

HOPE-FULL LIVING

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

April • May • June • 2016

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Hope-Full Living Mission Statement

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

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Friday, April 1, 2016

Not Ashamed of Christ

Therefore, do not be ashamed of the testimony about our Lord.

2 Timothy 1:8

Easter is more than trumpets, lilies and shouts of “Christ is risen!” Easter leads us to bold testimony, in an increasingly hostile world, that Jesus Christ, crucified and risen, is the only way to salvation. Courage is needed for such testimony!

Paul, facing execution in a Roman dungeon, writes to young Timothy not to be ashamed of the testimony about our Lord, “who abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel” (2 Timothy 1:10). “Do not be ashamed ... but share in suffering for the gospel by the power of God, who saved us and called us to a holy calling ...” (2 Timothy 1:8-9). Who needs to hear from your lips this week that Christ is risen indeed? “For God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control” (2 Timothy 1:7).

Lord, give us courage to speak of your physical resurrection. Amen.

Share: Seek one person this week to tell, “Christ is risen!”

Read: 2 Timothy 1:1-14

*Stephen J. Carter
Oakville, MO*

Saturday, April 2, 2016

Beyond Remembering!

They remembered his words, and returning from the tomb they told all these things to the eleven and to all the rest.

Luke 24:8-9

The followers of Jesus had difficulty understanding who he really was and what he had to do to fulfill his Father's plan. When Jesus was crucified and buried, they were filled with sorrow, and when reports were shared that he had risen, they were confused.

Then the angels said, "Why do you seek the living among the dead? He is not here, but has risen. Remember how he told you ... they remembered his words, and returning from the tomb, they told all these things to the eleven and to all the rest" (Luke 24:5-9).

It's critical for us to go beyond remembering to telling!

Heavenly Father, thank you for revealing to us your salvation plan fulfilled in Jesus. Amen.

Tell: Challenge yourself every day to tell someone about Jesus Christ, Son of God and Savior of the world.

Read: Luke 24:1-10; John 20:1-18; Mark 16:1-7; Matthew 28:1-10

*David P. Schmidt
St. Louis, MO*

Sunday, April 3, 2016

I Doubt It

Do not disbelieve, but believe.

John 20:27

In our skeptical modern world, it's easy to relate to Thomas. "Unless I see ... unless I put my finger into the mark of the nails ... I will never believe" (John 20:25). Jesus met Thomas' doubts with patience and grace, inviting him to see and touch, and Thomas believed.

A dreadful diagnosis from the doctor may cause us to question God's plan for our lives. Financial worries may throw us into the depths of doubt. But Jesus reaches out to us as he did to Thomas, inviting us to see and touch, taste and hear: "These (accounts) are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name" (John 20:31). "This is my body, given for you. This is my blood, shed for you." With Thomas, we joyfully proclaim, "My Lord and my God!"

Forgive our doubts, Lord, and help us to believe in you as our Lord and our God. Amen.

Encourage: Share the Good News of Christ's resurrection with someone experiencing the challenges of growing older.

Read: John 20:24-31

*Eileen Ritter
Byron Center, MI*

Monday, April 4, 2016

“In Your Easter Bonnet”

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.

2 Corinthians 5:17

As a small girl, I vividly remember shopping with my mother for a new spring dress, shoes and hat. I felt special when I donned my new clothes to celebrate the season. Now, look how beautifully our earth shines in its “new clothes.” The daffodils, tulips, dogwoods, azaleas and fruit trees revel in the joy of their reawakening. God has created this time of new life for us to celebrate the resurrection of his Son from the grave. He gives to us his promise of new life through Christ’s suffering and death. Let’s raise our songs of praise. Imagine our new clothes when we join our Lord at the day of resurrection!

Jesus, our risen Lord, we praise you for the new life we have in you. Amen.

*Share: Greet someone today with the words:
“Christ is risen! He is risen indeed, alleluia!”*

Read: Revelation 21:1-7; Romans 6:4-6; 1 Peter 1:3-4

*Ann Eissfeldt
Ballwin, MO*

Tuesday, April 5, 2016

Wounded Healers

He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds.

Psalm 147:3

Disappointments, separations, illness, failures and our bouts with Satan have wounded us. Jesus, the great physician, came to our rescue. Through his death and resurrection he assures us of our resurrection and life with him forever. In the meantime, he has called us as wounded healers to reach out to hurting people with the good news of God's grace and mercy. Who better to reach out to others than ourselves, who have been wounded and have received healing?

In the days ahead, we walk the Emmaus road. With Jesus every day is Easter. We listen to him speak to us in his holy Word. We meet him in the bread and wine of his holy meal. Along the way we invite others wounded by sin to join us. When evening comes, we will say to Jesus, "Abide with us," and awaken to a brand-new morning, living in the sunshine of God's grace forever.

Lord, heal my wounded heart and equip me to be a wounded healer. Amen.

Go: Pray, then visit with someone who is hurting.

Read: Psalm 103

*Leo Symmank
Seabrook, TX*

Wednesday, April 6, 2016

Wait Until Next Year? No Way!

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

2 Corinthians 6:2

Hey fans, baseball season is here again and no doubt we are beginning to hope for the best for our favorite team. The “wait until next year” that we chanted six months ago is finally upon us. How will those young Cubs do this year? What about those Cardinals, not to mention the New York Mets and Kansas City Royals?

Today’s Scripture reminds us once again that there is no way that God’s people need to “wait until next year” to know that we are winners in the Lord. Because of Christ’s death and resurrection, we rejoice in the victory that is ours already in Christ, right now, today. No need to worry about striking out today. The Lord has already touched all the bases for us, and we are home free.

Lord, thanks for putting us on your team through our Baptism. Amen.

Think: We are not looking forward to eternal life, we are enjoying it, right now, in the Lord!

Read: Romans 6:3-4; John 15:12-17

*Rich Bimler
Bloomington, IL*

Thursday, April 7, 2016

God's Whisper

The sound of a low whisper.

1 Kings 19:12

I like this section of Scripture. In it, God tells the prophet Elijah to stand on the mountain. There Elijah witnesses the forces of nature as evidenced in a strong wind, an earthquake and a fire. But none of these provided Elijah with the peace and comfort he was looking for.

Then there was a low whisper. The almighty God of the universe did not present himself to Elijah in the phenomenal power of nature, but rather in a low and quiet whisper.

The God of peace still makes himself known to us today, but we often miss him. At times we are too busy to seek him. Perhaps, like Elijah, we expect God to come in a great and mighty way, instead of a soft, low whisper.

Almighty God, help me listen for the soft, quiet whisper of your voice. Amen.

Watch: Sit outside and ponder the quietness of God's creation.

Read: 1 Kings 19:9-18; Jeremiah 29:13; Psalm 46:10

*Celeste Cummins
Storm Lake, IA*

Friday, April 8, 2016

The Delete Button

I, I am he who blots out your transgressions for my own sake, and I will not remember your sins.

Isaiah 43:25

Although many writers begin by writing first drafts on paper, using pen and pencil before they transfer their words to a computer, I do not operate that way. I choose to begin with the computer. There are several reasons for that. However, the main reason is the delete button. I do not have to erase my grammatical mistakes or misspellings with an eraser; I can highlight them and delete them. It is instantaneous and permanent.

God works in the same way. We agonize over our mistakes in life, our failures, ruined relationships and sinful thoughts, words and deeds. The beautiful thing is, if we confess our sins and ask for forgiveness, God deletes them. They are instantly and permanently removed from his thoughts, never to return or reappear.

Father, thank you for deleting all our sins when we come to you seeking forgiveness. Amen.

Work: As you work on a computer, think about how God instantly deletes our transgressions. Share that thought with someone.

Read: Jeremiah 31:34; Hebrews 8:12

Gloria Doty
Fort Wayne, IN

Saturday, April 9, 2016

Transplanted

The desert shall rejoice and blossom like the crocus; it shall blossom abundantly and rejoice with joy and singing.

Isaiah 35:1-2

We have lilacs, peonies and irises that go back three generations, transplanted from our old home twenty years ago. They thrive, unafraid, and bloom to welcome another spring. They haven't changed.

Refugees flee for safety and people move. Today's fluid society values mobility, some more than others, but it is an upheaval, especially if we're older. Leaving what's familiar brings on fear of the unknown. It's a natural reaction, but what changes are only the physical surroundings. Inside, we are still the same baptized children of God, saved by the cross. Like the transplanted spring flowers, what we are and know has not changed.

Lord, instill in us the knowledge that your saving grace lives in us no matter how far we are transplanted from the old garden patch. Amen.

Do: Re-acquaint yourself with the flowers that greet you every spring, and pass on a plant to someone who is moving.

Read: Genesis 12:1-4; Jeremiah 17:7-8

*Judy Scherr
Lemay, MO*

Sunday, April 10, 2016

Pursuit

I have other sheep that are not of this fold. I must bring them also.

John 10:16

I like the game *Trivial Pursuit*. Odd questions are asked, such as: What player squats an average of 150 times a game? What was the name of FDR's dog? Not much in life depends on trivia.

Not so with the pursuit described in the words above. Jesus is the Good Shepherd, who came "to seek and to save the lost" (Luke 19:10). He does not consider our lives as trivial. Rather, our salvation was so important to him that he was even willing to die for it. "The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep" (John 10:11).

Jesus looked ahead, down the centuries, and included us in his "pursuit." Of us, his "other sheep," he said, "I must bring them also." How blest we are to be counted in his flock. Jesus promises his sheep that no one can snatch them out of his hand (John 10:28).

*Thank you, Jesus, for pursuing and saving me.
Amen.*

Reflect: Think about times when you strayed and Jesus brought you back to himself.

Read: John 10:14-18

*Fred Boettcher
Menomonee Falls, WI*

Monday, April 11, 2016

Hold On

We have come to share in Christ, if indeed we hold our original confidence firm to the end.

Hebrews 3:14

Stairs are challenging. Do you remember being able to run up and jog down several flights, all without using the handrail? Now stairs for me require a slower approach, using the handrail, holding on and occasionally pulling myself up. The handrail is a must.

Life is similar to a long stair climb. When we are young, life is generally good and carefree. Aging brings the difficulties of illness, physical limitations or other life changing issues, creating a need to reach for assistance. Reach out to God and his unconditional love. He wants us to hold on to him. On the first Easter morning, his Son gave us all the assurance needed. Just hold on—the top of the stairs is there for us!

Heavenly Father, eternal life in heaven is the certain hope you have given us. Help us to hold on. Amen.

Your mission: Follow God. Show that in your life.

Read: Matthew 11:28-30

*Don Hollmann
Ballwin, MO*

Tuesday, April 12, 2016

Light Overcomes

If I say, "Surely the darkness shall cover me, and the light about me be night," even darkness is not dark to you. The night is as bright as the day.

Psalm 139:11-12

Mom's eyes glistened. "Sometimes I'm afraid I'll go blind," she whispered. She feared days without the hummingbirds, roses, magazines or card games.

