

HOPE-FULL LIVING

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

April • May • June • 2017

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Rich Bimler, Mark Zimmermann, Editors

Carol Geisler, Kasey Nugent, Editorial Assistants

Hope-Full Living Mission Statement

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

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Saturday, April 1, 2017

The Right Kind of Fool

We are fools for Christ's sake.

1 Corinthians 4:10

Happy April Fools' Day! Be on guard today. You may say, "I'm nobody's fool," but someone may trick you anyway. We can take a joke. We know that God, who saves us, also gives us a sense of humor. We never want to be the fool who says in his heart "there is no God" (Psalm 14:1), but we're not afraid to be "fools for Christ's sake." St. Paul didn't mind that people made fun of him for showing his Christian faith and neither do we.

A farmer came to town and had lunch at a bar and grill. He bowed his head and prayed before he ate. A man sitting close by said, "Do all the fools on your farm pray before they eat?" "No," answered the man. "The pigs don't!" Don't be afraid to show your Christian faith. You're nobody's fool, but Christ's!

Dear God, thank you for my daily bread and a good sense of humor to go with it. Help me to be fearless in sharing my faith. Amen.

Share: Talk to someone today about your faith. No foolin'.

Read: Psalm 14; 1 Corinthians 1:18-25

Lonie Eatherton
Fenton, MO

Sunday, April 2, 2017

The River Is the Spirit

Jesus stood up and cried out ... “Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, ‘Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.’” Now this he said about the Spirit.

John 7:37-39

It’s finally spring! The bare, dark, cold winter is thawing. Rain gives seeds growing power. Let this season of growth remind us that God’s Holy Spirit is renewing our faith through his gifts of Jesus’ body and blood and his life-sustaining Word. Drink in the living water and be filled by God’s power to share the gifts of life, hope and joy to the thirsty neighbors who surround us.

Psalm 46 evokes an image of God himself as a river flowing through me, supplying living water, refreshing and thirst-quenching, in the many exhausting battles of this life. God protects and surrounds me as the world around me shakes and wars rage. God Almighty is my fortress.

God, you are our refuge and our strength. Amen.

Refresh: Remember your baptism as you refresh yourself when watering the garden or even in the shower.

Read: Deuteronomy 28:12; John 4:10-11, 13-15; Psalm 46

*Nancy Rapp
St. Louis, MO*

Monday, April 3, 2017

Hope Springs Eternal?

Hope does not put us to shame.

Romans 5:5

“Hope springs eternal in the human breast.” At least it does if you are a baseball fan. No matter how poorly your team did last year, or how close they came to taking the pennant, or how the free agent trades went, the average fan just “knows” his team is going all the way this year! Hope gets us going down the road, but unfortunately it doesn’t always bring us to the desired destination. Even in matters of far greater importance, like battling cancer, this can be true. Hope is helpful. Hope may promote healing. However, not everything one hopes for is realized.

The hope we have as Christians, vested in the resurrection of Jesus and God’s promise to us through him, is different. It truly will make “winners” of us!

Thank you, Father, for the assurance you give us through Jesus’ resurrection, that even when our life ends here, we live with you forever. Amen.

Watch: Look for an opportunity today to give an account of the hope within you.

Read: 1 Peter 1:3-9; Romans 5:1-5

*Ted Zimmerman
Napa, CA*

Tuesday, April 4, 2017

He Delights in You

The Lord your God is with you, a mighty one who will save. He will take great delight in you, he will quiet you with his love, he will rejoice over you with singing.

Zephaniah 3:17

The Lord is with you! He delights in you! He quiets you. He loves and rejoices over you, even when you are not particularly delightful, lovable or worthy of rejoicing over. Think about that. Throughout the season of Lent we are reminded of our addiction to sin and of God's staggering, unconditional love and forgiveness through Christ Jesus. God's amazing grace has no limits. It is for you and for everyone ... and his love changes everything.

Lord, thank you for the delight you have for me when I am not delightful. Thank you for quieting me with your love when I am fearful and stressed. Thank you for rejoicing over me despite my shortcomings and failures. You are my Savior! Amen.

Do: Verbally or in writing share Zephaniah 3:17 with someone who needs the comfort of these words.

Read: Ephesians 2:4-10

*Judith Christian
St. Louis, MO*

Wednesday, April 5, 2017

From Blossoms to Beautiful Fruit

I chose you ... that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide.

John 15:16

When blossoms appear on fruit trees in the spring, it's hard to imagine how in a few months those blossoms will be transformed into beautiful, tasty apples or peaches. It's a miracle of God's creative genius.

As the faith of a baptized child of God begins to blossom and grow, it's hard to imagine how his or her heart will be transformed by the Holy Spirit to produce a fruitful life in God's service. Of course, that fruit will be affected by the pesky sins that worm their way into our lives and try to spoil our fruit. But as our hearts and lives are transformed by the waters of Baptism, the light of God's Word and the nourishment of the Lord's Supper, the Holy Spirit produces in us some beautiful fruit—for the good and growth of God's kingdom. That truly is a miracle!

Loving God, by your grace and guidance, enable us to bear beautiful fruit in your service. Amen.

Watch: Look for new opportunities to be a fruitful servant of Christ.

Read: John 15:1-16

*Gil Duchow
Hilliard, OH*

Thursday, April 6, 2017

Ah, It's Spring!

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

1 Corinthians 3:6

My favorite time of the year is spring. I'm impatient and I am excited to visit a local garden shop and view the many options available. Deciding what to plant can be a complex problem. Will the plant stand direct sun? Is frequent watering necessary? Will it endure an unseasonable frost?

Planting in fertile soil is not the end. Care, water and food are needed for the plant's survival. We are like a plant, baptized into Christ. Growing in him, we regularly take in God's Word to prevent us from withering away and falling from Christ's everlasting love. The Holy Spirit is our Gardener. He is always with us as our guide to develop deep Christ-anchored roots.

Father God, remind us that the Holy Spirit is with us, helping us to develop deep roots in Christ that are anchored in the certainty of eternal life with you. Amen.

Reflect: Remember the Holy Spirit as our Gardener.

Read: John 14:25-31

*Don Hollmann
Ballwin, MO*

Friday, April 7, 2017

Blessed

I will send down the showers in their season; they shall be showers of blessing.

Ezekiel 34:26

“Bless you!” “Have a blessed day.” “Bless this food” Such words express the idea that you are setting apart something special to bring some kind of well-being. We bless food, that it would nourish our bodies and give us strength. We bless the day, hoping the day brings peace and joy.

I found that the word *bless* is derived from the old German noun *blodan* which is translated “blood.” This means that the word *bless* once meant to consecrate with blood. I am truly blessed by God through the blood of his Son Jesus, who sacrificed his life on the cross for my sins. Well, bless my soul! My body and soul are created by God, redeemed by the blood of Jesus, and empowered by the Holy Spirit. My entire life is a blessing from God, blessed in every way and in all times and in all situations: “May the Lord bless his people with peace!” (Psalm 29:11).

My God, thank you for blessing me with your Son Jesus Christ. Amen.

Reflect: Count the showers of blessing poured out on you through the blood of Jesus.

Read: 2 Thessalonians 3:16

*Ken Holdorf
Frisco, TX*

Saturday, April 8, 2017

Walking with God

Keep steady my steps according to your promise, and let no iniquity get dominion over me.

Psalm 119:133

How do you take a springtime walk? Are your eyes on God's creation or on possible obstacles in the path? Watching out for hazards may keep you safe, but it's hard to resist the vibrant colors and variety in nature. We need a diligent walking partner.

Our spiritual walk through life abounds in possible missteps. We need a Walking Partner who knows the terrain and our inability to walk alone. Jesus also journeyed through our world of sin and evil. He resisted temptation, suffered in our place, and overcame death and hell itself. That's the Escort we need every day.

Walk in the Word and worship.

Appreciate the Almighty's abundance.

Look for the Lord's lessons.

Kindle the King's kindness.

O Lord, keep steady my steps according to your promise. Amen.

Walk and talk: Tell someone else about God's guidance in your walk through life.

Read: 1 Corinthians 10:12-13; Lamentations 3:22-23

*Sharolyn Sander
Lincoln, NE*

Sunday, April 9, 2017

Rain and Reign

Blessed be the LORD, the God of Israel, from everlasting to everlasting!

Psalm 41:13

We think of the word *rain* often in April, but Palm Sunday also reminds us of one of its homonyms, *reign*.

Rain refers, of course, to the windows of heaven that water the earth. But when we think of the story of the flood in Genesis, we know all too well that rain can be destructive, causing rivers to overflow washing out roads, houses and even precious lives.

But if you use the word *reign* it can refer to the duration of time in which a ruler such as a king governs his people. Some of Jesus' followers wanted to make him an earthly king, but his kingdom is not of this world (John 18:36). In his kingdom he reigns "from everlasting to everlasting." Of his kingdom there is no end. It is not seasonal. It is there for us on a daily basis. It is there for us eternally.

Lord, thank you for bringing us into your eternal kingdom. Amen.

Hope: Think about what it means to reign with your Lord forever.

Read: Psalm 123

*Jerrold Lloyd Nichols
Fort Wayne, IN*

Monday, April 10, 2017

My Way or the “High” Way

When my spirit faints within me, you know my way!

Psalm 142:3

It’s remarkable how much energy I muster up during times of weakness—energy focused on my problems! I wear myself out with worry and paranoia. No matter how hard I try to navigate those deep valleys, my way seems impassable.

We’ve all been down that road. Thankfully, we have a Savior who sympathizes with our weaknesses. Jesus knows our way! He took our place on a road of suffering which led to his death on a cross. Without complaint, Jesus followed his Father’s way and fulfilled a promise—one that opened for us a “high” way to true peace, joy and eternal life. When our spirits grow faint, we need not despair. In faith we can walk with Jesus, confident that he will lead us to higher ground.

Jesus, thank you for walking the way of suffering for me. Strengthen me for my journey . Amen.

Fill up: Let Jesus give you the fuel for your journey. Read his Word and seek his direction.

Read: Hebrews 4:14-16; 2 Corinthians 12:9-10

*Sandi Geis
St. Louis, MO*

Tuesday, April 11, 2017

Faith Planting

You cause the grass to grow for the livestock and plants for man to cultivate, that he may bring forth food from the earth.

Psalm 104:14

My mother insisted that the potatoes in her garden must be planted before Good Friday. Before planting, the ground had to be dug up, work assigned to me. Mom planted some of last year's potatoes and we waited for the potatoes to grow. Miraculously they did, without any effort on our part.

This is also true with faith. We work and work, sending e-mails and letters, making calls, teaching classes and writing devotions, but it is God the Spirit who grows faith. He grows it when people hear about the hard work Jesus did through his merciful life, his bloody death and his resurrection that broke the dark bonds of death for us. What a sacrificial work he did for us!

O Jesus, thank you for the hard work of salvation you have done for us. Remind us daily that it is your work, not ours, that brings the results of faith. Amen.

