the story in the same way.

An old movie that has left a permanent imprint on my memory starred William Holden. He's a cynical and somewhat antisocial, prisoner of war in a German prison camp called Stalag 17—the title of the film. Holden's character is suspected by his fellow American prisoners because he barter openly with German guards. He, however, is not a German spy. One of the least likely among the prisoners is the German spy, who helps the American prisoners flee.

Have you ever suspected someone of something that turned out to be untrue? With age we learn to be slower with our judgments. We may still see other people's sins, yet we see the people as having possibilities because of Christ and the cross.

O Lord, help us not to judge so quickly. Amen.

Reflect: Reflect upon one person about whom you could be more positive.

Read: Philippians 4:1-13

*Gordon Beck
University City, MO*

Saturday, May 10, 2014

Pursuit of Happiness

I know that there is nothing better for people than to be happy and to do good while they live.

Ecclesiastes 3:12

If someone asked you the question “What makes you happy?” how would you respond? Maybe you’re a person who loves to spend time outdoors. Perhaps you like to help out at the local soup kitchen or spend time with the grandchildren. A steaming mug of fresh coffee will instantly put a smile on my face. God tells us in Scripture that he wants his people to be happy in whatever they do. He also encourages us to do good things, not only for ourselves but also for others. He wants everyone to experience happiness during our earthly journeys. As you go about your day, may you find happiness in all you do, and may you share that joy with friends, family and neighbors.

*Dear Lord, thank you for the gift of happiness.
Help me to spread it to those I encounter today.
Amen.*

Do: Do something today that not only makes you happy but also brings happiness to someone else.

Read: Psalm 68:3

*Allison Lewis
Columbia, MO*

Sunday, May 11, 2014

Fussed Over

But you are a ... people for his own possession ...

1 Peter 2:9

As an only child, I was privileged to be fussed over when I visited my grandma's house for an overnight stay. She cooked my favorite foods just so. We played card and board games. Nothing was spared to make the moments precious and memorable as she celebrated her love for me. And, boy, did I soak it all in.

God makes a fuss over you and me just like that. We get special treatment and nothing but the best. Like a grandma with a beloved grandchild and like a young man detailing and hovering over his first car, your heavenly Father has prepared for you a life and a salvation in his Son, Jesus Christ. Through him you have been delivered from sin, death and the devil forever. Soak it all in. It's God's will to continue to fuss over you each and every day and through all eternity.

Thanks for fussing over me, Father. Amen.

Reflect: Take three long relaxing breaths and bask in the delight God takes in you.

Read: 1 Peter 2:9-10; Ephesians 1:3-6; John 10:27-30

*Mike May
Kansas City, KS*

Monday, May 12, 2014

Divine Knitting

For it was you who formed my inward parts; you knitted me together in my mother's womb. I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are your works; my soul knows it very well.

Psalm 139:13-14

Do you knit? Do you know someone who knits? I know a man who does counted cross-stitch to relieve tension! I still have something he made me. Perhaps you have something that someone knitted for you.

God is a knitter, it turns out. God knits people together. He creates us on purpose. He knits us together carefully and lovingly. You are someone God knitted together, and he did a great job!

God knit some of us together a long time ago. It might feel like his knitting is coming undone at times! But it isn't. Not even death will undo God's knitting. We will rise from the dead. We are fearfully and wonderfully made. We are made by God!

Wonderful are your works, O Lord! Thank you for reminding me today that that means me too! Amen.

Touch: Feel the knitted yarn of a sweater, scarf or cap. Remember that God knitted you with love and care.

Read: Psalm 139

*Don Schatz
Arcata, CA*

Tuesday, May 13, 2014

Red Shoes

To one he gave five talents, to another two, to another one, to each according to his ability.

Matthew 25:15

We sorted through mounds of used clothing. Clucking about the apparent excesses of our society, worried about the prediction of rain for tomorrow's outdoor rummage sale, we muttered about turning this event over to the "younger" church members. Lorraine spotted them: a beautiful pair of red high-heeled shoes. Lorraine and Bob are adopted grandparents to our school's third graders. They often provide refreshments for Sunday hospitality and bring homemade soup to Lenten soup suppers. Bob was the financial secretary for years. He ushers. Sundays they are always in Row 5, left side, aisle seats. There is a third member of their family: Lorraine's rolling green oxygen tank. Lorraine looked longingly at the red shoes for a minute and then shot back: "That shade of red doesn't go with my tank." We all roared with laughter and resumed sorting.

Lord, help us find new and joy-filled ways to serve you. Amen.

Forget: "But we always did it this way before!"

Read: Philippians 1:3-10

*Lois Scheer
San Diego, CA*

Wednesday, May 14, 2014

Being Neighborly

Your people shall be my people, and your God my God.

Ruth 1:16

In the Book of Ruth, we read that, after the death of her husband, Ruth said to her mother-in-law, “Where you go I will go ... Your people shall be my people, and your God my God.”

Ruth professed her love not only for her mother-in-law but for her mother-in-law’s God as well. In Bethlehem, Ruth picked up missed grain left in a field to feed herself and Naomi. When Boaz, the owner of the field, married her, famine turned to blessing. Ruth—a foreign-born, destitute woman—became the great-grandmother of King David and an ancestor of Jesus, who turns all our woes to blessings. Ruth talked like a neighbor and, more importantly, acted like one. May we do likewise.

Father, I see turmoil, hunger and disease in my own country and in foreign lands. Show me how to be a good neighbor. In Jesus’ name. Amen.

Do: What can you do to help hurting neighbors, whether they be close by or across the world? Ask God to help you hold out a hand to someone who needs your help.

Read: Ruth 1-4

*Ruth Geisler
Aliso Viejo, CA*

Thursday, May 15, 2014

My Grandmother's Bible

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

2 Timothy 1:5

It was a bittersweet occasion, the family gathering to divide the belongings of their beloved grandmother. Beside each grandchild sat a package Grandma had prepared especially for him or her.

Jim, the oldest grandson, reached into his package and pulled out a well-worn Bible. As he turned the pages, he noticed underlined passages and notes in his grandma's shaky handwriting.

Jim self-consciously glanced around the room as the other grandchildren opened their packages. Each one lovingly held "Grandma's Bible," realizing the treasure Grandma had given.

With repeated visits to a used book store and hours spent underlining her favorite passages, Grandma had left a priceless legacy to her grandchildren. What are you leaving to yours?

Help us, Lord, to share our faith with our children, grandchildren and all children we know. Amen.

Share: Tell a grandchild or a friend's child what God has done in your life.

Read: Psalm 71:15-21

*Eileen Ritter
Grand Haven, MI*

Friday, May 16, 2014

God Will Provide

So Abraham called the name of that place, "The Lord will provide"; as it is said to this day, "On the mount of the Lord it shall be provided."