"Then I will sing hymns to you in the darkness," I said quietly. She squeezed my hand. Into any night, every blindness or even the dark recesses of the soul, Jesus comes as the Light of life. He reminds you of a good memory or an apt Bible verse, creation in the moment, and even a peace that passes understanding. It may even be someone who loves you singing hymns!

Jesus, I ask you to open the eyes of my heart to the hope of perceiving you more fully each day. Even darkness is not dark to you for Light overcomes darkness every time. Amen.

List: How is God's Light blessing you both physically and spiritually?

Read: Ephesians 1:18; 2 Corinthians 4:18

*Julaine Kammrath
Aurora, IL*

Wednesday, April 13, 2016

Before Others

Let your light shine before others.

Matthew 5:15

My path crossed with Helen's as she exited a mid-week women's Bible study at church. Life's time had come for Helen to move. She stated no complaints about leaving the home that she and her late husband had shared for many years. Downsizing a household wasn't on her mind either.

Circumstances beyond her control dictated that she would be moving to a place with few activities. And that was the problem!

It is in the activities of life that we are with others. It is there our light is to shine to humbly display our good works. It is in gently witnessing before others that we urge them to give glory to our Father in heaven. I do trust that God will provide some path-crossing for Helen and her new neighbors.

Dear Lord Jesus, thank you for shared activities that promote your purposes. Amen.

Seek: Have the desire, take the time, to cross someone's path.

Read: Matthew 5:13-15; Luke 19:1-10

*Harry Edenfield
Brownstown, MI*

Thursday, April 14, 2016

Beautiful Morning

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

Psalm 118:24

As I enjoy my morning coffee on the patio and take in the beauty of a sunny spring day, a song comes to mind. The words of the chorus are: “Oh, what a beautiful morning. Oh, what a beautiful day. I’ve got a beautiful feeling everything’s going my way.”

It is a beautiful morning, but it remains to be seen if everything will go my way as the day progresses. Probably not. But no matter what the day brings, it will still be beautiful because God is with me and cares for me. God made the day, and I will rejoice in it.

Creator God, thank you for all the wonders of the world. Help me always to appreciate nature, take care of the world and praise you for the beauty in my life. Amen.

Walk: Take a leisurely walk in a park or forest preserve and praise God for all that he’s put in the world for us to enjoy.

Read: Psalm 118:14-29

*Jeanette Dall
Batavia, IL*

Friday, April 15, 2016

Sing with the Birds

Like birds hovering, so the Lord of hosts will protect Jerusalem; he will protect and deliver it; he will spare and rescue it.

Isaiah 31:5

I can handle the birds that come to my backyard. I can't supply crayfish and minnows for the great blue heron or a bloody carcass for the vulture. But bread crumbs, suet and sunflower I can handle.

Birds sing their praise when I have yet to lift an eyelid. They sing of a day made new, a new day to begin once again. In the evening the birds rest among the branches, singing. I hear them sing, "Watch, Lord, with those who wake or weep tonight." They are invoking life and I listen.

When days become cooler, some birds fly the great migration, knowing their landings will be soft and safe and out of harm's way. I am comforted by the rhythms of life around me, and I praise God that I am part of his creation. Sing alleluia!

*Lord, I join the rest of creation in praising you.
Amen.*

Watch: Go outside or look out the window. Watch and listen as creation praises the Creator.

Read: Matthew 6:25-34

*Ron Beathard
Harrison, OH*

Saturday, April 16, 2016

Training

While bodily training is of some value, godliness is of value in every way.

1 Timothy 4:8

Nearly every doctor or other medical expert suggests that a fitness program is a factor in our well-being. This is especially true for seniors since a balanced fitness program helps manage things like blood pressure and cholesterol. Exercise helps to strengthen our bodies so we feel better on a day-to-day basis and it reduces other health risks as we age.

It is wise to exercise, but as 1 Timothy advises, it is also crucial as we age to continue to train ourselves in godliness. Regular prayer, Scripture reading and worship are ways that we can grow stronger in the knowledge and love of God and of his Son, Jesus Christ. Physical health is valuable, but spiritual health is the most important.

Living God, help me set my body, heart and mind on you. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Reflect: Consider what to add to your daily routine to exercise not only your body but also your faith in Jesus Christ.

Read: Philippians 4:4-9

*Paul A. Metzler
Shrewsbury, MO*

Sunday, April 17, 2016

Voices of Praise

I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.

John 10:11

Their young, untrained voices brought a smile to this grandma's face. From the shy tones of some to the bellowing voices of others, they sang, "I just want to be a sheep."

As I drove away from the school's worship service, the kindergartners' message stayed with me. Sheep are not the ones who race to the head of the flock and get the glory. They follow. They keep their eyes on their shepherd and go where he leads them. He provides for them and urges them ever onward to greener pastures.

Let us raise our adult voices with those precious children and sing whole-heartedly to our risen Savior, "I just want to be a sheep."

Good Shepherd, lead me in the paths of your Son to eternal life. Amen.

Celebrate: Jesus Christ hears both shy tones and bellowing voices when all generations together sing praises to him.

Read: Psalm 100

*Beth Bieberich
Fort Wayne, IN*

Monday, April 18, 2016

A Calendar

My times are in your hand.

Psalm 31:15

Wanted or unwanted, calendars arrive in the mail. You probably have one or two—or ten—hanging around. The numbers on the calendar change very little, but the pictures are refreshing.

One of our calendars has photos of colorful butterflies resting on beautiful garden flowers. Calendars are normally used to mark time's passing. For me, this particular calendar emphasizes the timelessness of God's love. The butterfly is a Christian symbol of Jesus' resurrection. His resurrection assures us of a life that is eternal, endless, timeless.

Calendars mark beginnings and endings, starts and stops, appointments made and kept, a surgery anticipated and one completed, a life conceived and one put to rest. Let me hazard a guess: in Jesus' heavenly home, there may be calendars with photos, but none with numbers.

Dear Jesus, my times and timelessness are in your hands. Amen.

Choose: For yourself and others, select your calendar well.

Read: Revelation 22:1-5

*Harry Edenfield
Brownstown, MI*

Tuesday, April 19, 2016

If Only...

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

Psalm 103:2

Do you ever find yourself in the “If only” rut? *If only* I had more time, more money, more friends. *If only* people understood me. *If only* the pain would go away, or the circumstances would change. *Then* I would be happy and praise God.

We often ask God to change things. And many times God does change our circumstances and we receive the special blessing we wanted. Other times, God changes us. He opens our eyes, gives us new thoughts or develops greater peace and patience within us.

If only we put the whole of our lives into God’s hands, seeking his will, thanking him for each blessing throughout the day. What joy and peace will be ours.

Lord, enable me to cherish the blessings you give each day. Amen.

Count: List all the blessings you notice today ... and thank God for each one.

Read: 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18; Colossians. 2:6-7; Psalm 34:1

*Sharolyn Sander
Lincoln, NE*

Wednesday, April 20, 2016

Through Grandma's Eyes

Remember not the sins of my youth or my transgressions; according to your steadfast love remember me, for the sake of your goodness, O Lord!

Psalm 25:7

A little girl said to a friend, "I wish I had glasses like my grandma wears. She always sees when I need a hug or need to talk about something or when I am tired and afraid. And best of all, she always sees something good in everyone."

The Lord looks at each of us today through the cross and the empty tomb, and sees us as redeemed in him. Since we are now forgiven, he gives us the power to see others as loved and forgiven as well. What a joy to see others through the cross of Christ. What an opportunity to bring God's love to others today through a word, a touch, a smile, a prayer!

Lord, enable us to live "cross-eyed" today, as we see the needs of others around us. Amen.

Do: Through your "grandma eyes," look for someone to hug and listen to today, and then tell them why.

Read: 2 Corinthians 5:14-21

*Rich Bimler
Bloomington, IL*

Thursday, April 21, 2016

Time For Planting

As for that in the good soil, they are those who, hearing the word, hold it fast in an honest and good heart, and bear fruit with patience.

Luke 8:15

Early spring and planting are like hand and glove—they go together. The urge to plant flowers is so strong I can hardly wait. It seems like forever before my favorite nursery has the flowers I want. To somewhat satisfy my anxiety, potting soil and fertilizer are purchased, and frequent calls are made to the nursery.

With God, the growing season never ends. There is no need to wait for warm weather or plentiful water; anxiety is not required. His Word is our food, and our willingness to receive it is all that is needed.

God our Father, help us to always seek your guidance, so we always continue growing in our certain hope of eternal life with you. Amen

Don't wait: Start planting. Read the Bible daily.

Read: 1 Corinthians 3:5-9

*Don Hollmann
Ballwin, MO*

Friday, April 22, 2016

In God We Trust

*I will say to the Lord, "My refuge and my fortress,
my God, in whom I trust."*

Psalm 91:2

By an act of Congress, on April 22, 1864, the words "In God We Trust" were included on all newly minted U.S. coins. Much has changed in our society since 1864. While we have gained vast improvement in technology, as well as medical advancements, there is one question that still remains. In whom do we place our trust?

In the ever-changing society in which we live, we can easily become distracted by our everyday problems and lose sight of where we should place our trust. As sinners, we often fall into the bad habit of living by sight and not by trust. There is one constant in this world that never wavers: God, in whom we can always trust.

Dear heavenly Father, help me in all circumstances in life to place my trust in you. Amen.

Witness: Share with others the hope and trust you have in God.

Read: Proverbs 3:5-6; Psalm 62:8

*Betsy Becker Niedringhaus
Ballwin, MO*

Saturday, April 23, 2016

Living and Doing

But be doers of the word, and not hearers only.

James 1:22

A young friend of mine was killed by a drunken driver. At the funeral, her teacher father prayed for forgiveness and peace of mind for the young man who drove the car. Afterwards, I told the man how impressed I'd been by his prayer. He said, "If you teach it, you'd better live it."

By the power of God's Holy Spirit, we are all teachers by living, hearing and doing our faith daily. We read God's Word, which tells us how to live out our faith. We watch Jesus—the living Word—in action. The Holy Spirit moves us to respond as living, teaching, doing Christians in daily occurrences and horrific circumstances.

Father, fill me with your Holy Spirit so that what I hear and read in your Word motivates me to follow the living example of your Son. In his name. Amen.

Do: Be a doer today. Smile at the person who annoys you. Forgive the person who hurts you deeply.

Read: James 2:19-27; Romans 10:17

*Ruth Geisler
Aliso Viejo, CA*

Sunday, April 24, 2016

Amazing

The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control.

Galatians 5:22-23

Delayed gratification, we are told, is a mark of a mature person. Nothing expresses that better than planting bulbs—those homely little knots of matter, placed in the earth with a promise of beauty many months later. In that spirit, I planted Dutch iris bulbs in the fall. It was also in honor of two classmates who died recently. I grew up with a group of friends who have stayed in contact with each other ever since kindergarten, and now that we are in our seventies, Facebook allows us to experience news and photos with instant gratification. Much of life in 2016 is indeed very instant. God's way, however, frequently involves delayed gratification. He wants our trust, and he provides us with the Spirit's gifts of patience and self-control. Now in the spring, exquisite purple flowers appear without me doing anything. It's pretty amazing, isn't it?

O God, help us to know your timing is best. Amen.