Remember: Recall a time when someone responded in faith to your witness.

Read: Psalm 104

*Gordon Beck
Williamsburg, VA*

Wednesday, April 12, 2017

Not Ashamed

I was afraid, because I was naked, and I hid myself.

Genesis 3:10

We read about Adam and Eve and wonder at their foolish attempt to hide from God. Yet we, their descendants, do the same. The apple has not fallen far from the tree. We try to hide our shame and guilt, make excuses for ourselves and stubbornly refuse to repent. Do we really think God doesn't know?

God has always known, and that is why he sent his Son to save us. Jesus took our sins onto himself. He hung naked on the cross, bearing the shame of Adam and Eve and our shame. There was no place to hide. For us Jesus suffered the penalty of death. For us he rose in victory. Our sins are forgiven and by faith we are dressed in his righteousness. We have nothing to hide. "Everyone who believes in him will not be put to shame" (Romans 10:11).

Jesus, thank you for bearing our shame and guilt and clothing us in your righteousness. Amen.

Give: If you are able to do so, donate clothing to a shelter or mission.

Read: Psalm 22:1-5; Romans 10:5-13

*Carol Geisler
Manchester, MO*

Thursday, April 13, 2017

Forgiveness

For this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.

Matthew 26:28

To be sure, April showers bring May flowers as evidence of God's matchless creation. But have you considered the shower of forgiveness instituted on the night Jesus was betrayed? At the Passover meal, surrounded by the twelve, Jesus breaks bread, giving them his body, soon to be broken and pours wine into a cup, sharing with them his blood, soon to be poured out on the cross for the forgiveness of sins. This new covenant of his blood continues as a shower of forgiveness every time we gather to receive it until he comes again in his eternal kingdom.

Showered with his blood-bought forgiveness, we daily by the Spirit's power shower others with that forgiveness to bring new life and unity to a divided world.

Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. Amen.

Refresh: Forgive one person this week and watch Jesus' shower of forgiveness soften the barren landscape of sin.

Read: Psalm 103:8-13; Matthew 26:26-30

*Stephen J. Carter
Oakville, MO*

Friday, April 14, 2017

At One With Us

Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows.

Isaiah 53:4

Perhaps you saw this headline on the news: “Dad Gets Scar Tattoo to Match His Son’s Brain Cancer Surgery Scar: ‘I Wanted to Take Away Some of the Stares.’” According to Josh Marshall, after his eight-year-old son Gabriel underwent surgery to remove a tumor in his brain, the large scar left in its place “made him feel like a monster.” That’s when Josh decided to have his own head tattooed in the shape of his son’s scar. He said, “If they stare at you, they stare at me too.”

It’s hard not to compare this father’s love for his son with our heavenly Father’s love for us. Isaiah says, “With his wounds we are healed” (Isaiah 53:5). Thank God for the love of a father for his son. Thank God for his Son Jesus, whose love sets us free to love and live again.

I thank you, Lord Jesus, for carrying the scars of sin and death for me. Amen.

Share: Tell others of the new life you have been given in Christ Jesus.

Read: Isaiah 53; 2 Corinthians 5:16-21

*Edward Arle
St. Charles, MO*

Saturday, April 15, 2017

Peace in the Night

In peace I will both lie down and sleep; for you alone, O LORD, make me dwell in safety.

Psalm 4:8

Have you ever tossed and turned on your bed in the night, unable to sleep? I have. Your thoughts race and your heart feels dread because of our nation's problems, moral corruption and divisions or serious health, family and financial problems. What can you do to find peaceful sleep?

Paul writes helpful words to the believers in Philippi: "Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God which surpasses all understanding will guard your heart and your minds in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 4:6-7). No immediate solution to our big and small problems, but a simple trust in the living God who sent Jesus as our Savior and who asks us to pray and promises to hear us! I felt peace in the night and fell asleep in God's will and promises.

Lord, hear my prayer for peace in the night. Amen.

Rest: If you are anxious in the night, claim God's promised peace.

Read: Philippians 4:4-9

*Stephen J. Carter
Oakville, MO*

Sunday, April 16, 2017

Easter Butterfly

I go to prepare a place for you.

John 14:2

I love butterflies! We have two large butterfly magnets on our refrigerator. Years ago, when our grandchildren were little and came to visit, these magnets hung on our sliding patio door, so they didn't run through it as they rushed outside.

The reason I love butterflies is they are symbolic of new life. My father died in December 1985. On Easter Sunday of 1986 our family, including Mother, was sitting outside after church on a warm sunny day. A beautiful butterfly landed on Mother's arm and stayed there, even when it was time to go in for Easter dinner. It remained on her arm as she stepped through the doorway. A few minutes later we opened the screen door and watched it fly away. That Easter butterfly was a message from our heavenly Father that Dad was enjoying his new life in heaven.

Dear Heavenly Father, thank you for the assurance and comfort of a blessed reunion in heaven. Amen.

Sing: Sing the hymn "I Know that My Redeemer Lives."

Read: John 14:1-3; Job 19:25-27; Philippians 3:20

*Annette Schumacher
Muskego, WI*

Monday, April 17, 2017

What a Difference a Day Makes

He is not here, for he has risen.

Matthew 28:6

On Good Friday evening the faithful women were crushed and heartbroken, as they saw Jesus laid in the tomb. But on Easter morning the women were filled with joy and wonder at the astonishing words of the angel, “He is not here, for he has risen.” What a difference a day makes! On Saturday the timid disciples were hiding behind locked doors, fearing for their lives. But on Sunday evening their lives—and our lives—were changed forever by the appearance of the risen Christ. Jesus was living proof that he had defeated the powers of sin and death. He opened for us and all believers the door to eternal life. What a difference a day makes—now and forever!

Risen Christ, fill us with your triumphant joy and peace. Amen.

Comfort: Share the joy and peace of your risen Savior with someone overwhelmed by life’s burdens.

Read: Matthew 28:1-10

*Gil Duchow
Hilliard, OH*

Tuesday, April 18, 2017

Son Rise

For you are my lamp, O LORD, and my God lightens my darkness.

2 Samuel 22:29

There is nothing more beautiful than watching the morning sun rise above the horizon. Somehow, the golden rays bring a glimmer of hope to the upcoming day. After hours of darkness, our path is now visible with the light from above.

Through God's own Son Jesus, we forever have our path illuminated. He sent Jesus to die on the cross, so that our sins are forgiven and we now have the gift of eternal life with him in heaven. No longer do we live in darkness but instead we live forever with him in the light of his forgiveness and love. Today, rejoice in the hope that we have been given through Jesus' death and resurrection.

Dear heavenly Father, thank you for sending your Son to lead us out of darkness into the light and hope of your promise of eternal life. Amen.

Demonstrate: Let God's light shine through you in all your interactions with others.

Read: 2 Samuel 23:4

*Betsy Becker Niedringhaus
Ballwin, MO*

Wednesday, April 19, 2017

Breakfast

None of the disciples dared ask him, "Who are you?" They knew it was the Lord. Jesus came and took the bread and gave it to them, and so with the fish.

John 21:12-13

We spent a week at the beach with our children and grandchildren, and our daughter-in-law suggested taking bagels to the beach for breakfast. Off we went with bags containing everyone's favorites: poppyseed, blueberry, plain, cranberry/walnut, whole wheat and 7-grain. Sitting on the beach in early morning sunlight, enjoying bagels and cream cheese, all with people you love—what could be better? The disciples must have thought that, too, when Jesus invited them to breakfast on the beach. He had just granted them an enormous catch of fish, and now they were eating grilled fish, cooked by the Lord who loved them so much that he died for their sins and rose again to give them eternal life. They couldn't comprehend it all yet, but they knew nothing could be better.

Dear Lord, may we always be conscious of your enormous love for us. Amen.

Taste: Remember a time that made you happy and gave you a foretaste of the heavenly feast to come.

Read: John 21:1-14

*Sally Beck
Williamsburg, Virginia*

Thursday, April 20, 2017

Jesus Circles Back

Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these?" He said to him, "Yes, Lord; you know that I love you." He said to him, "Feed my lambs."

John 21:15

Have you ever been separated from a tour group, wondering if you are stranded in a country where you don't know the language or the way back to your hotel? What a relief when you see the tour manager coming toward you to bring you back!

Jesus circles back time and again to recall those who are lost and scared. He did it for Thomas, Peter (repeatedly) and Paul. Even though his journey to Jerusalem and the cross was relentless, he never hesitated to stop to heal, teach and bring divine relief to those who thought they were left behind. As our pace slows and strength ebbs, we may fear being left out, left behind. But Jesus will never move on without us. He will circle back and gather us to himself for the journey.

Jesus, when I'm feeling left out and confused, bring me back on the way with you. Amen.

Find: Welcome back one who has been separated from your family or faith community.

Read: John 21:15-19; Acts 22:3-16

*Mike May
Kansas City, KS*

Friday, April 21, 2017

Living Well, Dying Well

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

John 11:25-26

Vern was a great friend and pastor to many people. His life exemplified his faith, whether he was preaching or listening and sharing his faith at a coffee shop. He lived, loved, laughed and lifted people up, always focusing on God's grace and goodness.

He lived well because he knew who he was and whose he was. He died well because he lived out his Baptism, always pointing the way to the cross and the resurrection. Through his battle with ALS, Vern continued to point all of us to a Lord who never forsakes us, not because of what we do but because of what Jesus has already done for us. Thanks, Vern, for living well and dying well, in the Resurrected One.

Lord, in the midst of our pain and problems, help us to point to you, the Promise. Amen.

Recall: Think of others who are living well and dying well around you. Talk to them and thank God for them.

Read: John 11:17-27; John 14:18-19

*Rich Bimler
Bloomington, IL*

Saturday, April 22, 2017

Asparagus

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

Ecclesiastes 3:1

It's spring! There are beautiful stalks of asparagus in the grocery stores. How could asparagus not be mentioned in the Bible! The best quote I could find was a weak "probably cultivated by the ancient Egyptians or Greeks so perhaps the peoples of the Bible were familiar with it also." It troubles me greatly to think the children of Israel never had asparagus with their manna. A cousin whose mother lived with her in her senior years said, "We lived together well, except for how long to cook the asparagus." Occasionally I have purchased it "fresh" but out of season—skinny, stringy, expensive.

It's a matter of time. So maybe this isn't our time to run a marathon. Maybe we can't repair or recover that old chair we love so well. Pray the Lord will direct us to make good use of our now time.

Lord, renew our enthusiasm to find activities that will help us grow in grace "at this time," and thank you for asparagus. Amen.

Prepare: Cook some asparagus today, if you have the time!

Read: Ecclesiastes 12:9-11

*Lois Siemon Scheer
San Diego, CA*

Sunday, April 23, 2017

Are Doubts Normal?

And [Jesus] said to them, "Why are you troubled, and why do doubts arise in your hearts?"