Genesis 22:14

Many similarities lay between the sacrifice of Isaac and the crucifixion of our Lord Jesus Christ. Each mother was promised a son through miraculous circumstances. Each son was offered as a sacrifice by his own father. Each father dealt with sorrow and heartache as he prepared for his child's death. In both circumstances, a lamb was slain. For Isaac, a lamb miraculously appeared to take his place. Christ is the Lamb of God who took the place of all.

In both sacrificial offerings, God accomplished his will through his children. God also provided what was needed to complete the job.

My dearest Lord, please work in me and through me to accomplish your will. I am your humble servant. Amen.

List: What miracles has God asked you to do? Remember that if it is his desire, he will make it happen.

Read: Genesis 22; Hebrews 11:19

*Darla Panabaker
Breezy Point, MN*

Saturday, May 17, 2014

Respect for the Aging

Stand up in the presence of the aged, show respect for the elderly and revere your God.

Leviticus 19:32

“I get no respect,” said Rodney Dangerfield. However, my wife and I saw respect being shown following the funeral of my sister-in-law.

Her entire home had to be cleaned up. It was a huge task! And because of advanced age, the sisters and brothers of the deceased could not do it. What a blessing to see the nieces and nephews step up to get it done.

We are grateful for our siblings training their children in the ways of the Lord. The patriarch Moses’ words were fulfilled in them: “Rise in the presence of the aged, show respect for the elderly and revere your God” (Leviticus 19:32).

We may not be physically able to do many of the things we used to do, but we can rejoice that the next generation still can, that they respect and accept what we’ve shared and, above all, that they trust the Lord.

Thanks, Lord, for those who show respect for their aging parents and relatives. Amen.

Notice: Notice all the helpful things younger generations do for those who are aging.

Read: Proverbs 3:1-6; Ephesians 6:1-3

*David P. Schmidt
St. Louis, MO*

Sunday, May 18, 2014

The Sermon on the Mound

Seeing the crowds, he went up on the mountain ...

Matthew 5:1

A misspelling on a church sign spoke of “The Sermon on the Mound.” It reminded me of an incident with a baseball pitcher last season. The “ace” of the staff had a couple of rough outings. When asked about it by reporters, he indicated they would find his answer in his next start. Sure enough, he went deep into the game, allowing only one run. Rather than talk about his pitching prowess, he demonstrated it with a brilliant “sermon on the mound.”

You and I may never preach a sermon on the mound or on the mount. But we preach a sermon of sorts every day. We do it with what we do as much as with what we say. A smile to the pharmacist, a compliment to the cable guy, a note of encouragement to a friend, an email to a cousin can all be as helpful and effective as a Sunday morning sermon.

*Lord, help me speak of you through my actions.
Amen.*

Think about: What sermon you will preach today with your actions and attitude?

Read: Jesus' Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7)

*Jim Rogers
Ellisville, MO*

Monday, May 19, 2014

Which One Will You Feed?

Now if I do what I do not want, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells within me.

Romans 7:20

Perhaps you've heard the tale of a Native American grandfather who told his grandson that two wolves were constantly fighting inside his heart: one named Despair and the other named Joy. The grandson asked, "Which one will win?" To which the grandfather replied, "The one I feed!"

We can replace Despair vs. Joy with Hate vs. Love, Selfishness vs. Compassion or Anger vs. Forgiveness, and the point of the story still hits home. God has redeemed us through Christ, yet we sin daily. The war that wages within us is that of sinner vs. saint, and it doesn't get any easier the older we get. So which one are you feeding?

Dear Lord and Savior, renew me by the power of the Spirit to live as a baptized, redeemed child of God in all I do and say today. Amen.

Remember: Even as we struggle with sin, Christ has won the ultimate victory for us!

Read: Romans 7:7-25; Colossians 3:1-17

*Jane P. Wilke
Woodbury, MN*

Tuesday, May 20, 2014

Spare Me from “Do, Do, Do!”

We also have believed in Christ Jesus, in order to be justified by faith in Christ, and not by works of the law ...

Galatians 2:16

It was time to greet residents following Sunday worship at one of our Lutheran Senior Services communities. A woman in a wheelchair, with a big smile on her face, rolled up to me and said: “I want you to know how much I enjoy *Hope-Full Living*. The devotions are so uplifting. At my age, I don’t need to hear ‘do, do, do!’”

I thanked her for sharing, thinking to myself: “She gets it—she needs and wants to hear the GOSPEL!” Works of the law—“do, do, do”—save no one from their sin. But Jesus did, did, did—suffer, die and rise again for us. Believing in him and his work—work that is done, done, done—we are justified (forgiven) by faith in Christ.

Jesus does it all!

Thank you, Jesus, for Gospel truth. Amen.

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

Read: Galatians 3

*Randy Shields
Florissant, MO*

Wednesday, May 21, 2014

Seventh-Inning Stretch

*So on the seventh day he rested from all his work.
Then God blessed the seventh day and made it holy.*

Genesis 2:2-3

Baseball reminds us that it is okay to slow down and take a seventh-inning stretch. God took a break also. He called it the Sabbath. In this hurried and harried world, we can model for others the importance of resting, reflecting and respecting those who are weary and weighted down. And that includes all of us.

There is no clock in baseball. The game stretches out lazily, leisurely, relaxingly. What a great model for us to pursue as well. The Lord reminds us in our quiet times that we are already winners, through him, and that we are blessed to continue to live life, one inning at a time. Come to think of it, the Lord is giving many of us “extra innings” to continue to serve and celebrate the great game of Life in the Lord!

Lord, help us to relax and enjoy life in you. Amen.

Watch: Invite someone to watch a baseball game with you, in person or on TV, as you celebrate the Sabbath!

Read: Psalm 71; Philippians 4:4-9

*Rich Bimler
Bloomindale, IL*

Thursday, May 22, 2014

Small Things

Just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another.

John 13:34

A senior's life gradually becomes smaller. We downsize our home and get rid of what is no longer needed. Our abilities limit what we do and where we go. We grieve the little losses. Remind yourself of the things you can still do. Loving acts, no matter how small, add up to a lifetime of charitable living.

As the author and motivational speaker Leo Buscaglia once said, "Too often we underestimate the power of a touch, a smile, a kind word, a listening ear, an honest compliment or the smallest act of caring, all of which have the potential to turn a life around."

Lord, I give you thanks for the small acts of kindness that I can do for others. Help me obey your commandment to love my neighbor as myself. Amen.

Do: Smile at those you meet, call friends, pray for others.

Read: Luke 10:25-27

*Betty J. Gravlin
Florissant, MO*

Friday, May 23, 2014

An Unexpected Offering

Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see.