Consider: When have you waited on the Lord? It was worth it, wasn't it?

Read: Psalm 27

*Sally Beck
Williamsburg, VA*

Monday, April 25, 2016

It's Just That Simple

I will seek out my sheep, and I will rescue them.

Ezekiel 34:12

It was a fifty-five-year-old soiled clerical collar. You know, the white plastic kind, the collars that sometimes result in a child asking their pastor, "Are you God?" (Have you ever seen a picture of God in a clerical collar?) Wondering how to get it clean but still intact, I noticed the brief instructions on the back: "Wash with soap and water." It was just that simple.

Our Bible class has been studying the Book of Ezekiel for over a year. In it are some of the stories of God's people who just didn't get it. Poor Ezekiel tried everything to get their attention and to convey God's messages. After they had lost fields, flocks, food and much of their population, they were taken into captivity. They still didn't get it. Over and over Ezekiel repeated, "Repent and return to the Lord." It was just that simple.

Good Lord, today I give you every worry, every sorrow, every pain, as I listen to you tell me, "I am your shepherd; you shall not want." Reassure me that, yes, it is just that simple. Amen.

Reflect: Simplify just one task tomorrow.

Read: Ezekiel 34:11-16

*Lois Scheer
San Diego, CA*

Tuesday, April 26, 2016

Easter Energizes Faith

According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope.

1 Peter 1:3

“I hope you come back with the same air in your tires!” That was the comment of the elderly lady I visited regularly when I told her I was going on a trip. A flat tire is a problem!

When our confidence is deflated, it’s even more serious. Life’s cares and worries, its problems and predicaments can do that to us, wearing us down, undermining our faith.

In the spring of the year, we welcome the rebirth of nature, the bloom of new life. At this time also, as we celebrate the resurrection of our Lord, his Spirit energizes our faith, assuring us that in the living Jesus we have an eternal future.

By faith in Jesus we can see beyond the concerns that deflate us now. His Spirit will inflate our faith and enable us to live with a hope that carries us through hard times, and even through death.

Lord Jesus, energize my faith as I reflect on the promise spoken by your empty tomb. Amen.

Reflect: Identify what is causing anxiety for you; expose it to the promise of the open tomb.

Read: John 20:24-31

Paul Scheidt
Chesterfield, MO

Wednesday, April 27, 2016

Prayer

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

1 Thessalonians 5:16-18

One of the reasons I enjoy *Fiddler on the Roof* is the scene with Tevye talking to God. I'm nothing like Tevye, but I also talk to God a lot and that's how I think of prayer.

Whether formal, in groups, in desperation or contrition, the core of it all is communication. So, yes, I do it all day long. Sometimes I argue or try to make my case, like Tevye; sometimes I am the contrite sinner; mostly, I'm in need of God's presence so that I can keep going without becoming cynical or self-righteous. Increasingly, because I'm older and have new concerns, I need to remember God has taken care of me for a long time and will continue to do so.

Father in heaven, you are Lord of all, and I am grateful that you listen to me. Amen.

Listen: Dig up a soundtrack of Fiddler on the Roof. Listen to Tevye's concerns and compare with your own.

Read: 1 Samuel 1:24 to 2:10; James 5:13-18

*Judy Scherr
Lemay, MO*

Thursday, April 28, 2016

Talking to God

To you, O Lord, I call; my rock, be not deaf to me.

Psalm 28:1

I've had a few “mountaintop” experiences—one actually on a mountaintop. But here I am at 74 and I just learned something new. Last night I learned how to talk to God.

Of course, I've prayed before, but I don't think I ever just talked to God. Last night I did. It felt so good. I've always prayed silently, unless I was called on to lead a group. My private talks with God were silent—speaking inside my head and heart.

Last night, “alone,” I spoke aloud. I knew God was right beside me. I was not alone; he was listening. Perhaps because it felt like a “real” conversation, I did feel God listening, and that felt good. Perhaps that's why hymns and psalms are favorites, because they encourage us to “speak aloud to God “and that's how we really speak.

You are real in my life, O Lord. Thank you for hearing me, for listening. Amen.

Think: Pray out loud or pray silently. God hears you.

Read: Psalm 28:6-9

*Gail Lutze
Valparaiso, IN*

Friday, April 29, 2016

Medicate With Humor

Rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer.

Romans 12:12

Patient in tribulation and affliction—this is apparently the lesson to learn as our bodies grow older. We need to stay closely connected to our Savior and Lord in prayer and allow ourselves to smile and even laugh occasionally.

Jesus gave us an example of patience in suffering as he endured the pain of the cross for our sake. His mind was set on the mission God gave him to save all of mankind from their sins.

Therefore, when I sit in one spot too long and can't get out of my chair, I try to smile or even laugh a bit as I ask for help. Then I set my mind on the sure hope of a future life in the company of God and ask my Lord to enable me to persevere in faith to that blessed day of redemption.

Thank you, Lord, for the help and the hope you give us through all life's changes. Amen.

Remember: A sense of humor and a smile help keep us from despair.

Read: Job 19:23-27

*Beth Bieberich
Fort Wayne, IN*

Saturday, April 30, 2016

It's Time to Play

The Lord has done great things for us; we are glad!

Psalm 126:3

Springtime is a great time to play. It is a time to affirm the concept that there is no such thing as “age appropriate” when it comes to play. At every age, play is not a luxury, it is a necessity. Check out today’s Scripture to affirm that joy and playfulness are gifts that the Lord continues to give to us, because he has “done it all” for us.

If you are able, take a walk with a youngster today, and talk about how you used to skip down the sidewalk. Play a game with someone or tell a funny story to a “grouchy” friend. Spring into playful action this spring by acknowledging that play is a gift from the Lord, for all ages. Why should the kids have all the fun? Playfulness allows us to see that faith in the Lord is less a system to believe and more a love affair to celebrate.

Lord, today help me to pray—and play—in your name. Amen.

Play: Splash in the water, smile in the mirror and laugh out loud.

Read: Psalm 126

*Rich Bimler
Bloomington, IL*

Sunday, May 1, 2016

Forget Me Not

Are not five sparrows sold for two pennies? And not one of them is forgotten before God.

Luke 12:6

My mother wrote all the family dates of births, baptisms, anniversaries and deaths in a book, aptly named a “forget me not” book. It had a picture of forget-me-not flowers on the cover.

Occasionally, we fall into the trap of thinking God has forgotten us. We wonder if he truly knows or cares about our problems and hardships, our health and financial concerns. Or perhaps we feel we aren’t important enough for him to remember. We want to cry out, “Forget me not, Lord!”

As we age, our memories become less sharp and we tend to forget many things. But God’s memory never diminishes; he promises he will never forget us and our daily struggles. He remembers everything about us and will never forget us.

Heavenly Father, help us remember how much you love us and assure us you will never forget us. Amen.

Share: Research the forget-me-not flower and share the information with someone to remind them God will not forget.

Read: Psalm 136:23; Hebrews 8:12

*Gloria Doty
Fort Wayne, IN*

Monday, May 2, 2016

Thoughts for the Journey

He who is joined with all the living has hope.

Ecclesiastes 9:4

While travelling down the road of life as an aging pilgrim, I have found inspiration in the observations of King Solomon in Ecclesiastes. He keeps me focused on a lifestyle with God:

“Eat bread with gusto. Drink wine with a robust heart. Oh yes—God takes pleasure in *your* pleasure” (9:7-9, *The Message*).

“Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with your might” (9:10).

“Time and chance happens to them all ... for man does not know his time” (9:11-12).

“A good name is better than precious ointment” (7:1).

“And the dust returns to the earth as it was, and the spirit returns to God who gave it” (12:7).

These and other passages help me find gladness and purpose for my remaining days. I depend on Jesus’ promise of eternal life—his gift to me.

Jesus, help me live every day with meaning and purpose, with my eyes focused on eternity. Amen.

Time out: Take time to read the Book of Ecclesiastes.

Read: Psalm 27

Walter M. Schoedel
Webster Groves, MO

Tuesday, May 3, 2016

Downsizing

For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

Matthew 6:21

My husband and I have decided to move to a senior apartment across the street from our church, appropriately named Steeple View. This involves downsizing and selling our home. The challenge is the basement, which is full of stuff. Can you relate?

It occurred to me that Jesus probably had very little stuff. He traveled from place to place with his disciples, often stayed with Mary, Martha and Lazarus, and even slept on a boat occasionally. Jesus is our role model in so many ways, perhaps also in simplifying our lives with less stuff. Then we can focus on our faith, family and friends, as he did. Also, our family will thank us for downsizing, so they won't have to do it all when we're in heaven. A good friend of ours calls that a gift to our children.

*Dear Jesus, please help us to simplify our lives.
Amen.*

Do: Follow the priorities of Jesus: faith, family, friends.

Read: Matthew 6:19-21; Matthew 19:16-21; Luke 12:32-34

*Annette Schumacher
Muskego, WI*

Wednesday, May 4, 2016

A Watchman

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

Psalm 121:1-2

Dense fog surrounds my car. I can hardly see the road. A rest area comes along, so I make a quick turn and am safely off the foggy road. A gentle custodian approaches, ready to go home after a long night. When asked about the fog, he expresses concern about getting home and yet he lingers, watching us. I realize that he is waiting out the fog with us—with travelers afraid to venture out.

The fog begins to lift and he assures us it is safe to go on, but he lingers, making sure we are ready to go. We leave and he stands as a watchman at the shore. Each vessel is on its way, and then he leaves.

Lord, thank you for sending your angels, your messengers, to comfort and assure us of your love. Amen.

Think: Who are the angels and watchers in your life? Can you be that for others?

Read: Psalm 121

*Gail Lutze
Valparaiso, IN*

Thursday, May 5, 2016

Ascension Reflections

Therefore God has highly exalted him.

Philippians 2:9

I used to think that the word *ascension* referred only to Jesus being taken up bodily into heaven. However, *ascension* can also refer to one's coronation, when the person takes his or her rightful place upon a throne. That is what Jesus' ascension is all about. His work of redemption having been completed on earth, Jesus is elevated to the right hand of the Father. Jesus is Judge of all, both the living and the dead. What he gains is not so much altitude as authority.

What is most comforting is the knowledge that he who loved us and gave himself for us is now in the position to assure us that his love is at work in all things for us.

How wonderful it is, dear Jesus, to know we have a Friend in high places. Amen.

Ask: How will the gracious rule of Jesus be evident in my day's agenda?

Read: Acts 1:1-11; Philippians 2:1-11

*Ted Zimmerman
Napa, CA*

Friday, May 6, 2016

Convinced

It is to your advantage that I go away.

John 16:7

It's hard to imagine any circumstances in which it would be an advantage to have Jesus "go away." But the promised Holy Spirit would come only after Jesus ascended into heaven. The disciples were eyewitnesses to Jesus' death and resurrection. They proclaimed repentance and forgiveness in his name, but it was—and still is—the Spirit's task to convince the world of that Gospel truth.

Jesus did "go away," ascending bodily into heaven. He will come back—in his risen, glorified body—to take us to himself forever. Until that day, we are Jesus' witnesses, and he is with us as we share the good news. We may be stumbling and fearful and less than eloquent, but the Holy Spirit will convince the world of the truth. "It is to your advantage that I go away," Jesus said. Are you convinced?