Luke 24:38

Because Thomas said he would not believe unless he personally saw the wounds of Jesus, we call him "Doubting Thomas." Perhaps we are too hard on Thomas. His doubts are reasonable.

Let's be honest. The depth of our faith fluctuates. All people of faith have doubts at times. Doubts are a natural part of believing. Doubts do not equate with unbelief. Faith is not the absence of doubt, but rather faith continues to believe even in the midst of doubt. Faith is trusting God even when you cannot see God at work in your life or in our world. Faith is trusting in the light even in the darkness. Don't let your doubts overcome you. Accept them, deal with them and move past them. Let faith prevail.

Lord, help me to trust you even in the midst of my doubts. Amen.

Strengthen: Reinforce your faith by remembering how God has been faithful in the past.

Read: Lamentations 3:22-24

*Glen VanderKloot
Springfield, IL*

Monday, April 24, 2017

Seeds of Blessing

The point is this: whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows bountifully will also reap bountifully.

2 Corinthians 9:6

One of the most difficult times in my life was visiting our old family home after Mum and Dad passed away. The house was so still, empty and eerily quiet, yet my mind overflowed with memories.

I prayed, asking God for strength and glanced down at the path ahead. Growing up through a crack in the path was a solitary pink petunia—so perfectly formed and rich in color—dancing joyfully in the breeze. Petunias were Mum's favorite and at one time filled the garden beds, adorning the home with pink, purple and white.

That pretty pink petunia was a reminder that the seeds of blessing sown in our lifetime are not forgotten. God sees the kindness and love we sow, and in the right season the blessings we plant will grow and thrive, blessing the generations to come.

Lord, help me to sow bountifully the seed of your Word. Amen.

Remember: Share with others the ways in which God has blessed you.

Read: Matthew 13:1-43

*Kerry Osborne
Sydney, Australia*

Tuesday, April 25, 2017

Downpour of Blessings

May the LORD bless his people with peace!

Psalm 29:11

We haven't had rain here in a few weeks, but I think we made up for it last night! I woke up very early this morning to the sound of a thunderstorm and heavy rain. I listened. I didn't have to get up yet, so I waited, rested and enjoyed the storm. I was safe in my warm home. I had the luxury of really hearing the sounds of the rain pouring, wind blowing and thunder roaring. I could hear the water gushing down the gutters off the roof. I thoroughly enjoyed it all!

As I listened, I thanked God for providing us with rain. How often do I take it all for granted? I was grateful to God for the water and the wind. I felt the blessing of God's provision in an early morning thunderstorm prayer.

Almighty God, thank you for sounds of nature. I am so blessed by your abundance. Amen.

Blessings: Keep count today of God's blessings in nature.

Read: Daniel 2:20-23; Luke 1:78-79

*Annette L. Sherwood
St. Louis, MO*

Wednesday, April 26, 2017

Shine!

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

Psalm 67:1

Ah, spring! The days finally do seem longer. Psalm 67 is a song for a spring day. Make it your song today. It begins in spring, as it were. The bright light of God's face shines upon us. He sees you today. He looks at you through the eyes of Jesus. How our God loves you! His smile is a delightful light that illumines one's soul with the truth of his joy over us.

Did you ever lift up your face to the warm, bright sun? It feels good! God shines his love upon you today. He is the Author of the sun's light. He is the Son's Light blessing upon you today. He blesses you with a new day, a good day. Enjoy!

Bright, shining God, may I share with others the light blessing of your smile today. Amen.

Glow: Shine Christ's love on someone you love today.

Read: Psalm 67

*Don Schatz
Kenmore, WA*

Thursday, April 27, 2017

Be Still

Be still, and know that I am God.

Psalm 46:10

Nothing is as transformational as being still before the Lord. Let God set the agenda. Feel his warm embrace. Relax in his loving presence. Take the time to admit your frustrations, inabilities and needs. Hear his forgiveness and redirection, comfort and grace. Notice his blessing, falling around you like fresh spring rains. Refreshed and at peace, with burdens no longer weighing you down, notice the strength and energy God gives. Then walk, run or even spring into the plans God has revealed to you.

“They who wait for the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles; they shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint” (Isaiah 40:31).

Thank you, Lord, for quiet times that bring refreshment, energy and perspective to my life. Amen.

Be still: Designate _____ minutes of daily quiet time before the Lord. Praise and thank God for the results.

Read: Isaiah 40:28-31; Lamentations 3:22-26

*Sharolyn Sander
Lincoln, NE*

Friday, April 28, 2017

Gottes Zeit

My times are in your hand.

Psalm 31:15

Grandma grew up in a home that spoke only German. Yet I remember her saying only two things in German during the twelve years we shared life on this earth. She always called me her Schatzie (German for “treasured one”) and she frequently uttered the phrase, “Gottes Zeit ist die alle beste Zeit” (loose translation: “God’s time is the best time”).

Grandma used this phrase when a friend died or when there was too much rain on the corn for a good crop or when she was waiting for a grandchild to be born. It was a reminder that we are not in control and that our lives were in the hands of our gracious heavenly Father. I believe it was also her way of reminding us that God really does know what is best for us even when we disagree.

O God, help me to remember that my time is really in your hands. Amen.

Consider: Think about times when you have trusted in God to be in control of your life.

Read: Psalm 31

*Margaret Hinchey
Englewood, CO*

Saturday, April 29, 2017

Where's Jesus?

Why do you seek the living among the dead? He is not here, but has risen.

Luke 24:5-6

It seems like Jesus is never where people think he ought to be. He wasn't with his parents on the trip back home from Jerusalem. He wasn't with the respectable people. He wasn't with Lazarus when he got sick and died. He wasn't where everyone was absolutely certain they would find him: the tomb. The women went there with only one question: "How will we move that big stone?" No one asked, "Do you think Jesus will still be there?" Well, he wasn't! Now they had a million questions. The answer to all the questions was—and is—joy. And hope. Today Jesus continues to surprise with his joy-full, hope-full, real-life presence. Not according to our predictions, perhaps, but always according to our need and his boundless love.

Holy Spirit, open my eyes and alert my heart to encounter Jesus even in his most distressing disguises. Amen.

Think: Using your best 20/20 hindsight, reflect on some times recently that you have glimpsed Jesus and your heart was warmed.

Read: Luke 24:13-35; Matthew 25:37-40

*Mike May
Kansas City, KS*

Sunday, April 30, 2017

A Time to Plant and Cultivate

You cause the grass to grow for the livestock and plants for man to cultivate, that he may bring forth food from the earth.

Psalm 104:14

My wife and I enjoy driving through farm country on our way to visit her 99-year-old mother. As I write this, the farmers are in the fields—harvesting the fruits of the earth. As you read this, the farmers are back in the fields—planting and cultivating,

Farmers know that they are not the ones who cause the plants to grow and produce food. Most of them know it is God who gives us our food “in due season” (Psalm 104:27). He is the One who shows us with all of the blessings we enjoy, so many of which we take for granted. Above all, we are blessed to know by faith in Christ that we are God’s dearly loved and forgiven children, who will spend eternity with him.

Gracious God, open your hand and fill us with good things, especially the Bread of Life. Amen.

Share: By mail, email or in person, say thanks to a farmer.

Read: Psalm 104:24-35

*Gil Duchow
Hilliard, OH*

Monday, May 1, 2017

Tiptoe Through the Tulips

Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they neither toil or spin.

Matthew 6: 28

Of all of the wondrous spring flora that comes into bloom, perhaps none is more diverse in color and form than the tulip. It is a member of the lily family and when seen in mass plantings is a nearly overwhelming delight of beauty. The range of hues of this one flower is truly immense. The ultimate “flower” of God’s creation—humankind—likewise comes in a variety of forms and styles and colors.

Each of us is wonderfully made and very specifically loved by our Lord. He celebrates our uniqueness and wants us to use our specialized traits and talents to bring praise to him and share his love and grace to all those he brings before us.

Father, thank you for the variety of your creation, both in flowers and in people. Amen.

Praise: Use your “two lips” to praise our Creator for the blessings of diversity.

Read: Matthew 6:27-29; Revelation 7:9-10; 1 Corinthians 12:15-19

*Don Luepke
Fremont, IN*

Tuesday, May 2, 2017

Promise Kept

Not as the world gives do I give to you.

John 14:27

A delivery truck displayed the company motto: “We Help the World Keep Its Promises.” The trucking firm probably did a good job in delivering the promised goods on time, but we know that the world is generally not very good at keeping its promises. The world promises wealth, power and peace—offers that may satisfy for a while but ring hollow in the end.

Jesus offers more. Through his death and resurrection, our sins are forgiven. We will inherit eternal life and the wealth of his glory (Ephesians 1:18). His mighty power is at work within us (Ephesians 3:20). Jesus promises peace: “Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you” (John 14:27). The world’s peace depends on outward and ever-changing circumstances—on the absence of conflict, on good health or on freedom from fear or worry. Jesus’ peace depends always and only on Jesus himself.

Lord Jesus, fill me with your peace. Amen.

Give: Share Jesus’ peace with those who no longer trust the world’s promises.

Read: John 14:25-31; Philippians 4:4-7

*Carol Geisler
Manchester, MO*

Wednesday, May 3, 2017

Keep Singing

Sing and make music in your heart to the Lord, always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Ephesians 5:19-20

Paul's message to the Christians in Ephesus was to "always give thanks ... for everything." Seriously? He couldn't have meant for everything! These people were being persecuted, as was Paul. And yet they, and we, have been given everything—our salvation through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus our Savior. No storm of life can shake us when we cling to the cross. Forgiveness is ours! Heaven is ours! God's people sing, as did Moses and the Israelites, David, Mary, Simeon, Paul, the early Christians, and now, us. How can we keep from expressing our gratitude, always and in every circumstance, for God's amazing grace?

Lord, fill my heart with thanksgiving, my lips with hosannas and my voice with alleluias in every circumstance, for by your grace I have been saved. Amen.

Do: Daily speak, pray or sing a hymn or song of praise, whatever your circumstance.

Read: Psalm 150

*Judith Christian
St. Louis, MO*

Thursday, May 4, 2017

David's Model for Prayer

But you, O LORD, are a shield about me, my glory, and the lifter of my head. I cried aloud to the LORD, and he answered me from his holy hill.

Psalm 3:3-4

David knew how to excite his faith even in some very rough times in his life. His psalms are prayers by which we too can learn to pray. David starts by pouring out his heart, fears and troubles to God. He's very honest! In each psalm, David thinks of God by the power of the Holy Spirit. He remembers how big God is. He even uses some of God's own words, his promises. By the time David is finished praying, his troubles seem small and manageable for such a loving and faithful God, who created David and you and me and this universe out of nothing. In the light of God's blessings of eternal life and salvation through Jesus Christ there is nothing that can separate us from the love of this great God.

Our Father in heaven, you teach us how to pray and you answer even unspoken needs. You are great and good. Amen.