Hebrews 11:1

As a child, my parents and I regularly attended church together as a family. When I was old enough, I began giving a small offering as the basket was passed down the pew. On one occasion, I was so eager to place my offering in the basket that I accidentally dropped my little embroidered handkerchief into the basket by mistake. Needless to say, my parents and the ushers that Sunday got quite a chuckle!

What faith little children have! They are eager to share the Good News of Jesus with others. May we, too, have the faith and the enthusiasm that accompanies youth!

Heavenly Father, help me to have a renewed sense of faith and enthusiasm. Amen.

Pray: Pray for someone who is experiencing a challenging time in his or her life.

Read: Hebrews 11:1-3

*Betsy Becker Niedringhaus
Ballwin, MO*

Saturday, May 24, 2014

On Eagles' Wings

I bore you on eagles' wings and brought you to myself.

Exodus 19:4

When we think of the eagle, our national bird, we think of strength and soaring. But I have found that the eagle is also caring. When the mother eagle urges her little ones to leave the nest, she flies beneath them, spreading her strong wings to catch and support the eaglets lest they falter and drop into the abyss.

So our heavenly Father keeps us from the dark abyss of despair, loneliness or pain, offering his ready support and guidance. "Fear not" is said many times to us in his Word. "Don't be afraid to face criticism, loss or pain. I will never, never leave you." We can hold to that promise as perhaps we need to leave our nests that we have cherished for so long and be cared for elsewhere.

When God raises us up on eagles' wings, we know we will soar with him.

Lord, carry and shelter me with the wings of your steadfast love. Amen.

Do: Go forward with confidence, whatever path you must take.

Read: Isaiah 40:23-31; Exodus 19:3-6

*Connie Bretscher
Valparaiso, IN*

Sunday, May 25, 2014

Hit a Home Run!

May he give you the desire of your heart and make all your plans succeed.

Psalms 20:4

It was the Babe's last baseball game, May 25, 1935. He already had a successful career. He didn't need to prove anything. What did he do? Babe Ruth hit his 714th home run.

I'm sure Babe wasn't as strong and able as when he began his career in the major leagues. But he still gave it all he had. And the Lord gave success.

As we get older, it's a challenge to accept the fact that we can't do everything we used to do. It's also a challenge to still stay in the game and do what we can! God gives us opportunities today that we never had before. We don't have anything to prove. But we still have a loving God who saved us and has heaven waiting for us. This is the day to take the strength God gives us and do what we can to praise his name. He will give success.

Thank you, Lord, for blessing my life. Give me strength this day to praise your name. Amen.

Send: Send a college student \$10 or a dozen cookies. You're sure to hit a home run.

Read: Hebrews 11

*Lonie Eatherton
Fenton, MO*

Monday, May 26, 2014

Memorial Day

Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends.

John 15:13

The sound of “Taps” playing in the background always brings a tear to my eyes. I never served or fought in our Armed Forces, but I have met many men and women who have with honor. They made great sacrifices; some of them gave their lives.

We are indebted to them—all of them—for their giving of themselves for us and for their country. Their service has allowed us to have many freedoms, one of which is to be able to worship our God. They call it duty and honor, and we call it service.

God calls it love. It is borne out of his love for us, love shown to us with the ultimate sacrifice, which was Jesus' death in our place on the cross for our sins. Our service men and women may not die for our sins, but they do serve, and some do die for us, enabling us to keep proclaiming what Christ has done.

Dear God, thank you for the devotion of service men and women to this great country. Amen.

Thank: Say thanks to service men and women today, and if you have a chance, listen to “Taps.”

Read: John 15:1-17

*Cory A. Wielert
Crown Point, IN*

Tuesday, May 27, 2014

Gray Hair

[You] who have been borne by me from before your birth, carried from the womb; even to your old age I am he, and to gray hairs, I will carry you.

Isaiah 46:3-4

Nowadays, every birthday gifts me with another candle on the cake—and more gray hairs. Memories fade a little more. Joints and back ache a bit longer. Hearing fades, and life is fuzzier. What's so special about birthdays? Bah humbug.

Not so for the person God carries to old age! Years of trust have built faith muscles. When you need to ask, you know Jesus will carry you. Carry you through rough doctor visits. Carry you over family crises. Carry you past sleepless nights. Over the years you have spent time in his arms. Those arms that once stretched out to gather the whole world to himself carry you right by his heart. It's your spot. In fact, you and Jesus are old friends.

Jesus, let your goodness and mercy follow me all the days of my life. Amen.

Recite: Recite Psalm 23 at least once each day this week. Don't know it by heart? Then that's your next challenge!

Read: 2 Timothy 4:6-8; Psalm 55:22

*Julaine Kammrath
Aurora, IL*

Wednesday, May 28, 2014

The Best May Yet Lie Ahead

For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. If I am to live in the flesh, that means fruitful labor for me.

Philippians 1:21-22

The sign of a dying institution is when its members begin to think its best years lie in the past. The same is also true for individuals. I once saw a T-shirt message: “The older I get, the better I was!” Is that how you feel?

Perhaps physically we lose a step or two. But armed with the character and competency developed over the years, we often have much to give to younger generations of workers, citizens and family members. Remember that Moses did the work for which he is best remembered after he was 80 years old! John the Evangelist may not have written his magnum opus until he was in his 90s! Your best may yet lie ahead!

Lord, teach me to count the opportunities, not my years, so that I may apply my being to fruitful living! Amen.

Ask: What significant work has God been preparing you to do?

Read: Deuteronomy 34:1-12; Philippians 1:1-26

*Ted Zimmerman
Napa, CA*

Thursday, May 29, 2014

Who Is a Disciple?

Go into the world and proclaim the gospel to the whole creation.

Mark 16:15

When Jesus ascended into heaven, he filled his disciples with his power and authorized them to follow his command to proclaim the Gospel. Thus filled with euphoria, these eleven men began to carry out Christ's bidding.

Fast forward to the present—the Christian message has spread to all nations. Today multitudes of people who have heard and believed will someday equal the number of stars in the heavens. Unfortunately, there are still people who do not know Christ. How can we as laypeople help spread the message?

Ask yourself these questions: Am I just a “Sunday Christian”? Do I go to church, but leave the sanctity of worship behind when departing the building? Am I afraid of offending someone by telling them Christ's story? Or do I leave the building and know I am entering a mission field? You are a disciple. Act like it.

Lord, let my words and deeds display your message to help others come to believe in you. Amen.

Share: Share the Good News about Jesus with someone today.

Read: Luke 5:9-11

*Edna Schilling
Ft. Myers, FL*

Friday, May 30, 2014

Do What Needs Doing—Now

Get everything ready for yourself in the field, and after that build your house.