Holy Spirit, work through our Gospel words to convince the world of Jesus' love. Amen.

Share: When you talk about Jesus, remember that the Spirit is at work in the Word.

Read: John 16:1-15; Acts 1:6-11

*Carol Geisler
Manchester, MO*

Saturday, May 7, 2016

Patience

Love is patient and kind.

1 Corinthians 13:4

In a chat with a good friend the other day our conversation began to center around some struggles that a few of our grandchildren were having. What could we do? We aren't the parents. The grandchildren haven't shared their struggles with us. The parents haven't asked for our opinion and advice. We love our grandchildren and want the best for them. We have some wisdom and experience gained from our many years on this earth. What do we do?

We resolved to continue to bombard God's throne with prayer on behalf of our grandchildren. We are going to remain loving and approachable to all of our grandchildren, especially the strugglers. We reminded ourselves of the patience of the father in the parable of the Lost (Prodigal) Son in Luke 15. God has been patient and loving with us all our lives. It is our turn to show patience and love toward our children and grandchildren.

Lord Jesus, thank you for being patient and kind with me. Help me to be the same to others. Amen.

Reflect: Read and reflect on the story of the Lost Son.

Read: Luke 15:11-32

*Paul Eggold
Greendale, WI*

Sunday, May 8, 2016

A Mother's Love

Neither ... height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Romans 8:38-39

I firmly believe God created mothers to bring an element of his own love for us into the world. Many characteristics mothers possess are a direct reflection of the love God has for us as his children. Nurturing, protecting and teaching are examples of qualities that our heavenly Father has and instills in women to equip them to raise children.

It often isn't until we are adults that we can fully comprehend and appreciate the gift we have been given in our mothers. Sacrificial love is the cornerstone of motherhood. It is also a reflection of our Savior's love for his children. After all, Jesus died for us so that we might have eternal life with him in heaven. What a legacy of love we have been given!

*Dear Father, thank you for your gift of mothers.
Amen.*

Consider: How has your mother influenced you and the adult you are today?

Read: John 17:20-26

*Betsy Becker Niedringhaus
Ballwin, MO*

Monday, May 9, 2016

A Sense of Wonder

Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God.

Romans 11:33

Do we still have a sense of wonder? In an information age when you can Google almost anything you need to know, a sense of amazement may fade. Yet consider the marvel of a new baby with all systems “go”—respiratory, digestive, circulatory, neurological and so on.

Following his crucifixion—wonder of wonders—Jesus rose from the grave and promised, “Because I live, you also will live” (John 14:19). Isn’t that wonder-full? What a wonder that he gives himself to us for our forgiveness and life at his Table! It’s cause for amazement when Jesus says that whatever good we do for another person, it has really been done to him.

There’s one more surprise ahead: Heaven, where “no eye has seen, nor ear heard ... what God has prepared for those who love him” (1 Corinthians 2:9). There are abundant wonders yet to come!

Dear Lord, preserve in us a sense of wonder at your mercy and care. Amen.

List: Make a list of things you don’t fully comprehend but are of real benefit. Be amazed!

Read: Romans 11:33-36

*Fred Boettcher
Menomonee Falls, WI*

Tuesday, May 10, 2016

Majestic!

O Lord, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth! You have set your glory above the heavens.

Psalm 8:1

The beauty of God's world is all around us, if we take just a few minutes to witness it. The glistening of a gentle snowfall, the quiet patter of a spring rain, the refreshing breeze on a hot summer day and the brilliance of the autumn change of colors all speak to us of God's majesty. No earthly being can duplicate what God has shown his people.

Too often we dwell on the negatives in our lives and fail to appreciate the positive gifts God has bestowed on us. Many of us need to turn our pessimistic minds into more positive and optimistic views of God's majesty. For we are his greatest creations and nothing or no one can separate us from God's glory and plan for us.

Dear God, blessed are you for creating the magnificent world in which we temporarily live. Your magnificent creation must not be overlooked. Be with me, I pray, through Jesus Christ. Amen.

Get out: Invite a family member or friend to take a walk with you and enjoy the beauty of the world with which God has blessed us.

Read: Psalm 70:4

*Gloria Elder
Crystal Lake, IL*

Wednesday, May 11, 2016

Not to Worry

Do not be anxious ... about your body, what you put on.

Matthew 6:25

Jesus tells us not to worry about our clothes, but ever think how often clothing is mentioned in the Bible? Adam and Eve's animal skins, Joseph's coat, the wedding garment in the parable, Jesus' glowing garment at his transfiguration, just to name a few. Mark 15 describes a lot of clothes: Jesus' humiliation at the hands of the soldiers in the repeated off-and-on of "royal" clothes, followed by their demeaning gambling for his humble robe. Then in contrast is the loving act of Joseph of Arimathea who bought a shroud for his Lord and wrapped him in it. All of those clothes were provided by others, and, if we think about it, our most important clothing is, too. Our baptismal gowns were lovingly chosen by our parents, and the white robes of righteousness we will receive one day have been secured by Jesus' own blood and righteousness. Not to worry indeed.

Keep me mindful, Lord, that all of our needs are met by you. Thank you. Amen.

Recall: As you decide on clothing for the day, remember that you are dressed in Jesus' righteousness.

Read: Revelation 7:9-14; Galatians 3:27

*Sally Beck
Williamsburg, VA*

Thursday, May 12, 2016

He Breathed on Them

Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you ... And when he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit."

John 20:21-22

In *The Book of God*, author Dr. Walter Wangerin, Jr., describes this moment between Jesus and the disciples in a very personal way. He tells of the resurrected Jesus coming to each disciple in turn, placing his hands upon each one, and saying as he breathed on each one, "Receive the Holy Spirit." It is a very powerful and personal experience for each one. As we imagine that moment, we say to ourselves, "If only it were possible for us today!"

But it is. Our every kneeling at the Lord's Table is truly a moment like the one the disciples had. At every Sacrament, the risen Lord comes personally to each one of us, lays his hands upon each one of us, and says: "Peace be with you. Your sin is forgiven!" The miracle of his resurrection is experienced and celebrated again and again in your life.

Lord Jesus, breathe your presence upon me at your holy meal. Amen.

Rehearse: Practice moments of solitude and quiet as you meditate on his Word.

Read: John 20:19-31; Luke 24:13-35

*Lionel Otto
Adelaide, Australia*

Friday, May 13, 2016

Divine Super Glue

He is before all things, and in him all things hold together.

Colossians 1:17

Do you know what holds the human body together? Science calls it *laminin*. The interesting thing about this molecule is that it is in the shape of a cross when you examine it under an electron microscope. St. Paul once wrote this about Jesus: “In him all things hold together” (Colossians 1:17). Jesus holds everything together. That’s some kind of divine super glue!

In those moments in life when things seem to be “coming apart,” in those times when you’re not sure where to turn, in those times in life when you feel you have reached the end of your rope, there is Jesus. In Jesus “all things hold together” in a faith that believes that beyond the cross of Good Friday there is the open tomb of Easter.

Merciful God, whenever I feel as if I may be “losing it,” help me believe Jesus is there to keep me together. Amen.

Give: Share the encouraging power of Jesus with someone you know who may be having a tough time right now.

Read: Proverbs 8:22-31

*Edward Arle
St. Charles, MO*

Saturday, May 14, 2016

The Command

The word of God is living and active.

Hebrews 4:12

When God speaks, things happen. He said, “Let there be light,” and light appeared. God told Pharaoh, “Let my people go” and, with some persuasion, Pharaoh did so. Jesus, the living and active Word made flesh, said, “Little girl, I say to you, arise” (Mark 5:41) and “Young man, I say to you, arise” (Luke 7:14), and two young people awoke from the sleep of death.

When you were buried with Jesus in the waters of Baptism, the risen Lord called to you, “Little girl ... young man ... I say to you, arise.” The Word called, and you awoke from the death of sin to the light of eternal life. On a day still to come, our Lord Jesus will return “with a cry of command” (1 Thessalonians 4:16). Awake in life or asleep in death, you will hear the call of the living Word: “Arise!”

Jesus, Living Word, let me serve you now as I await your final command. Amen.

Listen: Each morning remember the call of Jesus and arise to a new day.

Read: Isaiah 55:8-11; 1 Peter 1:22-25

*Carol Geisler
Manchester, MO*

Sunday, May 15, 2016

Searching For One

If a man has a hundred sheep, and one of them has gone astray, does he not leave the ninety-nine on the mountains and go in search of the one that went astray?

Matthew 18:12

For many years, I owned a goat dairy. Over seventy-five does would give birth in the spring. Since nearly every birth was a multiple, I would have up to 150 babies (kids) born within a month's time. Although they were different colors and sizes, I would know if one or more were missing from the pens and I would immediately be searching for that one.

Believers are described as sheep and Jesus as the shepherd. How comforting it is to know that he knows if one of us has strayed from the safety of God's presence. He comes looking for us, possibly through a friend or relative or circumstance.

I was happy when I found my errant little goats, but nothing compares to the joy of Jesus when we return to him.

Gentle Shepherd, keep us from straying from your love and protection. Amen.

Pray: Think of someone who has strayed from God's sheepfold. Pray for that person.

Read: Psalm 23; John 10:7-16

*Gloria Doty
Fort Wayne, IN*

Monday, May 16, 2016

Keep Up the Good Work!

He who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.

Philippians 1:6

Walt Zeile, sainted pastor and dear friend, was one of the most affirming people I've known. He listened with empathy and he supported and encouraged me. At the end of many conversations, he would smile with a twinkle in his eye and say, "Keep up the good work, Steve-o!"

We all need that, don't we? How special we feel when someone listens to us and affirms our life! Just think what our words of encouragement can do to lift the heart of a friend or loved one.

Thank you, Father, for those who encouraged me. Help me to listen and to offer encouragement to others. Amen.

Cheer: Give a boost to a friend, telling them to "keep up the good work!"

Read: Psalm 63; Philippians 1:1-6

*Steve Hess
Fort Myers, FL*

Tuesday, May 17, 2016

It's Called Grace

God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.

Romans 5:5

In the first five verses of Romans 5, Paul gets right down and personal, and he tells us some amazingly powerful things:

God has given us the Holy Spirit; the Holy Spirit has poured the love of God into our hearts:

We have been justified by faith.

We have peace with God.

We have obtained access into his grace.

We rejoice in the hope of the glory of God.

We rejoice in our sufferings.

God, whom we could not possibly know, tore the heavens apart to enter our world in the person of Jesus. Why? Because God loves us so much, that he died for us and rose again to give us a relationship with himself that would be all of the things above. God loves us. Can we believe that?

Dear Father in heaven, thank you for your great love. May the Holy Spirit always keep me believing how much you love me. Amen.

Talk: Share with a friend what these things mean for you.

Read: Romans 5:1-11

*Lionel Otto
Adelaide, Australia*

Wednesday, May 18, 2016

Keeping It Together!

This Jesus is the stone that was rejected by you, the builders, which has become the cornerstone.