Pray: Share a time of prayer with someone.

Read: Psalm 23; Romans 8:28-39

*Nancy Rapp
St. Louis, MO*

Friday, May 5, 2017

Waiting and Watching

Stay awake, for you do not know on what day your Lord is coming.

Matthew 24:42

While we don't know when the end of the world will come, our heavenly Father knows. Jesus urges us to be watchful and faithful while we wait.

In the days before the Last Day it will be like the days of Noah, when "the LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth" (Genesis 6:5). But Noah was a righteous man. He walked with God and did all that God commanded (Hebrews 11:7).

Like Noah, we are a "waiting people," surrounded with evil. Yet God is also calling us to be a "watchful people," clinging by faith to his promise of forgiveness and life in the midst of chaos and confusion. He calls us to be his witnesses, inviting everyone everywhere to receive forgiveness in Jesus Christ. Keep watch!

Lord God, empower us by your Spirit to share your plan of salvation while there is still time. Amen.

Share: Start a conversation about the end times and the importance of being watchful and faithful.

Read: Matthew 24:36-39; 42-44; Matthew 25:14-29

*David P. Schmidt
St. Louis, MO*

Saturday, May 6, 2017

Everything Is Beautiful

He has made everything beautiful in its time.

Ecclesiastes 3:11

A chaplain serving in a Kansas state hospital tells of a remarkable young woman. This special girl was hydrocephalic. The water on her brain had caused her head to swell in size, making it impossible for her to hold her head up without the aid of special cables attached to her wheelchair. In spite of her medical condition, whenever it came time for morning chapel, this girl was there. And when the call for favorite songs was made, her request was always the same: "Everything Is Beautiful in Its Own Way."

Ray Stevens wrote that song and may have been thinking God's thoughts after him. That girl was beautiful in the eyes of God, as are we all. He even calls us his beloved children, and the cross of Jesus is there to prove it.

Lord, open my eyes to see the beauty you see in the people and world around me. Amen.

Watch: Look for the good in everyone you encounter today and don't hesitate to point it out.

Read: 1 Timothy 4:1-5

*Edward Arle
St. Charles, MO*

Sunday, May 7, 2017

My Name

Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born I consecrated you.

Jeremiah 1:5

I have five children and all their names begin with K. At the time we were choosing names, it seemed like a good idea, but there were days when I asked myself, “What were you thinking?” I had a difficult time using the correct name when I was in a hurry or frustrated with one of them. I would run through all five names before I reached the desired one. They are grown now, but occasionally, I do the same thing with my grandchildren. Do they look alike or act alike? No, but we can become confused.

God knows your name. He knew it before you were born and he never forgets it. He doesn't get you confused with your siblings, friends or neighbors. He doesn't mix you up with the thousands of individuals who have the same name. In God's eyes, each of us is a distinct creation and he loves us individually.

Father, thank you for knowing my name. Amen.

Share: Help someone understand how important his or her name is to God.

Read: Isaiah 43:1-3

*Gloria Doty
Fort Wayne, IN*

Monday, May 8, 2017

Aloe Vera

The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.

Revelation 22:2

Recently my eyes focused on one of three beautiful aloe plants in our house. Graceful and green, the leaves seem to praise the Creator. Then I remembered visiting an aloe museum and factory in Aruba where for over 125 years aloe extract has been blended with other ingredients to produce a soothing balm for dry and irritated skin. Just one plant showers us with God's blessings of beauty and healing.

Then I realized how God's salvation plan moves from the Garden of Eden, where we fell into sin, to the restoration of creation through his Son Jesus. "Bless the LORD, O my soul ... who forgives all your iniquity, who heals all your diseases" (Psalm 103:2-3). "With his stripes we are healed" (Isaiah 53:5). Finally, we view with John the heavenly Jerusalem with its tree of life. "The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations" (Revelation 22:2). "There is a balm in Gilead ... to heal the sin-sick soul."

Praise God from whom all blessings flow. Amen.

Enjoy: Rejoice this week in simple spring plants and Jesus' new creation.

Read: Revelation 22:1-5

*Stephen J. Carter
Oakville, MO*

Tuesday, May 9, 2017

Springs of Water

If you pour yourself out for the hungry and satisfy the desires of the afflicted ... you shall be ... like a spring of water.

Isaiah 58:10-11

The importance of water impressed me on a recent trip to Israel. Mountains are dry and barren; green is found only where there is water.

Isaiah says that faithful believers who pour themselves out “for the hungry and satisfy the desires of the afflicted,” are like watered gardens or springs of water in scorched places. Most of us help the hungry a little and our help to the afflicted seldom satisfies. I certainly don’t feel that I am a spring of water in my help to those in need. I am more like a slow dripping faucet. May God forgive me and strengthen me in him whose blood flowed for me, and whose spirit washed me in the waters of baptism.

O Lord, let me be a living spring of water in this dry earth of selfishness and greed. Cleanse me of my selfishness and open my heart to those in need, in the name of him who is the water of life. Amen.

Consider: During spring showers, think how you water the dry earth by your care for the needy.

Read: Isaiah 58:10-14

*Eldor Kaiser
Lenexa, KS*

Wednesday, May 10, 2017

Home

And we are his house if indeed we hold fast our confidence and our boasting in his hope.

Hebrews 3:6

Most of us have moved into more than one house, apartment or room as life's circumstances kept (and keep) changing. After a move, we make ourselves feel at home by arranging familiar items, hanging favorite pictures and inviting friends and family.

Having an earthly house that feels like home is a gift from God. An even greater blessing is realizing that God call us "his house" (Hebrews 3:6). Just as we dwell in our earthly house, God dwells in us. "Do you not know that you are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in you?" (1 Corinthians 3:16). Knowing we are God's house right now makes us feel at home wherever we may live. Holding fast to our confidence and hope in Christ, we also know that he is preparing a heavenly home that will be our best move ever.

Father, help me always boast in the hope I have in Christ, my Cornerstone. Amen.

Count: Remember all the houses where you've lived and recall how God lived with you in each place.

Read: John 14:1-3; 2 Corinthians 5:1

*Marj Maynard
Billings, MO*

Thursday, May 11, 2017

No Greater Love

Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends.

John 15:13

You may never have heard the name Victor Ortiz, but the man whose life he saved will never forget him. Victor Ortiz is a New Jersey transit officer now being hailed a hero for pulling an unconscious man off the railroad tracks seconds before the train would have taken his life. When asked what made him risk his own life to save a man he didn't know, Victor Ortiz said, "That's my job, to protect and serve."

When I read the story of Victor Ortiz, I was reminded of Jesus' words: "Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends." But Jesus didn't just die for his friends. He died for a world of strangers, including you and me, that in his death and resurrection we would all become his friends.

Lord Jesus, as you gave up your life for me, help me to live my life for you. Amen.

Watch: Find ways to show God's love to others today.

Read: Romans 5:6-11

*Edward Arle
St. Charles, MO*

Friday, May 12, 2017

Forget-Me-Not

O Israel, you will not be forgotten by me.

Isaiah 44:21

In our part of the country, just about the time of Mother's Day, a small, delicate blue flower with a petite yellow center bursts into bloom. According to German folklore, God had named all of the plants when a tiny, unnamed one softly whispered, "Forget me not, O Lord." The Creator responded, "That shall be your name."

Even when we are alone and feeling insignificant, our gracious Father does not forget us. He knows and remembers all of our hurts as well as our joys. The love that he has for you and for me abounds for each of us individually. He says, "I have called you by name, you are mine" (Isaiah 43:1). Can anything be more grand?

Lord, you always remember me; help me to never forget you. Amen.

Give: Buy or pick some Forget-Me-Nots, make a bouquet and share it with someone who needs to be remembered.

Read: Isaiah 49:15-16, Genesis 9:14-16

*Don Luepke
Fremont, IN*

Saturday, May 13, 2017

Trusting the GPS

Thus says the LORD, your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel: "I am the LORD your God ... who leads you in the way you should go."

Isaiah 48:17

Few people use paper maps any longer. Most of us have GPS (Global Positioning System) on our phones or in our vehicles. The voice on my GPS told me the routes and every turn needed to proceed to my destination. I found myself following directions most of the time, but occasionally I thought I knew a shortcut or a better way. That's when it said, "Recalculating," which actually meant, "Why didn't you listen to my directions in the first place?"

I am guilty of the same behavior in my life in Christ. I hear God's directions, loud and clear, but I believe I know a better way and that is when I end up hopelessly lost. God lovingly forces me to recalculate so I can continue to my heavenly destination. I need to follow his GPS (God's Plan of Salvation).

Father, thank you for your guidance and protection in every area of my life. Amen.

Guide: Talk to a friend about the heavenly GPS.

Read: Isaiah 30:21

*Gloria Doty
Fort Wayne, IN*

Sunday, May 14, 2017

Flowers Every Day

By this we know love, that he laid down his life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers.

1 John 3:16

“Happy Mother’s Day, Betty!” Betty looked up. She had been nodding off in her chair again. “Oh, thank you,” Betty replied, “I got flowers!” “Well, somebody loves you for sure!” her nurse assured her.

There were no flowers there in her room that day. Someone might have thought Betty had been dreaming. But Betty wasn’t dreaming. She explained, “My mother taught me that whenever you’re feeling down, just remember God’s love for you, and then think of something nice that someone did for you. That always brings a happy smile to your face. It’s like getting flowers every day.”

You can do the same for others. Every thoughtful word you speak, every kindness you show in Christ’s name is like giving flowers to someone.

Thank you, Lord, for mothers who showed us your great love in so many ways. Give us flowers to share with others. Amen.

Give: Spread a few flowers around, especially to the mothers in your life.

Read: Ephesians 1:3-6; Psalm 23

Lonie Eatherton
Fenton, MO

Monday, May 15, 2017

What's That In Your Hand?

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

Matthew 25:15

There are days when I feel creaky, tired and just plain “old.” If you’re like me, on those kinds of days, it’s tempting to think you no longer have anything of worth to offer the world or any talent that God can use. In reality, though, each one of us has been given at least one thing we can share with others. It may be something as simple as a smile, a hug, a kind word or a prayer. Let’s not allow what we can no longer do rob us of the joy of doing what we can!

Lord, when I feel frail and weak, help me remember to give my very best for you, whatever it may be. Amen.

Remember: This week, list seven “talents” that God has given you. Share one each day with neighbors, friends and loved ones.

Read: 1 Peter 4:11

*Carolyn I. Jones
Westerville, OH*

Tuesday, May 16, 2017

Singin' in the Rain

Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, and give thanks in all circumstances.

1 Thessalonians 5:16-18

Remember Gene Kelly's song and dance in the 1952 movie *Singin' in the Rain*? The weather couldn't drench his joy. Personal "rainstorms of life" are much harder to endure, and often generate complaints. But those who know Jesus can sing confidently, despite tears of sadness, loneliness or pain.