Proverbs 24:27

Is procrastination a word familiar to you? As a hint to what it means, it comes from two Latin words that literally mean: “push off to tomorrow.” There you have it. Procrastinators put off to at least tomorrow things that need attention today. We all know that a house can be built anytime, but the crops have to be planted when it’s the right season. Put off the planting in spring, and there’ll be no harvest in the fall. No crop to sell makes it tough to pay for the house. First things must come first. Procrastination makes no sense.

Jesus sent many do-it-now messages. Listen to him. Don’t procrastinate. Do what he says needs doing—now.

Jesus, give me your spirit of do-it-now. Amen.

List: Make a list of things you know you should do. Stop procrastinating. Make that phone call. Or say you are sorry. Or drop that bad habit. You know what I mean. Do it. Now.

Read: Joshua 24:14-15; Matthew 6:31-33

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

Saturday, May 31, 2014

Repeat the Story— Again and Again

And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. You ... shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way.

Deuteronomy 6:6-7

In the summer of 2001, Marshall Duke and Robyn Fivush asked members of four dozen families a series of 20 questions about the history of their families. They then compared their results with a battery of psychological tests the children had taken. They discovered the more the children knew about their families' history, the stronger their sense of control over their lives, the higher their self-esteem and the more successfully they believed their families functioned. These children knew they belonged to something bigger than themselves.

Isn't the same true in God's family? Through Moses, God told the Israelites to repeat the story of his saving grace. As Christians, we retell the story of our salvation through Jesus Christ to future generations to enrich their lives forever.

Help me, Lord, to repeat your story. Amen.

Tell: Share the story of Jesus with someone today.

Read: Deuteronomy 6:4-25

*Eileen Ritter
Grand Haven, MI*

Sunday, June 1, 2014

Always in Debt

Owe no one anything, except to love each other, for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law.

Romans 13:8

Making the final payment on the church's debt and burning the mortgage was a great Sunday for the whole congregation; it was a time of thanks and celebration! Even the Scripture agrees: "Let no debt remain outstanding, except to love one another" (Romans 13:8).

In light of that Scripture, the feeling for me is not quite so great, because I don't do such a good job of loving my neighbor. And that's why I desperately need to be praying, "Forgive me for not loving or helping others, not caring or sharing, not encouraging or remembering, not providing or praying." The truth is I'll always be in debt! I'll always owe my neighbor love—love I've undeservedly received time and again through Jesus' blood and righteousness, love I am always privileged to give away every day!

Thanks, Father, for daily opportunities to love my neighbor as you have loved me. Amen.

Ask: Ask your neighbor what you can be praying for. Consider how you might help answer his or her need.

Read: Romans 13:8-12; Matthew 18:22-35

*David P. Schmidt
St. Louis, MO*

Monday, June 2, 2014

Are You a “Hilarious” Giver?

God loves a cheerful giver.

2 Corinthians 9:7

During a recent stewardship emphasis at church, we learned that the Greek word for *cheerful* conveys the meaning of “hilarious.” In other words, “God loves a ‘hilarious’ giver”! It didn’t really sink in until we brought our commitments forward during worship. I saw some “hilarious” givers! Several couples were holding hands and smiling from ear to ear as they left their gift commitment and returned to their seats. What a blessing that was to see!

What if all of my “giving” became cheerful—even hilarious? What if I smile when I refill my husband’s coffee cup or give a cheerful greeting while I hold the door for someone? As Scripture says, God will love it, and it just may bless someone else too!

Lord, help me give cheerfully of my resources—time, talents, treasures—because you have given everything for me. Amen.

Give: Be hilarious (or at least smile!) as you “give a gift” to someone today!

Read: 2 Corinthians 9:6-12; 1 Chronicles 29:6-9

*Diane Bahn
Cypress, TX*

Tuesday, June 3, 2014

Looking Through God's Window

Look down from your holy habitation, from heaven, and bless your people ...

Deuteronomy 26:15

A room without a window can be a dismal place. Life is like that. We need a window in the room of our life. Not just any window. We need God's window. Through it, we look up to see God. Through it, God looks down to see us. It is the window that God fashioned when he sent his Son into time and space to be born on earth and to die for us on the cross.

God's window of the cross is not a magical delusion that deceives those who look through it. The window of the cross has the power through faith to change us from sinners into saints. One day we shall no longer look through this window, but we shall see God face-to-face. Alleluia!

Thank you, Lord, for giving us the window of Christ's cross through which we can see you and also reach out to each other in love. Amen.

Consider: When you feel boxed in by fear or disappointment, what are some things you can do to open a window of hope? What friend can you call?

Read: Lamentations 3:19-26

*Leo Symmank
Seabrook, TX*

Wednesday, June 4, 2014

A Spring in Your Step

Be still and know that I am God.

Psalm 46:10

Nothing puts a spring in your step like quiet time with the Lord. Let his unending love, strength and provision surround you. Listen to whatever he places on your mind and heart. Admit your frustrations and needs, and accept his forgiveness and peace. Ask for an awareness of his guidance and direction as you continue to trust in him.

Then go on your way, refreshed and joyful, with the light-hearted contentment only he can give. “They who wait on the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up on wings like eagles; they shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint” (Isaiah 40:31). Walk, run and even “spring” into action with his strength!

Lord, thank you for surrounding me with your embrace and lifting me up for joyful service today. Amen.

Memorize: Memorize a new Bible verse. Say it again and again as you exercise.

Read: Lamentations 3:22-23; Philippians 4:13

*Sharolyn Sander
Lincoln, NE*

Thursday, June 5, 2014

Take Time to Talk

Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you ought to answer each person.

Colossians 4:6

We call it the “Cousins Reunion.” My siblings and our first cousins get together for a few days to enjoy time together. Including spouses, there are a dozen of us, all retired and active. It’s great fun.

Yet this year I left disappointed. There seemed little time to really talk. I longed for deeper conversations with my loved ones—time to share our faith and encourage one another.

Didn’t Jesus talk with his friends on the road? After dinner? On a hillside? Even with a woman at a well? And didn’t Jesus initiate the conversation?

At the next reunion I want to find a way to encourage less activity and more conversation. Maybe I’ll pray for rain!

Lord, help me seize the opportunities to share your love with others. Amen.

Call: Call a friend or family member. Ask questions. Send a card or email. Share your hope in Christ.

Read: Luke 24:13-35

*Donna Streufert
South Bend, IN*

Friday, June 6, 2014

Live for Your Neighbor

Which of these three, do you think, proved to be a neighbor ... ?

Luke 10:36

I was standing outside the Tower of London waiting for a tour bus when I experienced one of my greatest failures at being a Good Samaritan. An elderly man dressed in rags was poking through garbage cans. Something prevented me from giving him money. Then I saw a woman come out of a small restaurant and look at the man. She immediately set a chair outside the door and led the man to it. Within minutes she brought him paper cups of coffee and soup. I got on my bus, now knowing what a Good Samaritan does.