Acts 4:11

On October 28, 1965, the final keystone section of the Gateway Arch in St. Louis was set in place, completing the tallest monument in the Western Hemisphere, built to commemorate the pioneer spirit and westward expansion of the United States. That “key” section has kept the Arch together for 50 years, verifying its critical importance to the physical structure and beauty of the monument.

St. Luke spoke of one critical to all because he, Jesus, holds all things together. “There is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved” (Acts 4:12). Jesus fulfilled God’s design to save the world from sin, death and the power of Satan. Let’s broadcast his redeeming work and exalt his name because he saved the world and is keeping it together.

Father, we thank you for the building of your Church. Help us broadcast your plan to keep it together. Amen.

Celebrate: Start each new day remembering and celebrating Jesus, who holds the Church together!

Read: Acts 4:1-12; Colossians 1:9-20

*David P. Schmidt
St. Louis, MO*

Thursday, May 19, 2016

Friends with Jesus

God is faithful, by whom you were called into the fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

1 Corinthians 1:9

The gospels introduce us to the many friends of Jesus, among them, the sisters Mary and Martha of Bethany. Similarly, my aunts, Minnie and Marie, were sisters and friends of Jesus, too.

I remember how Aunt Minnie, sweet and shy, taped a small picture of Jesus inside her kitchen cupboard door, a reminder of Jesus' loving presence. I remember how Aunt Marie, spunky and outgoing, fearlessly spoke of Jesus to most everyone. Like Mary and Martha, each had her own personality.

Both my aunts reflected their friendship with Jesus. Both left a legacy of love—their love for Jesus and their love for me. What a blessing they were!

Lord Jesus, thank you for those who show us what it means to be your friend. Thank you for inviting me into fellowship with you. Amen.

Think: Who knows Jesus is your friend? Who else needs to know? How will you show them?

Read: John 15:12-17

*Donna J. Streufert
South Bend, IN*

Friday, May 20, 2016

Overcoming Your Goliaths

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

Psalm 23:4

One of my favorite Bible stories involves David the shepherd boy in his fight against the giant Goliath. King Saul had warned David that Goliath was much too big for him to fight. However, all David thought when looking at Goliath and in defeating him was, “Look how much smaller he is compared to my God.”

Whenever you find ourselves overcome with some Goliath of a problem, remember that it is small when compared to the power of God in our lives. God sees our every need and he cares for us. Through his holy Word he forgives us for the sake of Christ, and strengthens us for the journey yet ahead.

Lord, we know that when we put our trust in you, you will give us the victory over the giants we face in our daily lives. Amen.

Remember: The next time you are facing a giant problem in your life, remember the story of David and Goliath.

Read: 1 Samuel 17; 1 Corinthians 10:13

*Jonathan Vierkant
Arlington Heights, IL*

Saturday, May 21, 2016

A Gracious Welcome

Whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me.

Mark 9:37

Every day we can extend hospitality in the name of Jesus. It isn't easy in our fast-paced world and busy lives. Days are hectic and schedules are packed. Too often we rush by a neighbor and fail to greet someone we pass on the street.

Jesus' example challenges us to welcome the stranger in our midst. Jesus crossed assumed boundaries to demonstrate hospitality in surprising places. Jesus welcomed the unclean, he blessed the Gentile, he empowered women, he embraced the children, and he comforted the foreigner. Can we do the same?

With God's help, we can share a loving smile, shake hands in caring fellowship, offer a beverage to a thirsty friend, or engage in conversation with a lonely stranger. God will encourage us to graciously welcome another that may become a friend.

God, teach me to welcome a stranger and share your love. Amen.

Think: Watch for an opportunity to provide a gracious welcome today.

Read: Mark 9:30-37

*Matthew Smucker
Chicago, IL*

Sunday, May 22, 2016

Like a Deer

As the deer pants for flowing streams, so pants my soul for you, O God.

Psalm 42:1

In our neighborhood deer come out of the nearby forest to find food. Gracefully they gambol along dangerous roadways and across our lawns. Their delicate, innocent ways catch our attention.

In the psalm a deer is fleeing hunters. He is tired and thirsty, much like our innocent Savior after he had been beaten, crowned with thorns and nailed to the cross. Hanging exhausted on the cross, he cries out, “I thirst.”

Living the Christian life today is not easy. In this fallen world our health may fail, friends may leave us and family members may not visit. We may be running on empty—emotionally thirsting for love. Look to him who by the cross gave us the abundant life that refreshes us for all eternity.

O Lord Jesus, thank you for completing the journey through death on the cross for our salvation and for refreshing us with victory over sin and death. Amen.

Find: Buy a new cross for your home, and place it where you will see it daily.

Read: Psalm 42; John 19:16-37

*Gordon A. Beck
Williamsburg, VA*

Monday, May 23, 2016

And It Came to Pass

So we do not lose heart.

2 Corinthians 4:16

A friend, the parent of a challenging preteen daughter, was sharing how exasperated she was with her daughter's behavior. My wife, who raised four children to maturity, identified with her frustration, and then shared how she got through those times. "I daily claimed a promise of God." "What promise is that?" the friend asked. "And it came to pass."

A bit facetious perhaps. Yet in times of trouble, challenge, pain and frustration only *seem* to last forever. By the grace of God, they do pass. And with the grace of God, they can be borne successfully and creatively. Scripture certainly is filled with many promises that can sustain us when weary and frustrated.

Everlasting God, while I often grow faint and weary, you do not. Grant me strength to face the challenges of this day and this time of life. Amen.

Pray: What is the biggest challenge you are facing, and what do you need from the Father to face it successfully?

Read: Isaiah 40:27-31; 2 Corinthians 4:16-18

*Ted Zimmerman
Napa, CA*

Tuesday, May 24, 2016

Crosslight

The word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.

1 Corinthians 1:18

Our church has a worship service called Crosslight. We celebrate Jesus, who lights up our lives with the love represented by his cross. One doesn't love the cross, nor does one worship it. Jesus, the Light of the world, who died upon the cross for us—him we love, him we worship. In that dark moment of his death, the Light of life sprang out to claim us who believe, who love and who worship him.

Do you have a cross displayed in your home? I bet you do. It speaks to you of Jesus, reminding you of his love. Look at that cross. Rejoice today for the Christ light in the shadow of the cross. Be glad! Jesus loves you.

Holy Jesus, Light of the world, light up my life today with your love. Amen.

Cross: Make the sign of the cross today and remember Jesus, the Light of the world.

Read: 1 Corinthians 1:18-31

*Don Schatz
Kenmore, WA*

Wednesday, May 25, 2016

From Weakness to Strength

But they who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles.

Isaiah 40:31

We all fear one thing as we grow older—falling. Each time I wobble and catch myself I thank God that I am still vertical. You may use a cane or walker to guard against such wobbles. You may have taken a fall or have a condition that keeps you wheelchair- or bed-bound. None of us can walk as surely as we used to. But we can fly.

God replaces our weakness with his strength. He draws us to himself through the sacrifice of his Son. As we pray to him in our weariness, he renews our strength. He replaces our fears with hope-filled living. He assures us we will be victorious until it is time to join him in heaven, where we will soar like eagles.

Father, replace my weakness with your strength. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Do: Use Isaiah's words to comfort someone who cannot get around well.

Read: Isaiah 40:28-31; Psalm 103

*Ruth Geisler
Aliso Viejo, CA*

Thursday, May 26, 2016

Remembering the Homebound

Blessed is the one who trusts in you.

Psalm 84:12

Reading Psalm 84 reminds me of my brothers and sisters who are homebound, or as some say, “They are shut-ins.”

In this Psalm the psalmist longs to be in the presence of the Lord in the courts of the temple in Jerusalem. He recalls his experiences there. He remembers his journey to the temple and delights in the goodness that God provides. Even though he misses being in the Lord’s dwelling place, he still trusts in him.

Today’s homebound miss the gathering of God’s people in worship. But God still comes to them in the ministry of Jesus—his holy Word, his blessed Sacrament, the visits of the pastor and fellow believers. At home there is always time for prayer, meditation, devotion and reflection on the goodness and grace of a loving Father.

Lord Jesus, be with me always as I put my trust in you. Amen.

Help: Help your congregation remember the homebound in prayer and visitations.

Read: Psalm 84

*Walter M. Schoedel
Webster Groves, MO*

Friday, May 27, 2016

Eye Photos

Having the eyes of your heart enlightened.

Ephesians 1:18

We gathered at the assisted living facility to visit a mentor friend. Our last time together, we celebrated his 80th birthday in his lovely Oregon home. Now, four years later, we wanted to see his new “home” and hear, first-hand, about the happenings in his life.

Ongoing conversations were lively. And, on the last full day, he grew quiet and focused intently on each speaker. We noted the subtle change. Our faces registered concern. Earl said, “I’m fine. I’m taking eye photos so I can remember each of you after you leave tomorrow.”

You see, Earl’s limbs don’t work so well. But his sight is out-of-sight ... no glasses needed! What a wonderful way to remember us! No need for a fancy camera. Just God-given sight with images stored in his mind’s eye.

What a blessing, Father, to spend time with mentor friends! Help me be a blessing to others. Amen.

Question: How do you remember mentor friends?

Read: Genesis 33:10; Matthew 6:22; Ephesians 1:16-21

*Louise Schini Weber
Fort Myers, FL*

Saturday, May 28, 2016

Surrounded

The angel of the Lord encamps around those who fear him, and delivers them.

Psalm 34:7

Not too long ago, I was trying to sleep through a big thunderstorm. The wind was howling, and I could hear the siding on the house creaking. The lightning flashed and the thunder roared. I remembered that God provides me with all I need, and I envisioned an angel of the Lord protecting me in the storm. I relaxed, thinking of God watching over me, loving me.

What do you do when fears seem to surround you? What brings you comfort during the storms of life? Remember that the Lord is near and gives us help to get us through in times of trouble. Envision the angel of the Lord nearby.

Dear God, remind me in times of trouble that you are nearby protecting me from harm. Amen.

Recall: Make a note of times in your life when God protected you.

Read: Luke 1:13; Luke 22:43

*Annette L. Sherwood
St. Louis, MO*

Sunday, May 29, 2016

The Secret of Living

Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them.

Romans 12:6

Here I sit at my desk. I have before me an electric alarm clock waiting to be fixed. The alarm mechanism isn't working properly. But there it sits, ticking away.

On the one hand I enjoy retirement and not having to wrestle with automobile traffic in the morning and evening. However, I don't want to just sit here in idleness. The Lord still has things for me to do, ways for me to use the gifts he has given me, skills that I have honed with experience over the years, ways in which I can do something for someone else.

The secret of living is giving, no matter what the age may be. How I love to be around older folks whose eyes are bright, whose speech is positive, who enjoy giving of themselves, however small the gift may be.

Dear Spirit of God, open my eyes to the gifts you have given me. Amen.

Look: Watch for opportunities to serve the Lord by serving others.

Read: Ephesians 4:11-13

*Paul Eggold
Greendale, WI*

Monday, May 30, 2016

Prayer Warriors

For kings and all who are in high positions.