"[We] can do all things through Christ, who gives [us] strength" (Philippians 4:13). Jesus suffered false accusations, crucifixion and death to redeem us. Darkness covered the earth. But imagine the singing and dancing in heaven when Easter victory was proclaimed!

God enables his children to "sing in the rain" despite struggles and heartaches. He calms our fears and fills us with peace. Slightly change the last word in Kelly's song to give the praise to God: "Why's each new task a trifle to do? 'Cause I'm living a life full of You!"

Lord, fill me with joyful praise despite the storms in life. Amen.

Sing: Hum your favorite hymns—rain or shine!

Read: James 1:2-4; Romans 15:13

*Sharolyn Sander
Lincoln, NE*

Wednesday, May 17, 2017

World Turned Upside Down

Rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation.

Romans 12:12

Several years ago my wife and I traveled in New Zealand. It was the first part of December, but their spring. The flowers and flowering shrubs were in full bloom. Our world had been turned upside down. We were disoriented in terms of what we expected to see.

Churches were being prepared for the Christmas celebration. The flowers of choice were lilies. "Let me guess," I said to a church curator, "In New Zealand, you have Christmas lilies and Easter poinsettias." "No," he replied, "we employ lilies for both seasons."

In other ways, our lives can get turned upside down. A major change in life occurs, or too many little changes add up. This can be disorienting and frightening. However, like our good friends in New Zealand, Easter lilies (and the Easter message) herald Christian hope in any season.

Lord, fill us with Easter hope for every season of our life. Amen.

Send: Save a few Easter cards to send whenever someone needs resurrection hope.

Read: 2 Corinthians 4:7-18; 1 Corinthians 15:1-11
Ted Zimmerman
Napa, CA

Thursday, May 18, 2017

Even If We Plod

For I have learned in whatever situation I am to be content.

Philippians 4:11

My friend of over fifty years often refers to her daily tasks as plodding. It also describes how I go through the day. We both thank our God for this ability to plod, to find the motivation and energy to keep going, regardless of our pace.

During a radio interview, a researcher said she found that older people were happier. She explained it in terms of time perception. I conclude that older people are happier because they are content even if life plods. A bonus to plodding is perspective. We can see where we've been. We see more clearly our inadequacies and God's grace. God has kept us under his wing, even when we failed or transgressed. We have reason to be happier even if we plod.

Dear Lord, thank you for time to remember, energy to pursue our interests, opportunities to serve and most of all, for Jesus. Amen.

Relax: Set your priorities and be thankful for missions accomplished.

Read: Psalm 145:1-9; 1 Timothy 6:6-8; Hebrews 13:5-6

*Judy Scherr
Lemay, MO*

Friday, May 19, 2017

After the Storm

I have set my bow in the cloud, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and the earth.

Genesis 9:13

Spring is thunderstorm time. Without much warning black clouds roll in, thunder booms and lightning streaks the sky. When the storm is over, the sun comes out and shines through the moisture, making a rainbow.

With the very first rainbow, God promised never again to destroy the whole world with a flood. God has kept that promise to this very day. God also promises to love and care for us when we are going through stormy times in our lives and on days when everything seems sunny and bright. He also promises to forgive our sins because of Jesus' death and resurrection and to take us to heaven when we die. The next time you see a rainbow, remember that God keeps all his promises.

Dear God, help me to remember that you are always with me and that all your promises are true. Amen.

Share: Talk about the rainbow promise with a child.

Read: Genesis 9:8-17; 2 Corinthians 1:19-20

*Jeanette Dall
Batavia, IL*

Saturday, May 20, 2017

How Goes Your Thinking?

As he thinks in his heart, so is he.

Proverbs 23:7

When we meet someone, we usually ask, “How are you?” And the response might be, “Very good!” “Not so hot!” “Better than yesterday!” I always respond by saying, “I am blessed! Still vertical!”

The other day in reading portions of the book of Proverbs I read, “As he thinks in his heart, so is he” (Proverbs 23:7). That prompted me to ask not “How are you?” but “How goes your thinking?”

When I yield my thinking to Christ, and not to life’s circumstances and happenings, my way of living changes to a Christ-like life—acting justly, loving mercy and walking humbly with my God (Micah 6:8). Another way to say it—I let God be God in my life.

Lord Jesus, transform my thinking to your way of living. Amen.

Exercise: Look up in a Bible concordance such words as “think,” “thinking,” “thinks,” and ponder the verse by answering the question, “What is God saying to me?”

Read: Philippians 4:8-9; 1 Corinthians 2:14-16

*Walter M. Schoedel
Webster Groves, MO*

Sunday, May 21, 2017

New!

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

A new pair of sunglasses, new hearing aids, and new socks—new things can bring joy to the new day. God offers us even greater joy. He takes old sinners like you and me and makes new people out of us. Because Jesus sacrificed his life on the cross to pay the debt of our sin, all who are “in Christ”—who place their lives in the hands of Jesus—are made “new.”

The psalmist, reflecting on being made new in God’s forgiveness, wrote, “Shout for joy, all you upright in heart” Psalm 32:11. Jesus promises to be with us today and always. He brings us joy and makes our life new.

Thank you, Jesus, for making me a new creation. Help me to rejoice always in this good news. Amen.

Share: Tell someone today how God makes you feel new because of Jesus.

Read: 2 Corinthians 5:11-21; Psalm 32

*Steve Hess
Ft. Myers, FL*

Monday, May 22, 2017

Remedy for Rest

Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

Matthew 11:28

There are so many factors that can rob us of our ability to enjoy the refreshing rest that our bodies, minds and souls need. Busyness and stress can hinder our capacity for rest. Interruptions in sleep patterns can leave us exhausted. Certain predicaments that curb activity or limit social interaction can lead to too much rest, which is often negated by loneliness, boredom or depression. It seems true rest is elusive!

There is plenty of expert advice available to those struggling to achieve rest, but only Jesus offers a remedy that cannot be interrupted by any of life's challenges. It requires no effort of our own. There is no list of things to do or pills to take, and there are no restrictions. Jesus simply says, "Come to me." Answer his call today.

Jesus, you know my struggles. Help me follow you, that I may experience true rest for my soul. Amen.

Relax: Jesus is calling. Enjoy resting in his presence. Pray, praise, sing, read his stories or just snuggle up in his embrace.

Read: Matthew 11:29-30; Psalm 62

*Sandi Geis
St. Louis, MO*

Tuesday, May 23, 2017

Kindness

Your people shall be my people, and your God my God. Where you die I will die, and there I will be buried.

Ruth 1:16-17

Ruth came from a different culture; she was a Moabite. They had their own gods, not the true God of Naomi. For ten years Ruth lived as a wife of Naomi's son Mahlon. Ruth's name meant "kindness," and as she came to know the God of Israel perhaps she learned to speak kindly when cultural differences occurred.

Through the power of the Holy Spirit kindness can be learned. We who were raised to be pessimistic can become optimistic. We can change from being self-centered to focusing on others. People will notice and ask, "How did you come up with that?" The answer is Jesus. He showed us the way to act as servants. As a servant, he died and rose for our salvation. With Jesus implanted in us, we discover we have kind words we never thought we had.

Jesus, give us the wisdom to use words that disarm differences that arise. Amen.

Help: Think of a person today who needs a word of kindness from you and find a way to say it.

Read: John 4:1-26

Gordon Beck
Williamsburg, VA

Wednesday, May 24, 2017

Peep and Tweet

Shout for joy in the LORD, O you righteous! Praise befits the upright.

Psalm 33:1

If you wake up just when it's getting light, you have probably heard the "peep and tweet" chorus. It may seem as if every bird in the city is right outside your window! I don't think of the birds as noisy alarm clocks. I like to think they are thanking and praising God for his care.

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus says that God takes care of the birds and he will surely take care of us because we are much more valuable than the birds. Most importantly, God takes care of our spiritual needs. Through Jesus' death and resurrection our sins are forgiven and we have the promise of eternal life. We can praise God for all the blessings he gives us. We don't need to join the "peep and tweet" chorus. We can praise God each day with our words and actions!

Lord, thank you for all your blessings, both physical and spiritual. Amen.

Tweet: Sing the hymn "Praise God, from Whom All Blessings Flow."

Read: Psalm 33

*Jeanette Dall
Batavia, IL*

Thursday, May 25, 2017

Clouds

Behold, he is coming with the clouds.

Revelation 1:7

To walk around with your “head in the clouds” means you are daydreaming. But perhaps that’s not such a bad idea. Maybe it just means you are dreaming of a better day, because in Scripture clouds are often associated with God’s presence.

When Israel traveled through the wilderness, God went before them in a pillar of cloud (Exodus 13:21). The risen Lord ascended into heaven as a cloud hid him from the disciples’ sight (Acts 1:9) and clouds will signal the Savior’s return on the Last Day: “You will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of Power and coming on the clouds of heaven” (Matthew 26:64). On that day when all hopes and dreams come true, we will be caught up “in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord” (1 Thessalonians 4:17).

Lord Jesus, let the clouds rising in the skies remind us of your glorious return. Amen. Come, Lord Jesus.

Look: Walk around with your “head in the clouds” today.

Read: 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18; Revelation 1:4-8

*Carol Geisler
Manchester, MO*

Friday, May 26, 2017

Let's Be Friends

Go in peace, for we have sworn friendship with each other in the name of the Lord.

1 Samuel 20:42

Remember Jack Benny and George Burns? George once said, "Jack and I had a wonderful friendship. Jack never walked out on me when I sang and I never walked out on him when he played the violin." What a great sign of friendship!

Friends are not those who agree with us all the time, but rather friends are those who know us through and through and love us all in all. We are able to be friends with others because Christ the Lord has made us his friends through his death and resurrection: "Once we were God's enemies but now we are his friends, through Christ" (Romans 5:10).

Jesus, thanks for being my friend so that I am able to be friends with others. Help me to forgive and encourage and affirm people, all because of what you have done for me. Amen.

Connect: Call, visit or write a friend of yours whom you have not talked with for a while. Renew old friendships, whether or not you like their singing or violin playing!

Read: 1 Samuel 20:35-42; John 15:12-17

*Rich Bimler
Bloomingdale, IL*

Saturday, May 27, 2017

Have No Fear

In all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.

Romans 8:37

It's been said that phrases like "Have no fear" and "Do not be afraid" appear 365 times in the Bible. While I can't confirm that as fact, I find the possibility comforting. How many Bible stories are about one of God's own facing fear? Think about Jonah swallowed by a big fish or the disciples in the boat as the waves and winds raged. Satan knows our every weakness and he wants nothing more than for our fears to lead us away from God. Yet throughout the Bible, God in his love led his children through their fears into peace that passes understanding.

Christ's victory over sin, death and Satan also means victory over fear. If there are 365 reminders not to be afraid, there's one for every day. How comforting!

Heavenly Father, remind us every day that you are stronger than our fears. In Christ Jesus we pray. Amen.