We encounter numerous wounded souls as we travel down life's road. In each case, Jesus helps us answer, "What does my neighbor need?" It might be a friendly word, a drink of water, a push of a button to call the nurse, time spent in prayer. Jesus calls us to share his mercy, and he will show us how to do it.

Father, when I see someone who needs your love, show me what to do. Amen.

Do: Ask God to open your eyes to those in need around you.

Read: Luke 10:25-37; Matthew 22:35-40

*Ruth Geisler
Aliso Viejo, CA*

Saturday, June 7, 2014

“I’ll Be Back”

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

Revelation 22:20

I entered Room 44 and found him asleep in a wheelchair, chin on chest. I rubbed his arm, and he looked up through sleepy eyes.

“Hey, Pastor!” “Hey, Art. How ya’ doin’?” “Okay.” Chin to chest, seemingly asleep. A muscle twitches, and his eyes open.

“Have a seat, Pastor.” I did. “It’s good to see you, Art!” “Good to see you too, Pastor.” Chin to chest, seemingly asleep again.

I sit quietly with him. It occurs to me it doesn’t matter if he wakes and we talk or not. He’s knows I’m there and will remember. After several minutes, the quiet feels holy. “I’ll be back. I’ll see you again,” I say. “Okay,” he answers.

“I’ll be back.” A common promise. One Jesus makes to us no matter what situation we are in. Until then, he gives us quiet, holy moments to sit with friends. Quiet moments to pray, “Come, Lord Jesus!”

Come, Lord Jesus. Amen.

Thanks: Give thanks that Jesus promises, “I’ll be back!”

Read: Revelation 22

*Al Schenk
St. Louis, MO*

Sunday, June 8, 2014

You Dreamer, You!

I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh ...

Acts 2:17

Powerful gusts are buffeting my house right now. That means yard and deck items will get re-arranged and turned upside down. When God's Holy Spirit is freshened in our communities and its members, things can get turned upside down there too. In his sermon on the Day of Pentecost, Peter refers to the prophet Joel (Joel 2:28-32). Part of what he quotes says, "Your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams" (Acts 2:17). That's upside down!

Popular opinion says that young men have no vision whatsoever—just a jumble of dreams—and that old men stopped dreaming a long time ago to take refuge in bygone memories. But God's Holy Spirit re-orders and refreshes absolutely everything! The Spirit is God's gift and guarantee to you received at your baptism and is renewed daily regardless of your age. Prepare to have your dreams renewed!

Holy Spirit, whirl me like a tumbleweed across the front yard of my life and fuel my dreams! Amen.

Dream: After reading today's Scripture and some of your other favorites, what dreams come to mind?

Read: Acts 2:12-24

*Mike May
Kansas City, KS*

Monday, June 9, 2014

Mold Me

Behold, like clay in the potter's hand, so are you in my hand ...

Jeremiah 18:6

While in Haiti I met a young man who wanted to finish his schooling. Upon questioning him I learned that high school in Haiti costs \$150 a half year or \$300 total. To me that did not seem like much, as an average American income could cover that easily. Yet for him his income was \$150 a month, and it had to feed, shelter and educate him and his six siblings.

God has blessed us all with such riches, and yet we forget that we are able to help those in need. We are blessed in the United States to have a free education and assistance from our government. Do we bless others as God asks us to? I myself need to be molded by God to serve his people.

God, mold me to be the one who shares my multiple blessings with those in need. Amen.

Choose: What aspects of your life do you think God wants to mold and change in you? Pick one to focus on and note the progress over time.

Read: Psalms 40:2; Isaiah 64:8

*Pamela Ann Taylor
Mansfield, OH*

Tuesday, June 10, 2014

Note to Self ...

Even a child makes himself known by his acts, by whether his conduct is pure and upright.

Proverbs 20:11

In an attempt to deal with a difficult person, I've become difficult. Each time before we meet, I pray. I vow to behave as Christ's representative. Then I fail. While a child's motives are apparent, we tend to "assign" deeper meaning to an adult's actions. God asks us to understand the unseen and know he loves us all. As Christians, we pledge to follow Christ's example of love. Is it better to simply act, thinking less about another's motives? What is pure and right? You know—and so do I. We can talk and talk, but we only shine when we act accordingly.

Strengthen me, Lord, to overcome my difficulties and to walk in the ways of my Savior. Amen.

Vow: Who turns you into a difficult person? Vow to act simply, with kindness and love. Try it out today!

Read: Psalm 51:10-12; Romans 7:14-25; Galatians 5:22-26

*K.S. Wuertz
Leslie, MO*

Wednesday, June 11, 2014

Hometown

This one was born there.

Psalm 87:6

Where is your hometown? You can point to a place on a map and say, “I was born there!” Zion, the city of Jerusalem, was the hometown above all hometowns. It was the hometown of choice as the Lord numbered his beloved people of Israel: “This one was born there.”

We who have been born anew in Christ share a hometown, but it isn't in Nebraska or Texas or California. It's the hometown you long for, “the city that has foundations, whose designer and builder is God” (Hebrews 11:10). When Jesus returns on the Last Day, “the holy city, new Jerusalem” (Revelation 21:2), the dwelling place of God, will be our home. It's the hometown above all hometowns, a home without pain or death or sorrow. At home with all the saints, you will say with joy, “I was born here!”

Lord Jesus, I look forward to the day when I will be at home with you forever. Amen.

Share: Talk with someone, and share memories of your past and future hometowns.

Read: Psalm 87; Revelation 21:1-4

*Carol Geisler
Manchester, MO*

Thursday, June 12, 2014

Traveling Memory Lane

Remember Jesus Christ ...

2 Timothy 2:8

During this past year my wife and I traveled down memory lane. We attended our family reunion ... the stories of the past enriched our lives. We visited some friends in a care center ... our conversations affirmed our mutual faith. We participated in a retirement celebration for a close friend ... the remembrance of our relationship warmed our hearts.

These visits reminded us of another journey—traveling with Jesus. Ever since our baptism, he has been at our side, forgiving us, lifting our spirits, directing our ways, comforting us at the death of our spouses, blessing us with children and grandchildren and now great-grandchildren, helping us begin each new day together, looking forward to the time when we will spend in eternity with Jesus in heaven.

*Lord Jesus, take us by your hand, day by day, and lead us to live in your presence now and forever.
Amen*

Do: Travel down memory lane, recalling how Jesus has touched your life ever since your baptism.

Read: 1 Thessalonians 1:2-10

*Walter M. Schoedel
Webster Groves, MO*

Friday, June 13, 2014

Alone ... No More

The word of the LORD came to him ... "What are you doing here, Elijah?"