1 Timothy 2:2

At this critical time for America, we face national elections in a few months, with a struggling domestic situation and a turbulent, unstable world. How do Christians participate as citizens while at the same time, as citizens of heaven, lift up Jesus for others?

Paul writes young Timothy to serve faithfully as pastor in Ephesus, proclaiming “that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners” (1 Timothy 1:15). Timothy, a citizen of the Roman Empire, must “wage the good warfare, holding faith and a good conscience” (1 Timothy 1:18-19). Timothy and the Church must pray “for kings and all who are in high positions.”

Now more than ever, America needs prayer warriors for our nation who are ever seeking God’s wisdom, guidance, power and protection for elections and future governance. Will you pray alongside other Christians?

*Lord, hear our prayers and bless our nation.
Amen.*

Ask: Pray now and often for our nation and participate as a citizen in the election process.

Read: 1 Timothy 2:1-6

*Stephen J. Carter
Oakville, MO*

Tuesday, May 31, 2016

Hand of God

And the Lord your God brought you out from there with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm.

Deuteronomy 5:15

Michelangelo painted the sixth day of creation with Adam's hand reaching toward God. The hands don't touch. In my mind I fill in lightning bolts and sparks, but I also wonder who is reaching for whom.

Throughout Scripture, God's "right hand and his holy arm" reach out in anger, but also in power to protect and bring about salvation (Psalm 98:1). The prophet Isaiah writes about Israel being upheld by God's "righteous right hand" (Isaiah 41:10). Jesus himself says that no one can snatch his sheep out of his Father's hand (John 10:28).

We can reach for God, but all would be in vain if he hadn't reached for us. Lightning bolts and sparks may be the best we can envision, but his reach is far more spectacular.

All power belongs to you, O Lord. Hold us up and preserve us in your hand. Amen.

Notice: Marvel at the many mechanisms of your hands.

Read: Psalm 98; John 10:22-30

*Judy Scherr
Lemay, MO*

Wednesday, June 1, 2016

Twelve Words

As the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive.

Colossians 3:13

We are excited to attend two family weddings this year. We look forward to these joyful gatherings, as family and friends witness their vows and ask God to bless their marriage.

My wife and I thank God for 40 years of marriage this year. (She's a saint!) I recall what one husband answered when asked on their 50th anniversary how he and his wife had reached this milestone. "Twelve words," he said: "I am sorry. I was wrong. Please forgive me. I love you."

Some of those twelve words are harder to say than others. But admitting we were wrong, truly being sorry and asking for forgiveness can add power and depth to the three words "I love you."

Please help us, Father, regularly to seek forgiveness and admit our wrongs, as we express our love for each other. Amen.

Remember: Be ready to apologize, and witness the healing power of God's love.

Read: Psalm 32; Colossians 3:12-17

*Steve Hess
Ft. Myers, FL*

Thursday, June 2, 2016

Yogi Berra

Humble yourselves ... casting all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you.

1 Peter 5:6-7

Yogi Berra was famous for saying things that at first hearing didn't make sense, but at the same time each one of his malapropisms, as they are called, made sense. "When you come to a fork in the road," Yogi said, "take it!" He also said, "Baseball is ninety percent mental and the other half is physical," and, "You can observe a lot by just watching."

A lot of wonderful, life-giving truth comes to us in ways we cannot understand. We do not understand, really, why God cares about us so. He cares about us simply because he does. It's in God's nature. If that doesn't astound us, it should.

God sees us and knows us. He understands us and cares for us. God knows when we stand and when we fall. God knows when we are good and when we fail. God knows when we walk and when we stumble. Through it all, he loves us.

Thank you, good Lord, for knowing us truly and still loving us surely. In the Jesus' name. Amen.

Pray: Give thanks for God's astounding love for you in Christ Jesus.

Read: Psalm 103

*Jerry Groth
Jackson, WI*

Friday, June 3, 2016

Detours

Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me, your rod and your staff, they comfort me.

Psalm 23:4

Traveling last summer I found many detours, causing me to think about my life—changes in plans, jobs, the death of a loved one. I took a voluntary detour, tired of the traffic, needing time away from the big trucks and fast lanes. On a Kentucky country road I saw the small sign—The Old General Store. There it was, an old weathered store and its warm owner. Not too busy at the time, she was available for friendly conversation. Unwittingly, I found myself telling her about my husband's death and the changes I faced. I shared fears and hopes with a woman I never would have met without the detour. I left feeling rested.

Detours help avoid dangers of the road and allow us to see the places and people we might miss. Knowing that our Lord is leading, even detours make sense.

Lord Jesus, travel with me through all the paths of life, including the detours. Amen.

Thought: How does the Lord lead you, even on unknown roads?

Read: Psalm 23

*Gail Lutze
Valparaiso, IN*

Saturday, June 4, 2016

The Greatest of These

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

1 Corinthians 13:13

What does Jesus want even more than your faith? He wants your love. How do you give love to a God who has everything? You create something personal, like a poem especially for him. You sing a song because your voice is yours to give. You sketch a picture in your prayer journal just for Jesus. You lay your first spring flower on an altar as a gift. Or you do what I do when my little granddaughter waves good-bye from the car—you blow kisses out the window.

Does Jesus get those poems, songs, pictures, flowers and kisses? You know he does. He cherishes your love! It is the “greatest of these.”

God, when you made me in your image, you created my capacity to love. Increase my heart that I may love you even more. Amen.

Determine: How you might show Jesus your love?

Read: John 6:1-9; John 12:1-3

*Julaine Kammrath
Aurora, IL*

Sunday, June 5, 2016

The Exchange

Let us run with endurance the race that is set before us.

Hebrews 12:1

Starts and sprints matter, but in a relay the successful exchange of the baton often determines the winner.

It is important to set aside the weight of sin and run with perseverance. Just as someone passed that baton to you, you are called to pass on the good news of salvation to someone else—a neighbor, a family member or a friend. A relay runner doesn't stop to hand off the baton; he reaches out and runs alongside the recipient until that new runner has gained speed. In the same way, we continue to run alongside and support those with whom we share our faith.

Just as every runner in the race fixes his eyes on the finish line, so we fix our eyes on Jesus, “who endured the cross ... and is seated at the right hand of God” (Hebrews 12:2).

Fix our eyes on you, Lord, and help us pass on our faith to others. Amen.

Support and encourage: “Run alongside” someone with whom you have shared your faith.

Read: Hebrews 12:1-3

*Eileen Ritter
Byron Center, MI*

Monday, June 6, 2016

Smile!

A glad heart makes a cheerful face.

Proverbs 15:13

How would you like to reduce stress, lower blood pressure, strengthen the immune system, increase energy and appear more attractive all in one easy step? Just smile! These are only a few of the health benefits known to researchers. Your smile is a special gift you can bestow on anyone. And it's good for you, too!

Most people will happily return the smile to you, but others may have questions. 1 Peter 3:15 encourages us to be "prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you." It's your big chance to give all the credit to God. Your explanation might be as simple as "Jesus loves me!" or "God made a beautiful day!"

But always be ready to share even more ... and start a chain reaction of blessings!

Lord, enable me to reflect the love and joy you put into my happy heart. Amen.

Count: How many smiles will come back to you today?

Read: 1 Peter 3:8-17; Proverbs 17:22

*Sharolyn Sander
Lincoln, NE*

Tuesday, June 7, 2016

The Leaning Norfolk Pine

For I the Lord do not change.

Malachi 3:6

When we moved into our current home thirty-eight years ago, a four-foot pine tree graced our front yard. It currently checks in at about thirty-six feet, leans precariously toward our two-story home and in case of a howling wind could take out the front of our house. But we love it. Informal invitations from us read, “Come to the House of the Leaning Norfolk Pine.”

Thirty-eight years ago we joined a growing, active church, which soon gave birth to a school. Today the community has changed, attendance is minimal and aging, and we struggle to keep the school afloat. But we love it. Remove the tree? Maybe. Change churches? Never.

Lord, continue to help us make wise decisions as we age and everything around us changes. Bless our church and help us to continue to spread your good news. Amen.

Serve: Find new ways to serve in your congregation.

Read: Hebrews 13:7-8

*Lois Scheer
San Diego, CA*

Wednesday, June 8, 2016

What Goes Down Will Come Up

Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth.

Colossians 3:2

How often do you groan as you bend down to pick up something you dropped? Gravity is useful for holding us in place and keeping earth in its orbit. It is not helpful for creaky backs and knees.

The law of gravity governs earthly objects. But those who belong to Christ don't live by earthbound rules. Paul tells us, since we have been raised with Christ, we set our hearts on things that are above. Neither gravity nor sin, death or the power of Satan were strong enough to hold Jesus in the tomb. God the Father raised Jesus just as he will raise us and take us to himself in heaven.

Jesus, thank you for conquering all the forces that hold me down. Keep me focused on my uplifting life with you. Amen.

Do: When you find yourself complaining, put your mind on things above.

Read: Colossians 3:1-17; Romans 6:1-14

*Ruth Geisler
Aliso Viejo, CA*

Thursday, June 9, 2016

From Whispers to Shouts

Then shall ... the tongue of the mute sing for joy.

Isaiah 35:6

Our friend Joe speaks only in a faint whisper. “I have so many things wrong with me,” he admits, shaking his head. Ninety years plus, this faithful Christian lost his voice to disease some time ago. Yet he clings to God’s promise that one day his voice will be restored to sing his Savior’s praises.

Isaiah 35 describes the joy of the Israelites returning from captivity in Babylon. Jesus quoted the verses to show he was the Messiah sent to redeem us all from the bondage of sin and eternal death.

Joe, and all who trust in God’s promise of life and redemption, will find that their weak hands, feeble knees and anxious hearts will give way to shouting, leaping and joyful singing of God’s praises—no longer in whispers, but in full voice!

All praise to you, Lord, for your promises. Amen.

Give hope: Comfort those who lose physical strength with the assurance of God’s promise.

Read: Isaiah 35; Matthew 11:1-6

*Donna J. Streufert
South Bend, IN*

Friday, June 10, 2016

In the Footsteps of God

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

Ephesians 2:10

Have you ever visited one of our nation's state or national parks and hiked along the trails? No doubt you've seen signs advising you to "Stay on the Path." Those signs were placed there by others who walked those trails before and know firsthand the safest way to travel.

In the Bible, the Hebrew word for righteous can be translated "to walk in the footsteps of God." St. Paul, in his letter to the Ephesians, says that we have been saved by the grace of God in Christ Jesus. Now God has laid out a whole new life path for us to travel, a path of good works done for the glory of God. In the Book of Proverbs we read: "Walk in the way of insight" (Proverbs 9:6). In Christ Jesus, life is putting one foot in front of the other as you walk the way of salvation.

Dear heavenly Father, in this new day guide my every thought, word and deed for Jesus' sake. Amen.

Walk: In everything you do, walk in the footsteps of God.

Read: Ephesians 2:1-10

*Edward Arle
St. Charles, MO*

Saturday, June 11, 2016

An Inclusive Community

“Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink? And when did we see you a stranger and welcome you, or naked and clothe you? And when did we see you sick or in prison and visit you?” And the King will answer them, “Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me.”