Consider: What fears has God already led you through?

Read: Psalm 46; 1 John 4:7-21

*Jane Wilke
Woodbury, MN*

Sunday, May 28, 2017

Daily Discipline

But I discipline my body and keep it under control, lest after preaching to others I myself should be disqualified.

1 Corinthians 9:27

These days find me back at physical therapy due to pain in the base of my spine and my lack of exercising. Therapists exercise my body for me. They stretch out my legs until I want to scream, "That hurts!" It hurts for a bit but I know it will help in the long run and get me up and walking again.

The Lord disciplines us in our spiritual walk. He stretches us to the limit. Sometimes it hurts, but he is making us stronger Christians in our walk of faith. Let others see Christ in you. Learn from the Lord's discipline to give him honor and glory.

Dear Lord, help us to walk in your ways and daily discipline ourselves in devotion and prayer time with you. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Exercise: If you are able to do so, go out and walk in the cool of the evening. Talk to the Lord while doing so.

Read: Psalm 103:6-14

Kay Charon
Glen Cove, NY

Monday, May 29, 2017

Vacation

Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

Matthew 11:28

Memorial Day is usually thought of as the official start to summer. Swimming pools are open and barbecues begin. It is during this time of the year when many of us choose to take a vacation and travel somewhere to relax, rejuvenate and spend time with family or friends. Vacation offers a respite to the everyday stress we all experience.

Often these daily stressors cause us to lose sight of the important aspects of our lives. Consequently, when we neglect our faith, our relationship with our heavenly Father suffers. When we fail to nurture our faith in him, then other areas in our lives begin to falter as well. Nurture your faith and family today by regularly spending time in worship, his Word and fellowship with others. Don't take a vacation from God. It is bad for your health!

Dear heavenly Father, remind me of the importance of nurturing my relationship with you. Amen.

Action: Spend time with Jesus today.

Read: Matthew 11:27-29

*Betsy Becker Niedringhaus
Ballwin, MO*

Tuesday, May 30, 2017

Value Our Bodies

I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are your works; my soul knows it very well.

Psalms 139:14

While visiting my daughter's home in Texas, I remarked how cute my granddaughter, little Eliana, looked as she walked down the hall. She heard me, turned around and said, "I was born this way." Conceited? Perhaps, but acceptable from a 4-year-old. We don't want our children to grow up with vain ideas about their appearance, yet we do want them to recognize that each of us is "fearfully and wonderfully made." Do we really contemplate how marvelously and miraculously God has made us—the constant beating of our heart, all our inner organs, our limbs, our senses. All of this is truly the work of an all-powerful, loving, wise and all-knowing God. It is our duty to thank and to praise but also to assume the responsibility of caring for our bodies to the best of our ability.

Dear Father, thank you that I was "born this way." Help me to live a healthy lifestyle. Amen.

Ask: Is there a healthy habit I could start, or an unhealthy one I could stop?

Read: 1 Corinthians 6:19-20; 1 Timothy 5:23

*Harriet Stennfeld
Fort Wayne, IN*

Wednesday, May 31, 2017

New Dance Moves

Look carefully then how you walk ... making the best use of the time.

Ephesians 5:15-16

When I learn about 100-year-old Eileen Kramer still dancing and choreographing, I think God wants me to do something new. Eileen's video shows her experimenting with new ways to move her arms and hands expressively. She may no longer leap across the stage, but she can still be creative.

Sometimes we hesitate to try something new, but new things can surprise and excite us, and keep life interesting. Remember the first day of school, starting a new job or moving into a new apartment or house? "New" offers an element of hope. God gives us the time and ability to try new things. Use these gifts and re-experience the joy of youthful surprise and excitement.

God, thank you for reminding me that I can still be young at heart by trying new things. Amen.

Do: Exercise to different music, put a new plant in an old container, or pray in a new place today.

Read: Romans 15:13

*Catherine A. Welch
Southbury, CT*

Thursday, June 1, 2017

If I Should Wake Before I Die

As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you.

John 15:9

Remember praying, “If I should die before I wake, I pray the Lord my soul to take”? Here’s a new twist to this old prayer: “If I should wake before I die, I pray the Lord to show me why.” So ... what might God have in mind for you to do today?

Finding purpose is a struggle at any age, but as we get older we sometimes wonder why God is keeping us around. Perhaps the answer is found in his amazing grace. Think about it: He loves us even though we don’t deserve it. He forgives us even though we don’t deserve it. He grants us eternal life in Christ even though we don’t deserve it. So maybe your purpose for today is to love someone who seems unlovable or to forgive someone who hurt you. What a difference that could make!

Dear Lord, help us to love others as you have loved us. Amen.

Reflect: With whom can you share a bit of God’s grace today?

Read: Jeremiah 29:11-13; John 15:1-17

*Jane Wilke
Woodbury, MN*

Friday, June 2, 2017

God's Rainbows

As many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ.

Galatians 3:27

In a muddy rut lies a drop of water, stagnant and dirty. The sun shines down on it, and lifts it up into the sky and warms it. Then it falls as a snowflake, pure, white and clean. That is what God's grace and mercy does for us each day. Our lives are soiled by the wrongs we do and the good we fail to do. God shines on us with his transforming forgiveness and love. When the sun shines on the raindrops, they become a beautiful rainbow. So do we.

God promised to never again destroy the earth with a flood. The rainbow is a reminder of his promise. We are God's rainbow of promise. If someone is despondent over past sins, assure them of God's forgiveness provided through the suffering, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. If someone is lonely, hug them and assure them of God's love and yours. Touch others with kindness and enjoy being God's rainbow!

Open my eyes, Lord, to see people in need. Help me to be your rainbow of promise to them. Amen.

Glow: Be a rainbow for someone today.

Read: 1 Peter 3:18-22

*Leo Symmank
Seabrook, TX*

Saturday, June 3, 2017

Fear Is the Enemy

Fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God; I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.

Isaiah 41:10

Fear. We have all experienced fear at one time or another. Fear is a response to danger. Far too often that danger is more perceived than real. Today fear runs rampant throughout our society.

When we let fear guide our lives, we diminish life for both others and ourselves. Fear robs us of rational thinking and can lead us to make poor decisions. When we let fear and anxiety control us, we lose our ability to practice empathy and hospitality to those in need. Fear diminishes life. Trust that God's power is greater than the things that you fear. Trust God to help you overcome your fears.

Lord, empower me to let go of my fears and live life to the fullest. Amen.

Reflect: How realistic are my fears?

Read: Psalm 118:1-9

*Glen VanderKloot
Springfield, IL*

Sunday, June 4, 2017

Holy Spirit

For God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control.

2 Timothy 1:7

As an artist I've always loved depicting the Holy Spirit in all of his manifestations—dove, fire, water, wind. Each one lends itself to movement, bold colors and flowing shapes, energetic lines. That's how the Spirit works in our lives, isn't it? Filling us with energy and boldness to welcome strangers, help others in need and tell them about Jesus' saving love. Lately, though, I've been feeling the Spirit's power in restraint. Maybe my Type-A self doesn't have to jump in with its usual doing, advising, having the answers. There is another way that the Spirit works: granting us wisdom to listen, to be still, to be there.

Instead of a bold palette, I could use some quiet blues and greens with peaceful, horizontal lines ...

Holy Spirit, you give us energy and you give us quiet. Thank you. Amen.

Remember: Recall a time that you felt the Spirit's power in doing. Recall another time in which the Spirit gave you the ability just to be there.

Read: John 3:1-8

*Sally Beck
Williamsburg, VA*

Monday, June 5, 2017

God's View

[Jesus] calls his own sheep by name and leads them out.

John 10:3

When my sons were young, we visited the Empire State Building. As they looked down, they thought the cars were toys and they couldn't see any people. They discovered that many things look tiny when seen from high in the air and some things can't be seen at all. I have the same sensation when looking out of a plane window. As the plane soars higher and higher, it looks as if the land below is uninhabited.

But God has a different view. There are millions of people on earth, so ordinary and insignificant—except to God. We are all very important to him. He knows each of us personally. Whenever we feel unimportant, useless or almost invisible, remember that God sees us from a different perspective. He sees us as his redeemed children—children he loves, children for whom he cares.

Lord, sometimes I feel insignificant. Thanks for always keeping me in your sight and for loving me. Amen.

Comfort: Tell someone who's feeling unimportant about Jesus, the Good Shepherd.

Read: John 10:1-18

*Jeanette Dall
Batavia, IL*

Tuesday, June 6, 2017

Showers and Floods

Then God said to Noah, "Go out from the ark ... Bring out with you every living thing ... that they may swarm on the earth, and be fruitful and multiply on the earth."

Genesis 8:15-17

Showers are polite. Floods are rude. Or so we say. We portray showers as gentle and nurturing and floods as powerful and destructive. But floods don't only destroy. They also renew and revive. They scour away the old, bring new soil and provide the ingredients for fresh new growth.

God renewed creation through a flood. Old things were drowned and died. New things, fresh and vibrant, emerged from the tomb of the ark to live anew. Just so the flood of Holy Baptism sends a daily torrent through our lives. No matter how "old," we emerge from the tomb of yesterday's sin and death, scoured by the flood of grace and nourished by the new soil of the Spirit's power.

Lord Jesus, call me out of the tomb of yesterday's dyings into the new light of the life you give. By your Spirit, make me joyously fearless to live there. Amen.

Ponder: What's new today? Make a list and enjoy it.

Read: Isaiah 55:10-13, 2 Corinthians 5:16-21

*Mike May
Kansas City, KS*

Wednesday, June 7, 2017

Able to Forgive

And when he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them."

John 20:22-23

I would argue that the blessing of forgiveness is showered upon us more than any other blessing, because we sin daily and much. Unfortunately, the blessing that flows to us freely from Christ's breath doesn't always flow through us as freely as it should.

When we are hesitant to forgive or when we withhold forgiveness, the blessing stops with us. This cannot be. God doesn't just ask us to forgive. He commands us, and his commands are always good and right.

How have you been doing with this? Right now is always a good time to forgive so that there may be reconciliation, peace and joy. Do as the Holy Spirit gives you the power to do. Forgive!

Lord, help me to be a continuously forgiving person. Amen.

List: Make a list of people who need to hear God's forgiveness for them and then go and bring that good news to them.

Read: Matthew 18

*Jeremy Klaustermeier
Warrenton, MO*

Thursday, June 8, 2017

Thirsty for God

My soul thirsts for God, for the living God.

Psalm 42:2

One evening my sister, Dad and I recognized a hymn playing softly over the nursing home's sound system. We sang along. Immediately the doorway filled with residents and staff thinking we were having a church service. The psalmist says that as a deer pants for water, he longs to be with God in the temple.

At times my health prevents me from going to church. When I can go to church, I exult in the Lord's Supper, in worshiping him and receiving his forgiveness and blessing. Whether we worship in church, or in our own home or room, God is with us in his Word and the power of our Baptism. Thanks to the sacrifice of his Son, it's a closeness that can never separate us or leave us thirsting for him.