1 Kings 19:9

Have you ever felt so totally alone that you thought you would die? Elijah did. Chased by enemies that wanted him dead, Elijah found a cave to hide in. I hope you have no enemies like that. But there are enemies that chase the human mind and heart. Guilt, loneliness and despair are the result of living in this sinful world. Sin causes us to draw in on ourselves and hide from the world and even God.

But God doesn't give up on us, because that's the kind of God he is. In Christ Jesus, God comes looking for us to lead us to the cross of his grace and forgiveness. At that cross we find others just as alone as we are, looking for community and someone to understand and care for them. That Someone is Jesus. In him we are alone no more.

Lord Jesus, never leave or forsake me. Amen.

Tell: Tell your friends that God is there for them and so are you.

Read: Hebrews 13:1-6; Deuteronomy 31:1-6

*Edward Arle
St. Charles, MO*

Saturday, June 14, 2014

Life's Tapestry

Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I have been fully known.

1 Corinthians 13:12

The beautiful artwork in a tapestry is created with interlaced threads. Long warp threads are the underpinning on a loom. They are the beginning and the end, the firm foundation. The width is determined by weft threads, hand-placed to create an intricate image of color and pattern.

Life in Christ is like a beautiful tapestry! God is the eternal beginning and end, the firm foundation of our life, faith and hope. Shifting patterns of joy and sorrow, faith and doubt create our unique picture of life on earth. But we see our existence imperfectly, a few strands at a time. God sees the whole picture with perfect clarity and love.

Because of Jesus' life, death and resurrection, God sees us as his holy, redeemed children. Remember today that God knows you and loves you completely. Your life is his artistic masterpiece!

Lord, help me to appreciate your presence in the fabric of my life. Amen.

Consider: What is God weaving into your life today? How can you use it for his glory?

Read: Psalm 44:1-8

Sharolyn Sander
Lincoln, NE

Sunday, June 15, 2014

Listening to Dad

Listen to your father who gave you life ...

Proverbs 23:22

Most of us are now of the age when our dads are of distant memory. We remember what they looked like, we remember some of their favorite things, what teams they rooted for, what music they preferred, their favorite TV programs. We remember what made them laugh and what made them angry. Some of us even remember what their voices sounded like.

Some of us remember the way they sang hymns, the way they read prayers, the way they led our family devotions, the way they read from the Bible.

But most of all we remember some of their words. Some of their words were priceless. They told us about their faith. They told us about their hope. They told us about their values. They told us their stories.

I am most grateful for Dad's words. He shared his love for Jesus, his confidence in God's love for him, a sinner, his love for his family, his confidence in the gift of an eternal life in heaven. Thank God for dads!

Thank you, Lord, that so many dads were so very faithful. Bless the words of the fathers of our day.

Amen.

Quote: Quote your father to someone.

Read: Psalm 103

*Vern Gundermann
Saint Louis, MO*

Monday, June 16, 2014

Family Reunions

I kneel before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name.

Ephesians 3:14-15

We've all been to a family reunion, right? It's an anticipated tradition, an enjoyable and cherished experience. As soon as it's over, everyone asks, "When will the next one be?" A family reunion is a chance to see people we love, to catch up on events in the lives of relatives and to relive times past.

There's a much larger family reunion still to come. It's the heavenly gathering of the Savior's faithful followers. What a joy it is to be among those who celebrate not just the past but a future with God and his saints that has no end! Jesus made it all possible by joining our earthly family and making us his own family.

*Blest be the tie that binds us to you, Lord Jesus.
May the fellowship of Christians on earth be a fore-
taste of the grand reunion to come. Amen.*

Talk: Talk to a fellow Christian about your anticipation of heaven.

Read: Ephesians 3:14-21

*Don Hoferkamp
St. Louis, MO*

Tuesday, June 17, 2014

My Father's Eyes

This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you.

John 15:12

Years ago I heard a song by Amy Grant and the lyrics have stayed with me. It's called "My Father's Eyes." She sings her prayer that when others look at her, they'll say, "She's got her Father's eyes ... eyes that find the good in things when good is not around; eyes that find the source of help when help just can't be found; eyes full of compassion, seeing every pain, knowing what you're going through and feeling it the same."

The older I get, the more I look like my mom and my grandma. It's amazing to consider how families resemble one another. What about the family we are in Christ? What do people see when they look at me? The older I get, the more I pray that they will see my Father's eyes.

Dear Father, help me to serve others as Christ would serve them. In his name I pray. Amen.

Consider: What can you do today to be the hands and feet of Christ in service to others?

Read: 1 Peter 4:1-11; 1 Corinthians 13

*Jane P. Wilke
Woodbury, MN*

Wednesday, June 18, 2014

Drawing on Jesus

Why does he eat with tax collectors and sinners?

Mark 2:16

My drawing students heard the message loud and clear: learn the rules first. Rules for perspective and for composition. Rules for figures and for faces. If you learn the rules, you will be able to draw realistically, and you will have a proper drawing. If you use only the rules, your drawing will also be lifeless and boring. Yes, I'm afraid so. The rules are only the beginning; the goal is to go beyond. Think outside the box. Be an artist.

The lessons in Sunday school and confirmation class and Christian doctrine are essential, but life with Christ is not a matter of knowing the rules. Giving only what's required or doing only what's proper results in a static life. Let Jesus lead—eat with sinners, touch lepers, care for someone when it's not convenient, give when it hurts. Be the person God created you to be.

Jesus, you gave and healed and sacrificed for me. Help me do the same for others. Amen.

Do: Let someone interrupt your schedule today. Be there for that person.

Read: Mark 1:40-45; Mark 2:13-17

Sally Beck
University City, MO

Thursday, June 19, 2014

Perfect Vision

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

1 Corinthians 13:12

My eye doctor's assistant was amused when I compared the blurry vision caused by cataracts to eating a cheeseburger and then touching your glasses. While the one-liner brightened the moment, visiting the eye doctor is seldom amusing for folks with aging eyes.

Seeing the physical world is important, but it's also critical to see in a spiritual sense. Through faith, God grants spiritual vision to help us look beyond the here-and-now to what's ahead. Just as eyesight dims due to age and ailments, the disease of sin clouds spiritual vision so that right now we only "see in a mirror dimly." Today we ask God to help us focus on what's important as we look forward to an eternity of perfect vision when we will see him "face to face."

Dear Father, help me see your promises clearly today. Amen.

Focus: Sharpen your spiritual vision through daily Bible reading, meditation and prayer.

Read: Ephesians 1:18-23

*Marj Maynard
Billings, MO*

Friday, June 20, 2014

What Is It Like When You Die?

We do not want you to be uninformed about those who sleep in death, so that you do not grieve like the rest of mankind, who have no hope.