Matthew 25:37-40

When I worked in the school system, including the students with disabilities into a regular classroom became a goal. Parents wanted their children to learn with non-disabled children in the daily social life of their community. Classroom leaders became buddies who helped these children to be accepted by the other children. Each learned from the other.

Shouldn't this also be life within the Church? Christ often sought out the downtrodden and ill, rather than gathering with church leaders. He taught his disciples and followers that life in the kingdom looked like the acceptance shown by little children.

Lord Jesus, may we accept and love all who come to our church community. Amen.

Greet: Welcome visitors to your church. Invite them to Bible studies and fellowship activities.

Read: Matthew 25: 31-46; Romans 12:3-5

*Ann Eissfeldt
Ballwin, MO*

Sunday, June 12, 2016

Sunday Morning Surprises

Not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another.

Hebrews 10:25

Gail and I love the Sunday morning worship experience at our church. We treasure the singing, confession and absolution, creed, baptisms, readings, the preaching from the Scriptures and joining other believers at the altar for the Lord's Supper. God also has many surprises for us as we interact with people—exchanging the greeting of peace, listening to friends who have experienced illness or the death of a loved one, getting to know a seminary fieldworker, affirming stories of outreach or a passion for serving others. These are Sunday morning surprises!

The writer to the Hebrews affirms our confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus. There we stir up those Sunday morning surprises, “not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another.” Expect those surprises every Sunday in the very house of the Lord.

Lord, enrich our Sunday morning worship with your surprises. Amen.

Share: Tell a friend one of your Sunday morning surprises and expect more.

Read: Hebrews 10:19-25

*Stephen J. Carter
Oakville, MO*

Monday, June 13, 2016

Enjoy Life

Everyone also to whom God has given wealth and possessions and power to enjoy them, and to accept his lot and rejoice in his toil—this is the gift of God. For he will not much remember the days of his life because God keeps him occupied with joy in his heart.

Ecclesiastes 5:19-20

When it comes to your finances, you may have never gotten ahead, or you may have been blessed with abundance. Either way, you should know by now that your life doesn't consist of the amount or the quality of your stuff. It's OK to have stuff, but it's also OK to not have stuff. Stuff can't love you. Stuff can't forgive you. You can't talk and pray with stuff.

Your contentment and satisfaction come only from being a child of God and living your life in his arms. Find true joy in whatever God gives you to keep you occupied.

Lord, help me to remember the way to be content in any and every circumstance. Amen.

Do: Count your nonmaterial blessings.

Read: Luke 12:13-21; 1 Timothy 6:6-10

*Jeremy Klaustermeier
Warrenton, MO*

Tuesday, June 14, 2016

Independence

Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?

Mark 10:17

I was at a daycare and I noticed something about the kids. They all wanted to do things themselves without help, until they figure out that they can't do it, and then they wanted your help immediately. When they didn't get help immediately, they cried and pouted.

We are often like that, aren't we? We cry and pout because we want to do it ourselves and when we find out we can't, we cry and pout because God doesn't give us what we want or help us in the way we want.

Our peace comes when we give it up to God. As helpless children, all we can do is surrender to him and let him do his will. Independence is good for some things, but it has no place in the work of salvation. That depends on Jesus.

Lord, make me surrender to you. Amen.

Do: Make a list of things in your life that are out of your control and give them up to God in prayer.

Read: Ephesians 2:4-10; James 4:6-8

*Jeremy Klaustermeier
Warrenton, MO*

Wednesday, June 15, 2016

Joy Comes

Weeping may tarry for the night, but joy comes with the morning.

Psalm 30:5

Down and up; night and day; weeping and joy; anger and favor; absence and presence; mourning and dancing; sackcloth and party clothes. In this catalogue of opposites the psalmist is describing his life lived in relationship with God.

He has not lived a wayward life. He has trusted God. But something has brought him low to where he only felt the absence of God. It felt like the very depths of hell itself. But God rescued him, and the long night of weeping was turned into the joy of the morning.

Our lives, too, may be up and down like the psalmist's. But for us, too, there will always be the morning, and the joy. God has promised it in Christ.

Heavenly Father, in my sad, painful moments remind me that my morning will also come for Jesus' sake. Amen.

Write: Write down the dark times in your life that have been followed by the morning of joy.

Read: Psalm 30

*Lionel Otto
Adelaide, Australia*

Thursday, June 16, 2016

Ice Breaker Blessings

It was fitting to celebrate and be glad.

Luke 15:32

Delightedly I welcomed classmates at the sign-in table during our 50th high school reunion ice breaker. What better place to be than here where I could see the names without having to guess who they were!

As the evening progressed, the hum of conversation permeated the room, dotted with hearty laughter and sympathetic tears ... no ice needed breaking here! We were our all-grown-up selves, excited to just be with one another ... no expectations, no one-upmanship, listening with open hearts, celebrating together.

Looking around the room, my eyes rested on various classmates as I recalled shared school experiences. So many of those gathered were integral to the woman I am today. How thankful I am for each of them. The words from 2 Timothy 1 echoed in my mind, "I thank God for you."

A huge thanks, Lord, for the many blessings you've give me through friends. Amen.

Consider: Connect with a former classmate, expressing your joy when remembering him or her.

Read: 1 Samuel 18:1-3; 2 Samuel 15:19-22; Luke 10:27

*Louise Schini Weber
Fort Myers, FL*

Friday, June 17, 2016

Tell Me Where It Hurts

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

Psalm 50:15

Parents, grandparents, teachers, coaches and medical personnel sometimes must inquire, “Tell me where it hurts,” in order to know how to help the person who’s hurting. God, our great Caregiver, also wants us to tell him where it hurts. Even though he already knows every detail of our bodies, minds and souls, he invites us look to him for help and healing.

Look at the many psalms of David in which he pours out his ailments and woes. “My heart throbs; my strength fails me” (Psalm 38:10). “My bones are troubled” (Psalm 6:2). “I am afflicted and in pain” (Psalm 69:29). There are many more. David suffered much, yet his psalms contain more than complaints. They resound with trust, praise and hope. Every day we can tell God where it hurts, then join David in declaring, “Because he inclined his ear to me, therefore I will call on him as long as I live” (Psalm 116:2).

Great Physician, I call to you today and every day for help and healing of mind, body and soul. Amen.

Tell: When telling others about your ailments, tell also of your trust in and hope for God’s help.

Read: Psalm 103:1-5; Psalm 86:1-7

*Marj Maynard
Billings, MO*

Saturday, June 18, 2016

Who's in Charge Here?

You are anxious and troubled about many things.

Luke 10:41

My husband and I were getting our house ready to sell. I wanted the house to be perfect, and we painted, fixed, replaced, patched and hired repairmen. Working around other people and a dog was a challenge, but I persevered. The house had to be the ideal of every potential buyer. I undertook the job of painting the stairway (those fingerprints must be eradicated) and as I moved the paint can from one step to the next, it slipped, and I dumped a gallon of paint down the stairway. It flowed like a waterfall from step to step and over the side into the hallway. In the midst of the chaos I could hear: "Be still and know that I am God ... Do not be anxious about tomorrow ... Consider the lilies ... Martha, Martha ... Let not your hearts be troubled ..." The mess was cleaned up. The imperfect house sold. God is in charge.

Forgive me, Lord, when I think I'm in charge. That happens way too often. Grant me your peace instead. Amen.

Reflect: When you are troubled and anxious, remember that God is in charge.

Read: Luke 10:38-42

*Sally Beck
Williamsburg, VA*

Sunday, June 19, 2016

Father's Day

The Lord will keep you from all evil; he will keep your life.

Psalm 121: 7

On June 17, 1910, the first Father's Day was celebrated in Spokane, Washington. In 1966, the first presidential proclamation honoring fathers was issued by Lyndon B. Johnson.

Many years have passed since the first official celebration of Father's Day. Today, we often celebrate this special day with family barbecues or going out to eat at a restaurant. However, this special day is more than a celebration. We often fail to realize that our identity comes from our father, not only our earthly father, but our heavenly Father as well.

When we were children, our father was our protector and provider. He was also our role model and guide in life just like our heavenly Father. This parental relationship is a direct reflection of our relationship with our heavenly Father.

*Dear God, thank you for your gift of fathers.
Amen.*

Reflect: How has your earthly father influenced your life? How can you see your heavenly Father at work in your life?

Read: Psalm 121; Ephesians 3:14-19

*Betsy Becker Niedringhaus
Ballwin, MO*

Monday, June 20, 2016

Singing Trees!

Then shall all the trees of the forest sing for joy.

Psalm 96:12

Today is first day of summer. In most areas of the Northern Hemisphere, trees are full of leaves by now and glorious in their beauty. It is not hard to join with the psalmist in “hearing” trees singing praises to God, their Creator.

Psalm 96 is a favorite of mine, whether it is summer, fall, winter or spring. It celebrates the glory and rule of God throughout creation. All peoples, all nations and the entire natural world (fields, trees, oceans, even the heavens) are called upon to sing a new song of glory to God who guides and reigns over it all.

Psalm 96 is also typically read at Christmas Day services each year because the deepest glory of God is known in the incarnation of Jesus Christ. Indeed, sing to the Lord a new song of joy and praise!

God of creation, touch me with the beauty of nature; fill me with the new song that is Jesus Christ. Amen.

Rejoice: Enjoy nature today and praise God’s creation of the natural order.

Read: Genesis 1:1 to 2:3; Matthew 1:18-25; Psalm 96

*Paul A. Metzler
Shrewsbury, MO*

Tuesday, June 21, 2016

Step “Lightly”

Whoever follows me ... will have the light of life.

John 8: 12

A *Peanuts* cartoon had Lucy and Charlie Brown talking about cruise ships. Lucy said, “You know, Charlie Brown, there are two kinds of people who go on cruise ships. There are some who face their deck chairs toward the stern so they can see where they’ve been. And there others who face their deck chairs toward the bow so they can see where they are going. Now,” said Lucy, “in the great cruise of life, Charlie Brown, how do you face your deck chair?” Charlie thought for a moment and then said, “I can’t even get my deck chair unfolded.”

Do you ever feel like Charlie Brown? Just can’t get going? Well, St. Paul’s advice to Charlie and to us is step out and follow Jesus: “Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord” (Colossians 3:23). In other words, “Forget the chair. Just start living for Jesus’ sake.”

Lord Jesus, open my eyes today to follow your lead for my life. Amen.

Pray: Ask God to help you lead someone to Jesus today.

Read: Psalm 1; John 8:12-20

*Edward Arle
St. Charles, MO*

Wednesday, June 22, 2016

Clean

He is like a refiner's fire and like fuller's soap.

Malachi 3:2

There is an ongoing debate concerning the merits of anti-bacterial soap. Advocates claim that it does a better job of keeping us clean and preventing illness. Opponents worry that anti-bacterial soaps lead to the development of “super bugs” that are resistant to antibiotics.