Father, I long to worship you daily. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Do: Take someone who needs a ride to church or hold a simple church service in your own room.

Read: Psalm 42; Psalm 95:1-7; 1 Chronicles 16:23-36

*Ruth Geisler
Aliso Viejo, CA*

Friday, June 9, 2017

How Did I Get Here?

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

2 Timothy 1:5

Just more senior moments. You're ready to leave the mall, but can't remember where you parked your car. After a series of doctor's appointments and tests, you wind up in the hospital. How did I get here, anyway?

Look back at your relationship with Jesus and ask yourself, "How did I get here?" Did Christian parents first teach you about Jesus? Did grandparents or other family members tell you about his death and resurrection? You may have attended a Christian day school, Sunday school or VBS where you studied God's Word. You may have met Christ through a campus ministry. Christian friends or a believing spouse may have brought you to worship in God's house. Whatever your route, the Holy Spirit has brought you to where you are today.

Thank you, Lord, for those who brought me to faith through the power of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Pass it on: Be a Lois or a Eunice. Share your faith with the next generation.

Read: Deuteronomy 6:4-9

*Eileen Ritter
Byron Center, MI*

Saturday, June 10, 2017

Through the Wringer

In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world.

John 16:33

Next to the farmhouse where I lived my first few years, stood a small white wash house. Although I was too little to help on wash day, I watched carefully and recall many warnings to stay away from the wringer. It was fascinating to watch those powerful rollers squeeze water out of even the bulkiest items.

Wash houses are now quaintly obsolete, but people sometimes still say, “I feel like I’ve been through the wringer.” Sickness, pain, grief, family troubles, all can leave us feeling wrung out, flat and hopeless. At those low points, we find hope in today’s verse and others like 1 Peter 1:3-9. There we hear that God permits trials to test and refine our faith, making it “more precious than gold,” leading to the “salvation of your souls.” Even though we may go through the wringer, on the other side is “joy that is inexpressible.”

Lord of Life, thank you for sustaining me through trials so that my faith may be refined and strong. Amen.

Admire: Look at a washing machine and remember that you too are washed clean.

Read: 1 Peter 1:3-9

*Marj Maynard
Billings, MO*

Sunday, June 11, 2017

Thinking in Threes

The grace of Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

2 Corinthians 13:14

Jonah was in the belly of the fish for three days. Peter denied Jesus three times. Jesus rose from the dead on the third day. Jesus spoke of the third person of the Trinity, promising to send “another Helper” (John 14:16).

The Holy Spirit at Pentecost astounded those gathered there. Beginning with the apostles, all Christians received the gift promised by Jesus himself. Paul wrote that this same Spirit makes us free (2 Corinthians 3:17-18). Free indeed, from uncertainty regarding our future in his kingdom, and free also from fear, for the Spirit guides us continually. We have been drawn close to God the Father and God the Son by God the Spirit.

Bless us Lord, so that we listen to the Spirit within, the Spirit you have given us to accompany us continuously. Amen.

Listen: Study Scripture in all circumstances, guided by the indwelling Spirit who is at work in the Word.

Read: John 14:15-21; Acts 2:1-21, 36-39

*Judy Scherr
Lemay, MO*

Monday, June 12, 2017

“Weather” or Not You’re Ready

And Elijah said to Ahab, “Go up, eat and drink, for there is a sound of the rushing of rain.”

1 Kings 18:41

I love weather and I attribute it to growing up on a farm. After all, farmers rely a lot on the weather. My father could look at the sky and the clouds and know if rain was on its way.

There’s a great story in 1 Kings chapter 18 that starts with a famine and ends with the prophet Elijah sending King Ahab to the top of Mount Carmel multiple times to look for rain. The seventh time, showers came raining down.

There are times we might feel as if we’re in the middle of a famine. But the time always comes when, through the eyes of faith, we’ll see blessings come raining down upon us. “Weather” or not you’re ready, rain is on its way!

Lord God, loving Father, give us eyes to see the blessings you shower down around us. Amen.

Remember: What were your times of famine? What blessings came raining down?

Read: 1 Kings 18:1-46

*Jane Wilke
Woodbury, MN*

Tuesday, June 13, 2017

Do Things with Great Love

If I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing.

1 Corinthians 13:2

I serve as interim pastor for a small, graying congregation. The members are as faithful as they come, but they are discouraged. They can't seem to attract younger members. Will they be able to attract a pastor? How long can they continue to fund the ministry they offer? They look with envy at neighboring congregations that appear to be prospering.

I reminded them of a proverb: "We can't all do great things, but we can all do things with great love!" That is our primary calling. Some may be so placed and gifted to do great things. God, however, measures faithfulness chiefly by the love we demonstrate, doing whatever he gives us the opportunity and resources to do.

Open my eyes, Lord, to see someone I can serve with great love. Amen.

Ask: Who or what is my opportunity to serve with great love today?

Read: 1 Corinthians 13; 1 John 4:7-21

Ted Zimmerman
Napa, CA

Wednesday, June 14, 2017

Exhale

For everything there is a season ... time to keep, and a time to cast away.

Ecclesiastes 3:1, 6

Ever have the sensation that you just exhaled? You let out something important and you felt it leave you for good. You breathed out. You let go of that thing that was pressing on you, and suddenly felt relieved and peaceful again. God invites you to be healed, and part of the healing comes from letting go of your troubles. You can grow in trust, knowing that God has your best interests at heart. God cares about you deeply.

Is there something you need to speak about? Are you waiting to say something to someone at the right time? Share it with God. Let it out, and let it go! Breathe out what is blocking you from God's grace, so you can breathe in God's abundance, comforting peace and blessings.

Dear God, help me to let go again, and trust in your peace. Amen.

Meditate: Find a quiet place to relax, exhale deeply and let God help.

Read: Acts 2:26; Romans 5:2

*Annette L. Sherwood
St. Louis, MO*

Thursday, June 15, 2017

Giving Up All

Sell all that you have and distribute to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven.

Luke 18:22

The man asked Jesus what he needed to do to gain eternal life. Jesus told him to sell all that he had. Let's change the view. What if Jesus asked you to give up to him only what you touch? You touch your car's steering wheel, your collections, your flat screen TV. Would you give Jesus the money that passes through your hands? The food in the fridge?

Your hands touch mementos of vacations past, family photos, hand-made treasures. Would you give those things to Jesus? What else do you touch? The arm of a dear friend, the soft cheek of a grandchild, your own face in the mirror. Imagine knowing Jesus would draw every person you touch into his arms. Changes your perspective, doesn't it?

Jesus, open my mouth to speak of my desire for you to receive the people I love. Put their faces before me today. Amen.

Witness: Tell those you love that you want to give Jesus everything you can touch. Then touch them!

Read: Matthew 19:13-14; Matthew 20:30-34

*Julaine Kammrath
Aurora, IL*

Friday, June 16, 2017

Laughing Out Loud

Our mouths were filled with laughter, our tongues with songs of joy.

Psalm 126:2

Remember the W.C. Fields quote? “Start the day with a smile and get it over with.” The psalmist has a better idea. Laughter and joy are gifts the Lord gives us each day, in the midst of our worries, woes and weeping. We laugh and sing, not because everything is going well, but because we know that even when struggles occur, the Lord is still with us with his grace, forgiveness and hope. We know how it all turns out!

No need to pray as my friend does, “Lord, give me coffee to change the things I can change, and wine to accept the things I can’t.” Instead, let us shout, “This is the day the Lord has made ... rejoice and be glad in it!” (Psalm 118:24). Start the day with a smile, and continue that grin throughout the day. Take that, W.C. Fields!

Lord, thanks for the gifts of smiles and laughter. Open my mouth and face to shine your love and joy to others. Amen.

Rejoice: Put a sign on your refrigerator: “Stop Global Whining—Celebrate Joy in the Lord!”

Read: Psalm 126

*Rich Bimler
Bloomington, IL*

Saturday, June 17, 2017

Seaworthy Faith

The law of the LORD is perfect, reviving the soul.

Psalm 19:7

For a boater, a day enjoying sea, wind and sun revives the soul. And for one boater, the perfect powerboat in choppy waters is a simple, reliable one with well-placed handholds and a clear view from the helm.

If today brings troubling news or challenges, think simple. Unclutter your view of the day. Hop onto God's perfect powerboat. Hold on to his love and look around. There may be people or activities that can quell your anxieties, ease your pain or loneliness, and uplift your spirits. Focus on joyful ways to accept God's love, love him, and love your neighbor. Venture outside yourself and be open to God's refreshing presence.

God, thank you for always being there when I need you. Amen.

Refresh: Do a simple, refreshing task, with someone else if possible, like collecting stones in a glass vase and filling it with water.

Read: James 1:17

*Catherine A. Welch
Southbury, CT*

Sunday, June 18, 2017

Happy Father's Day

Remember also your Creator in the days of your youth.

Ecclesiastes 12:1

Our family took up a whole pew in church and we were there every Sunday, Mom and Dad and eight kids. I suspect that I had the best dad in the world. He taught us right from wrong. He taught us a father's love too! He's still the best human example of forgiveness that I've ever known (and I have a few of my own teenage driving stories to prove it!).

We thank God for our dads and we thank God that he has made us fatherly examples to the next generations. Most of all, we thank God that he is our faithful Father. In the midst of a confused and perverse world, he still teaches us right from wrong. He sent his own Son Jesus to win forgiveness for us and make us his own dear children.

Dear Father, thank you for our earthly fathers. Give us faith and fortitude to be good Christian examples to our children and our children's children. Amen.

Remember: Write a few thoughtful lines about your dad. Tuck it away in your Bible for someone else to find someday.

Read: Ephesians 6:1-4; Hebrews 12:7-11

*Lonie Eatherton
Fenton, MO*

Monday, June 19, 2017

Loneliness

I tell him all my troubles.

Psalm 142:2

I keep hearing many of my peers confess that they are lonely. They find that creating new relationships is not easy for them. They feel forsaken and forgotten. They think that no one cares for them. Even family members are too busy to spend much time with them. They seem to be victims of our society's emphasis on individualism and self-sufficiency.

When this happens, we have but one recourse. That's to recall who we are by the grace of God—children of a loving, heavenly Father. Then we join the psalmist in prayer, "I cry to the LORD for help; I plead with him ... you, LORD, are my protector; you are all I want in this life" (Psalm 142:1, 5). We may feel lonely at times, but Jesus is always with us, walking at our side. Others may fail us, but not our Lord and Savior.

Lord Jesus, as I face the issues of life in my later years, give heed to my cry and help me experience your presence and promises. Amen.

Consider: Spend time thinking about how the psalmists turned back to God when lonely.

Read: Psalm 142; Psalm 130; Psalm 143:5-8; Psalm 119:169-173

Walter M. Schoedel
Webster Groves, MO

Tuesday, June 20, 2017

Satisfied

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.