1 Thessalonians 4:13-14

A little boy prayed, “Dear God, what is it like when you die? I don’t want to do it; I just want to know.” We may smile at that, but it is the universal question everyone must face at one time or another in our lives.

The Apostle Paul helps us to understand why our death is only like falling asleep. Think of it: every night we have a “mini” experience of what death is like, but with one huge difference—we will fall asleep in Jesus! He will come personally to walk with us through the valley of the shadow of death. Plus, we have that certain HOPE “that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him” (1 Thes. 4:14).

Lord, help us to fully understand the hope we have in your death and resurrection. Amen.

Think: Think of the joy of waking up with him in heaven.

Read: 2 Corinthians 5:1-8; Luke 23:39-46

*John Herzog
Chesterfield Township, MI*

Saturday, June 21, 2014

Over- and Under-Building

Behold, I am the one who has laid as a foundation in Zion, a stone, a tested stone, a precious cornerstone, a sure foundation: "Whoever believes will not be in haste."

Isaiah 28:16

Have you noticed that new houses being built lately tend to be on the large side? For most Americans, their "dream home" is the most costly expenditure of their lives. The problem is, by the time most folks can afford such a house, their children are already in their teens. Before very long, they may not need such a large house. So they begin to think of downsizing.

As I consider the larger issues, I think to myself: What are my wife and I investing ourselves in? How truly important are the goals toward which we are pointing our major energies these days? When I'm near my end, I'd hate to have been aiming at other than God-pleasing targets.

Dear Lord God, sharpen our aim, so that, having received all our gifts and energies from you, we may apply them to what really matters to you. Amen.

Ask: Ask yourself what you're aiming for, how you're spending your gifts and talents from God and what you are focusing your emotions and efforts on.

Read: Hebrews 3:3-6

*Deane Schuessler
Woodbury, MN*

Sunday, June 22, 2014

A Self-Made Man?

And his fame spread far, for he was marvelously helped, till he was strong.

2 Chronicles 26:15

Uzziah became king of Judah when he was sixteen years old. Unlike many of his predecessors, he started out well and for a long time faithfully served God in what he did. He was helped to stay on the right track by his mother and a faithful mentor, Zechariah the priest. As long as those two were around, he was a good king and very successful. But later in life he began “believing his own press,” as we might put it today, and he slipped as a king. When he no longer listened to his advisors, things went downhill fast.

God does not abandon his children after they are born. He gives them people to guide them. No wonder the children of God are called “more than conquerors” (Romans 8:37), something that self-made men and women never come close to becoming on their own.

Lord, open my heart and my ears to the guidance you send me throughout life. I ask this in Jesus’ name. Amen.

Recall: Recall helpers God sent you in the past.

Read: Proverbs 16:18.

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

Monday, June 23, 2014

To the Cloud

Then we who are alive ... will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord.

1 Thessalonians 4:17

Have you heard of “the cloud” in computing”? If you have a computer, you can store your files on a network somewhere “out there.”

In today’s verse we discover that God will do his work on clouds as well. The Thessalonians were worried that those who already died would miss out on heaven. “Not so,” said St. Paul. They will rise first on that day! In fact, when he returns, Jesus will bring the dead with him to meet the living together with him “in the clouds.”

This verse reassured those early Christians. It reassures us today also. As we grow older, we lose family and friends to death. But God is a God of life, and even those who have passed on from this life are alive in him. Let this happy news make us feel like we are walking on air!

Lord God, thank you for turning clouds into a Gospel lesson about life in Jesus. Amen.

Look: Look up to the clouds and pray, “Come, Lord Jesus!”

Read: 1 Corinthians 15:50-57

*Don Schatz
Arcata, CA*

Tuesday, June 24, 2014

A Circle of Protection

As the mountains surround Jerusalem, so the Lord surrounds his people both now and forevermore.

Psalm 125:2

What is it about mountains that makes them a symbol of strength and support? They're very sturdy and solid, and they don't move much, so we can count on their staying power. We could say they provide a circle of protection around us.

Who needs protection? We all do. From what? From terrorists and the threat of terror; from fires, tornadoes, floods and hurricanes; from poverty or the fear of not having enough; and, as we are keenly aware, from the ravages of aging bodies.

For protection, "some trust in chariots and some in horses [in today's terms, guns, drones and missiles], but we trust in the name of the Lord our God" (Psalm 20:7). He surrounds us with his mercy and care, as the mountains surround Jerusalem (or Denver or Albuquerque). God's circle of protection is strong and sturdy. He will always be there to aid, comfort and defend us!

Dear Lord, in you alone I trust. Amen.

Read: Read in 2 Kings 6:8-20 about the invisible army of God that encircles us all.

Read: Psalm 125; Psalm 91

*Don Hoeferkamp
St. Louis, MO*

Wednesday, June 25, 2014

Welcome, Stranger!

Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels unawares.

Hebrews 13:2

The little town of Astoria, located on the south shore of the Columbia River, population 9,477, ten square miles in size, sits on the ocean side of Oregon. We docked there on a cloudy May morning anticipating the usual vendors, photographers and cabbies. Instead we were welcomed with huge smiles, warm greetings, free maps and guidebooks and offers of help, all delivered by a host of gracious SENIOR CITIZEN VOLUNTEERS. They drove tour busses, assisted us at each stop, answered every question and lent a hand wherever needed. What a metaphor for the Church! Do we greet our visitors with joy and warmth? Do we show that we love where we are and what we are doing? Do we let our visitors know how happy we are they came to worship with us? What a splendid job for the senior citizens of our Church.

Lord, put a smile on my face and the warmth of your love in my greeting when I meet a stranger. Amen.

Volunteer: Become a church greeter. No greeters in your church? Organize some.

Read: Genesis 18:1-8

*Lois Scheer
San Diego, CA*

Thursday, June 26, 2014

Lead on, Lord

And he said to them, "Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men."

Matthew 4:19

I retired from nursing 15 years ago. Then the Lord gave me a new job. I retired from my job as church secretary three days ago. But God still has plans for me. My newest assignment is to share my faith journey, my life story, with others through my writing. We never retire from God's work. Like all new assignments, this one is filled with challenges and excitement. I have learned that if my Lord calls me to a task, he always provides exactly what I need to accomplish the task in his name and to his glory.

Is the Lord Jesus calling you to a new venture? Trust his call. He will lead you. Follow him!

Leading Lord, I am ready for today's assignment if you will lead the way. Amen.

Follow: Follow your Savior to wherever he is calling you today.

Read: Mark 2:13-17; Luke 5:1-11

*Terry Weber
Williamsburg, VA*

Friday, June 27, 2014

Too Much, Too Fast?

Be still and know that I am God.