According to the prophet Malachi, the promised Savior would be like “fuller’s soap”—laundry detergent, full strength, with bleach! No wonder the prophet asked, “Who can stand when he appears?” (Malachi 3:2). Jesus came to wash our sins away, but not with “fuller’s soap.” Our sin-stained hearts and lives are washed clean in his blood shed on the cross. We stand before God now, as we will for all eternity, brightly dressed in Jesus’ own righteousness—clean and forgiven!

Lord Jesus, I give you thanks and praise, for you have made me clean. Amen.

Clean up: Wash your hands, wash the dishes, do the laundry, remembering that your sins are washed away in Jesus’ blood!

Read: Malachi 3:1-4; 1 John 1:5-10

*Carol Geisler
Manchester, MO*

Thursday, June 23, 2016

Forsaken by God?

My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?

Psalm 22:1

Do you sometimes have the feeling that God has forsaken you in these later years? Abraham felt that way when he still wondered why God had not given him a son (Genesis 15:2-3). The psalmist felt that God had been ignoring him in the midst of his troubles (Psalm 10:1). Certainly Job had that feeling in the midst of his losses (Job 13:15). Even Jesus cried out on the cross, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” (Matthew 27:46).

Yet in each case as you read these accounts, God was indeed faithful. Ponder his words, “I will never leave you nor forsake you” (Hebrews 13:5). Feelings of forsakenness—yes. Actuality of forsakenness—no. Confess with the psalmist, “The Lord is on my side” (Psalm 118:6).

Lord Jesus, help me sense your helping hand at all times. Amen.

Reflect: Take a moment today to reflect on God’s presence in your daily walk.

Read: Psalm 22:1-21

*Walter M. Schoedel
Webster Groves, MO*

Friday, June 24, 2016

Like a Child

Truly, I say to you, unless you turn and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Whoever humbles himself like a child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.

Matthew 18:3-4

William Wordsworth's poem "Behold My Heart Leaps Up" recognizes the need to stay connected with our inner child, the source of natural piety and joy. Working with children daily, I recognize the unique way youngsters see even the most ordinary as though it was the first time they encountered it, and it may well be. Jesus always noticed kids and welcomed them. May we never become too adult or too old to know the child within ourselves. God is our Father in heaven. Connect with the child within and come to Jesus. He will gather you into his loving arms and hold you close. He is our strength and our protector, now and always.

*Jesus, thank you for welcoming me as your child.
Amen.*

Visit: Go to your church's Sunday school and enjoy a child's artwork or notice their delight in seeing something as ordinary as a caterpillar.

Read: 1 Peter 2:1-3; John 3:3-8

*Nancy Rapp
St. Louis, MO*

Saturday, June 25, 2016

Wait Here

Wait for the Lord; be strong, and let your heart take courage; wait for the Lord!

Psalm 27:14

Do you have a hard time waiting on the Lord? When I find myself getting impatient with someone for an answer, I recall this passage on waiting for the Lord with courage. I become a little more patient, remembering that the Lord has perfect timing for me.

Waiting is difficult for most of us. We want everything as quick as possible. Our culture supports the idea of instant results, and we have gotten used to it. Sometimes answers and solutions don't come to us quickly. We have to pause, pray and discern. Remind yourself that you can trust the Lord to help you. The Lord is there for you. Take courage!

Dear Lord, when I get a little impatient waiting for results, remind me that you have perfect timing. Amen.

Write: Journal your thoughts to the Lord, and then let go of the results.

Read: Proverbs 8:34; Hebrews 9:28

*Annette L. Sherwood
St. Louis, MO*

Sunday, June 26, 2016

Imprinted on the Heart

I [Paul] bear on my body the marks of Jesus.

Galatians 6:17

It was a bittersweet day when we sifted through my father-in-law's keepsakes after he died. In the bottom of a box I discovered a heavy brass cross. For many years it lay atop the soft padded cover of one of his scrapbooks. Lifting the cross out of the box, I was struck by the way the cross had left its imprint, so distinctly, on the book. "How true," I thought, "this man's heart and life were imprinted with the cross of Christ." As a faithful, loving husband, father and Christian teacher, Dad Streufert was not ashamed to let the imprint of Christ be clearly revealed.

In his letter to the Galatian Christians, the apostle Paul wrote of bearing the marks of Jesus on his very body. Paul had suffered in many ways, even as he faithfully shared the gospel throughout the then-known world. Like Dad, Paul bore the imprint of Christ.

Imprint your image on my heart, dear Lord, that my life, too, may give witness to your love. Amen.

Think: What imprint is your life leaving?

Read: Galatians 6:14-18

*Donna J. Streufert
South Bend, IN*

Monday, June 27, 2016

Learning Patience

Be patient, therefore, brothers, until the coming of the Lord.

James 5:7

Grandma was reading a Bible story to our granddaughter Abby. The story was God's promise to Abraham under a starry sky that he would have many descendants. Yet Abraham and Sarah were too old to have children. Abby, lost in thought for a moment, piped up, "I think I know what this story means. God wants us to be patient!" Quite an insight for a five-year-old!

Patience is something I often lack, even though I am much older than Abby and have had plenty of time to learn it. Patience is needed while God works his wonders in our lives, even though it often seems slow to come to pass. God has consistently proven his trustworthiness to his saints—and to me. What he promises he will bring to pass.

Father, you have planted seeds of hope in my life. Grant me now the patience of the farmer. Amen.

Ask: Is there a friend for whom patience and trust in the Lord are growing thin? How can you help?

Read: James 5:1-11; Genesis 15:1-5

*Ted Zimmerman
Napa, CA*

Tuesday, June 28, 2016

Are We There Yet?

O God, do not forsake me, until I proclaim your might to another generation.

Psalm 71:18

A family on vacation has gone barely 10 miles when a voice comes from the back seat: “Are we there yet?” Reflecting on life’s journeys—rearing a family, fulfilling career responsibilities and undergirding the Church’s mission with talents and treasures—we might be ready to ask: “Are we there yet?”

Evidently not; we’re still here. St. Paul reminds us: “By grace you have been saved through faith ... we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works” (Ephesians 2:8, 10). Whether or not grandchildren are in your family picture, good works include influencing the next generation. Young Timothy learned God’s love in Jesus through his mother Lois and his grandmother Eunice. Share the psalmist’s prayer: “O God, do not forsake me, until I proclaim your might to another generation.”

Lord, help me find ways to share my faith with the next generation. Amen.

Try: If you are able, take a friend, child or grandchild out to eat. In the conversation, share your faith in Christ.

Read: Psalm 71:17-18; 2 Timothy 1:3-5

*Fred Boettcher
Menomonee Falls, WI*

Wednesday, June 29, 2016

Assembly Required

Let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works ... encouraging one another.

Hebrews 10:24-25

A gift! You open the box only to be greeted by those dreaded words: “Assembly required.” But if the gift is a jigsaw puzzle or a model you’ve been longing to put together, the opportunity to assemble is the best part of the gift.

God has given his children a precious gift—the Christian Church. But to truly benefit from this gift, assembly is required. Within the gift of the Church, believers “stir up one another to love and good works ... encouraging one another” (Hebrews 10:24-25). We listen to God’s Word and receive Christ’s body and blood in Holy Communion. We pray together and share words of hope and comfort. We rest in the forgiveness won for us by Jesus’ death, and together we celebrate his resurrection.

Thank you, Lord, for your gift of the Church. Help me to encourage others through love and good works. Amen.

Assemble: Meet together this week with other Christian believers.

Read: Psalm 27

*Eileen Ritter
Byron Center, MI*

Thursday, June 30, 2016

Enduring Hope

May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope.

Romans 15:13

Hope is a simple word but carries a mighty concept. I hope for a restful night, a bright blue morning, the sound of the birds awakening me in spring, the laughter of my grandchildren and, most importantly, God's heavenly kingdom.

God gave his early believers an enduring hope while they followed him through the desert to their permanent home in Canaan. With all the turmoil our world seems to experience today—wars, famines, earthquakes, illnesses, financial upheavals—we have that same magnificent hope and promise that God will lead us through these valleys and carry us to his mountaintop—heaven.

Dear Father in heaven, bless me with the wisdom to see the miracles you perform in my life today. Thank you for your care and concern for your people. Amen.

Share: Witness to your belief in the presence of God in your life and to your hope for your future on earth and in heaven.

Read: Psalm 39:7

*Gloria Elder
Crystal Lake, IL*

HOLY HABITS for **HOPE-FULL HEALTH**

How Is Your Garden Growing?

Spring is a great time to get ready for new growth ... especially at our ages. Our lives are new each day because of our sun-shining Son, Jesus. Many things in the “garden” of life continue to refresh us as we “bloom” where we are planted. Here are some:

1. Scripture—Continue to grow through Word and Sacrament as you feed on God’s grace.
2. Socialize—Keep connected with people in your “garden,” for support and stamina.
3. Smiles—Show the joy we have in Christ through your every action, including smiles.
4. Serve—Volunteer your time and gifts to enable others to grow in their gardens.
5. Sleep—Healthy bodies are crucial for healthy gardens. Take care of your body—it’s the only one you’ve got!
6. Share—God has given each of us beautiful buds and flowers, in order to sprinkle others with hope and helpfulness.
7. Surprise—Watch for the wonderful new sprouts of surprise each day. As a friend recently said to me, “Sometimes I just look up, smile, and say, ‘I know that was you, Lord. Thanks!’”

Enjoy your garden and gardening, as Holy Habits for Hope-Full Health!

Hope-Full Praying

Staying Energized

Why is it, Lord, that sometimes I feel like the Energizer Bunny and other times I feel like a burnt-out lightbulb? Some days I am ready to greet the world head-on and other days I simple feel like saying, “I give up!”? In good days and bad instill in me your power and presence and keep letting me know that your energy of hope and love are always with me, in spite of how I feel. Amen.

Happy Memories

It is sometimes hard to become nostalgic, Lord, if I cannot remember anything, but this day I thank you for those happy memories of the past. For friends now gone, for family now grown, for dreams now met, for opportunities so blessed. For the “good old days” as well as for the “good new days,” please accept my humble and hope-full “thanks.” Amen.

Support From Others

Lord, you sure know when I need the help and support of others through some tough and trying days. Thanks for sending special people to me when I need a helping hand, a friendly face, a soothing voice, a warm hug. I thank you for these people right now, Lord, as I call them by name (share names of these special people now). Thanks for the community of saints, the Church, that you have put around me. Amen.

Children and Grandchildren

What a joy it is to be blessed by children and grandchildren, Lord. In the good times and the bad, I continue to thank you for my family—for their love, support, smiles, phone calls and even their interruptions. I would not have it any other way! Continue to bless them so I can be a blessing to them. And keep your forgiveness flowing between all of us. Amen.

Strength From Scripture

Your Word is a lamp unto my feet, Lord, but why do I sometimes forget to see that you are lighting each step of the way? Forgive me when I fail to search the Scriptures, and also when I seem to live as though you are only present in the Scriptures rather than seeing your Word alive in the people and world around me. Amen.

Rejoicing in Accomplishments

There are days when I accomplish much, Lord, and then there are those others days. Help me to focus on what I do right rather than on what I mess up. Help me know that you love me because of what you have done and not for what I do, but also encourage me to share the joys of helping others in your name. Amen.

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