Psalm 46:10

Ever felt overstimulated at the movies from the rat-a-tat succession of previews across the big screen? Talk about sensory bombardment. TV ads challenge our mature senses and sensibilities. Weakened and slowing receptors often strain from ramped-up input.

Keeping up with grandkids is exhausting. Whether it's games on smart phones or Wi-Fi movies, the high-tech activities seem other-worldly when contrasted with our childhood memories.

Ever wonder what God thinks about all this frantic change? I'm so glad he is almighty and will be able to handle the pace of life long after I'm gone. He must be a very fast processor! So until he comes, let's hang on as the merry-go-round of life keeps increasing speed.

Lord, thank you for young people who keep pace with the speed of technology, enjoying its pleasures and opportunities. Keep me positive about the rapid change of life around me. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Share: Sit down with a young person and share your perspective on all the changes through the years.

Read: Ecclesiastes 3:1-12; Romans 8

*Rodney Otto
Grand Rapids, MI*

Saturday, June 28, 2014

Falling Steeples or Solid Rock?

Everyone who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock.

Matthew 7:24

Last summer we visited western France. Nearly every town had one building that was crumbling and abandoned—the village church. I thought of the hymn: “Built on the Rock the church shall stand, even when steeples are falling.” What a joy it was whenever we found evidence of active worship in one of those crumbling churches! Other churches had beautiful exteriors, but inside they were little more than museums.

Jesus said that we build on the rock when we hear his words and act on them. It’s not about how we look on the outside. What matters is inside—a living and active faith, expressed in worship and service.

Lord Jesus, help me put my faith into practice. Amen.

Practice: “Practice” your faith today: pray for someone, lend a hand, say a kind word.

Read: Matthew 7:24-27; Luke 21:5-6; 19

*Diane Bahn
Cypress, TX*

Sunday, June 29, 2014

Treasures in Heaven

Store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moths and vermin do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal.

Matthew 6:20

Catherine had been an excellent teacher for 30 years. But what her junior high school students remembered most about her is that she was the teacher who listened to them.

When at her retirement party dozens of her former students showed up to celebrate her life, Catherine was completely surprised. She had stored up riches that she didn't know were there.

When Jesus tells us to store up treasures in heaven, he's not telling us to buy our way into heaven. The price of admission has been fully paid by the grace of God in Jesus Christ. He's telling us that there is a way of life that creates riches that death can't destroy.

When the love of God flows through us into the lives of others, a treasure of love is being built for us in heaven. It's one of those surprises by which God will enrich the eternity that he will share with us.

O Holy Spirit, make me a vessel through whom your love flows into the lives of others. Amen.

Do: Be available to those who need a listener.

Read: Ephesians 2:4-10

Donald Becker
Oak Park, IL

Monday, June 30, 2014

Who's Blessing Whom?

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

Psalm 103:2

Forget not all his benefits

I was a youngster. I don't remember my Sunday school teacher's name or anything else about her, but I remember what she said: "Even if I come late to church, I can be there for the most important part. I can hear the pastor's wonderful words: 'The Lord bless you and keep you.'"

I had heard that benediction many times before, but from that point on it was different. It urges me to take inventory and prompts me to sing, "Who could ask for anything more!" Imagine: God blessing me! And along comes the Psalmist, asking me to count the many ways God has blessed me: times I'd be sick and was healed; when I'd sinned and was forgiven; and the list goes on.

And then the Psalmist turns to his audience and tells us it's our turn to bless the Lord "and forget not all his benefits."

May I forget not all your benefits, O Lord. Amen.

Engage: Engage some person in recalling five special ways in which God has blessed that person.

Read: Psalm 103: 1-6

*Karl E. Lutze
Valparaiso, IN*

HOLY HABITS for **HOPE-FULL HEALTH**

Living Well—Aging Well!

Here are five more “Holy Habits” from a study of people over 100 years of age. A strong spiritual life, relationships, humor, a positive outlook and staying active were discussed in the last issue. As you read, consider how well you are living them out and consider which one(s) you may want to consider more intentionally:

- Live for the day. Sure, reflect on the past and plan for the future, but rejoice each day. It is a gift to savor and celebrate, in the Lord!
- Rather than focus on issues or problems, dwell instead on the Lord’s love, forgiveness and grace in the midst of the struggles.
- People who live to be 100 are adaptable and independent. They see themselves as blessed, rather than as victims of life.
- Centenarians handle emotional stress well. Perhaps it is because they’ve weathered many a storm and know in faith the Lord is always with them.
- They eat well and do not overeat. Fruits, veggies, fish and, of course, a chocolate cookie once in a while! Small portions bring large blessings!

Thanks to those centenarians around us for these Holy Habits for Hope-Full Living! The next time you see one of these celebrating saints, give them a holy hug yourself!

Hope-Full Praying

Easter Blessings

We are Easter people, Lord, and alleluia is our song! We sing and pray every day because it is Easter every day, through the Cross and the Resurrection. Enable us to live as Easter people, even at times when we get stuck on our Good Fridays. Nudge us to the Cross and on to the Empty Tomb, Lord, as we go out and Easterize the world, all in your glorious name. We live on this side of the Resurrection, and we are glad! Amen.

The Gifts of Nature

Help me this day, Lord, to give thanks to you for your creation all around us. Slow me down to listen to the chirps, to touch a crawling creature, to bring a smile to a little child. Thanks, Lord, for reassuring me that your Son, Jesus, is with me always, even when the dark clouds appear. Amen!

Those In Need

Let me be your instrument of care, concern and contentment to others, in your name. Where there is a need to speak out, use my voice. Where someone needs support, give them my hands and feet. Where someone is invisible to others, give me your Light to show them the way to you. Equip me, Lord, with your love and forgiveness. I am ready! Amen!

Special Friends

Lord, you have gifted me with so many friends throughout my life. Today, I pause to remember them. Thanks to those special people who have left this world, namely... Thanks for my friends who are still with me this day, whether near or far, like... Allow me to be a special friend to others as well, even if I do not always agree with or understand them. Today I ask you for a special measure of your grace so that I may befriend them, as you have befriended me. Amen.

Beating Boredom

Some think I am too old. Some think that I need my rest. Others think that I have lost my edge and might not be up to the some tasks. And sometimes, Lord, just between you and me, I really do not feel like doing anything anyway. Bring hope and peace and a sense of joy to me this day, Lord. Help me to find a purpose in my life through you. Amen.

Staying in the Word

Lord, there are so many words trying to get our attention ... words, words, words! They bombard us through ads, TV, emails, newspapers and personal conversations. Move me to focus on your Word, the Scriptures, lest your love and forgiveness get lost in the overload. Enable me to see your Word as the only Source and Power of my life. And help me to hear your Word, both through the Scriptures as well as through your servants around me. Amen.

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