Matthew 5:6

The lyrics of the Rolling Stones' hit may take you back to 1965: "I can't get no satisfaction." Yet that sentiment may still be present in your life today. Where is satisfaction to be found?

Jesus offers satisfaction to those who hunger and thirst after righteousness. "Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness," he said, "and all these things will be added to you" (Matthew 6:33). Along with righteousness, he satisfies all of our physical and emotional needs. We receive all this by grace through faith in Jesus. But how could God ever be satisfied with us? Paul wrote, "For our sake [God] made [Christ] to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God" (2 Corinthians 5:21).

We thank you, Lord, for graciously supplying all we need, especially Christ's righteousness. Amen.

Donate: Sort and donate items that no longer give you satisfaction.

Read: Psalm 103

*Eileen Ritter
Byron Center, MI*

Wednesday, June 21, 2017

Leave the Light On

Your word is a lamp to my feet, and a light to my path.

Psalm 119: 105

Motel 6 has the slogan “We’ll Leave the Light On For You,” a welcome invitation to guests because the motel will always be open. When our sons went out and it was going to be dark when they arrived home, the porch light was on to welcome them. Even if worry was part of our waiting time until their return, the porch light was a beacon to their home, letting them know we wanted them to feel welcomed.

God’s light is always on, not just when it is dark outside, but always, 24/7. God wants us to trust his directions. Occasionally we forget and go it alone, only to stumble. “Always God” are two words to remember, trusting that he will be your guide.

Father God, when we start to trust ourselves more than you, send the Holy Spirit to remind us that you are always with us lighting the way. Amen.

Trust: Remember that God is with you.

Read: John 12:44-50

*Don Hollmann
Ballwin, MO*

Thursday, June 22, 2017

Blessings Far Away

*Blessed are the people to whom such blessings fall!
Blessed are the people whose God is the LORD!*

Psalm 144:15

There are days when blessings are hard to come by. There are little aches and pains and stiffness. Long-held plans are changed or canceled. You have lemons but forgot where you put your recipe for lemonade. A general darkness lays heavy on the spirit and God's blessings are forgotten.

On such days think of tomorrow and new beginnings and all the wondrous blessings planned for you. Recall the blessings you receive in Jesus Christ.

Be ready for anything. Say little prayers now and then. There may be a new friend waiting for you. Share with others a blessing you have received. There are blessings for all of us, blessings that fall like cherry blossoms, but sometimes you need to shake the tree.

Lord, make me aware always of the bountiful blessings of your creation, and of the pleasant smile of a person passing by. Amen.

Remember: Have you ever been surprised by unexpected moments of happiness? Such moments are blessings from God.

Read: Matthew 5:1-12

*Ron Beathard
Harrison, OH*

Friday, June 23, 2017

Team

There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call.

Ephesians 4:4

My first-place baseball team was defeated by the team in last place. How could that happen? I reasoned that the condition of each player varies daily in condition from poor to excellent. A winning team must have individual players that are in excellent shape that day.

As Christians we are Jesus' Church here on earth and members of Team Jesus. What position do you play? Whether a starting pitcher, a bench warmer or in the minor leagues, you must be ready to play now. In any position, we should be aware of our teammates and give encouragement to those who need it. You are not only team members; you are soldiers of the cross.

Dear Father, let my talents and abilities work for the best for your Church here on earth. Amen.

Rise: "Stand up, stand up for Jesus!" You are soldiers of the cross.

Read: Ephesians 4:11-16; Romans 15:5-7; Colossians 3:12-17

*Jim Wiedman
Lombard, IL*

Saturday, June 24, 2017

Every Moment Matters

Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, making the best use of the time.

Ephesians 5:15-16

It just seems like yesterday that my wife and I were changing the diapers of our children. Now, we are changing the diapers of our youngest grandchildren. Where does the time go? As I think back over the years, it just seems like a blur. It is true what they say: “The older you are, the faster time goes by.” As we visit our children, we realize how important our time with them is. Every moment matters! As I think back, we have been so blessed. Our Lord is the one who helps us to enjoy each moment as it comes. Don’t let a day go by without living it to the fullest. Make the most of every opportunity the Lord gives you. Thank him for those moments and then let others see him in and through you.

Lord, let me make the most of every moment you give me in this world. May you be glorified through those moments. In Jesus’ name. Amen.

List: Make a list of your special moments.

Read: Psalm 92

*Mike Lutz
Shelby Township, MI*

Sunday, June 25, 2017

Blessed!

All who see them will acknowledge them, that they are an offspring the LORD has blessed.

Isaiah 61:9

Years ago I was in graduate school at a public university. I received a letter from another student, telling me about the department. I replied, ending my letter as I always do, with the word “Blessings” and my signature. She wrote back how that one word, “Blessings,” had blessed her. She told me she was going to sign all of her letters with that word from then on. She asked how I came to use that word. It opened up an opportunity to share the good news about Jesus, the real Blessing!

You never know how God will use you today to bring his blessing to another, but he will. You are not only blessed by God, but you are his blessing to the world in Jesus.

Father, thank you for your many blessings. Amen.

Give: Touch another's life today with God's blessing.

Read: Matthew 5:13-16

*Don Schatz
Kenmore, WA*

Monday, June 26, 2017

The Small Stuff

To you do I cry all the day.

Psalm 86:3

“Don’t sweat the small stuff!” I’m sure that we all pray for friends and family, that they would know and seek the Lord for healing, strength and joy, and for our beloved and distressed country, for peace. Yet when the computer balks or we can’t find our car keys, do we remember that God is close at hand? God, who has promised to move mountains with our mustard-seed faith, can help us maintain our inner peace on days when it seems that “nothing in this house works but me.”

The Lord wants us to ask for his help, but he wants us also to give thanks for the small stuff—that you arrived safely from your trip to the grocery store, that you had a good night’s sleep or that you found that item you were looking for. Give thanks to the Lord for he is good!

Lord, thank you for your help in things both great and small. Amen.

Watch: Be aware of all the help you receive daily from your gracious God. Share those blessings with others.

Read: Psalm 17:6; Psalm 38:15; Psalm 116:2

*Connie Bretscher
Valparaiso, IN*

Tuesday, June 27, 2017

Nothing But the Truth

All Scripture is breathed out by God.

2 Timothy 3:16

From ancient times, people have sworn to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. Yet, as many as have kept that oath, there are many who have not.

Not so with God. When he speaks in his Word, he has given us the complete and utter truth. God does not lie. He doesn't beat around the bush. He doesn't tell us only what he thinks we want to hear. He gives us the honest truth.

In a world full of lies and deception, isn't it good to know that you can count on God to tell you the truth? It may not feel good at times, especially when we are convicted of sin, but it is for our ultimate good to know the truth, because the Truth will set us free. Live in the truth!

Lord, lead me to live by the truth. Your Word is truth! Amen.

Speak: Share the truth with someone today.

Read: John 14:5-7; John 17:16-19; 2 Timothy 3:14 to 4:5

*Jeremy Klaustermeier
Warrenton, MO*

Wednesday, June 28, 2017

Journey

Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

Psalm 23:6

“Why me?” Often that is said in the aftermath of some crisis or tragedy a person experiences. I asked the same question as I began to regain my strength of body and mind. Why was I given life anew when I was not many breaths from death?

God’s plan for my life unfolds each new day I have left on this earth. Until God calls me eternally home for the final time, I continue to pray for a certain resolve, urgency and commitment to respond to the Lord’s will for me. Over the years I have heard, preached, taught, known and believed grace, but not until my “journey through the valley of the shadow of death” did I have such a complete and compelling awe that God really, truly loves, forgives and empowers me to live as one belonging to him.

Use me, O Lord, to live, speak and show your loving, forgiving, empowering grace. Amen.

Today: Live, speak or show God’s grace.

Read: Philippians 1:19-27; Micah 6:8

*Steve Albers
St. Louis, MO*

Thursday, June 29, 2017

The Angel-Hearted Ones

Whoever brings blessing will be enriched.

Proverbs 11:25

There are some people who cross our paths who stand out from the rest. When I reflect back over my life, I see them clearly: my grandmother, the elderly Scripture teacher and the friend who stuck by me during difficult times. They each had a similar quality, a certain sparkle to the eye and a way of speaking that lifted my spirit. They abounded with kindness and it flowed from them like water from a tap. I am so grateful for these kind-hearted ones who, like angels in disguise, taught me about God's love and led me to discover a sense of faith, hope and joy. Knowing them has helped me cope with the criticism and negativity which is so common in our world.

Take some time today to think back over the "angel-hearted ones" who have touched your life. Write down their names and list the blessings they brought you. Thank God for them and think about those whom you might bless in a similar way.

Lord, thank you for the kind-hearted people you have sent into my life. Amen.

Write: Be angel-hearted. Send a note of encouragement to a friend.

Read: Proverbs 11:24-25

*Kerry Osborne
Sydney, Australia*

Friday, June 30, 2017

Run-Off Ramps

Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

Matthew 11:28

When traveling in the mountains, you often see signs indicating the severity of the grade going down the mountain. If a tractor-trailer is moving too fast or loses braking power, its speed increases as it goes downhill. This is a dangerous situation for that truck and for other drivers on the road. Highway departments often build “run-off” ramps, areas filled with sand where the runaway truck can find the means to stop. The tires sink into the sand and all forward movement is halted.

Our lives become like a runaway vehicle, going at dangerous speeds every day. We endanger ourselves and others when we have no time for God or his Word. Occasionally, God builds “run-off” ramps into our lives. Some event forces us to slow down and come to a complete stop. This affords us the opportunity to rest and reconnect with God before we proceed.

Jesus, help us to moderate our activities before we need to come to a complete stop. Amen.

Rest: Invite a busy friend for a restful visit.

Read: 1 Kings 5:4

*Gloria Doty
Fort Wayne, IN*

HOLY HABITS for **HOPE-FULL HEALTH**

Older Adult Ministries in Your Congregation

Here are some Holy Habits that can be developed in your congregation to celebrate your faith and to serve others. Add some of your own ideas in a lively discussions with others.

1. Gather a small group of older adults together to think of new ways to connect with each other.
2. Evaluate what is already being done, and then consider 2 or 3 additional ways to connect.
3. Consider serving those who are homebound.
4. Select an “Advocate” among you who agrees to be the “point person” to develop ideas. This is key!
5. Do a special “Older Adult” Sunday to emphasize ministries with, for and by older adults.
6. Interview 2 or 3 older adults each week and publish quotes in your church communications.
7. Help you pastor and staff to better understand “aging” so that they can promote a more positive attitude toward aging.
8. Think of other ways to help your people see aging as a blessing instead of a burden. Keep the conversations going among people of all ages that aging is a gift to be celebrated and not a burden to be endured. And celebrate the gift of aging in the process!

Hope-Full Praying

Stormy Weather

Springtime is a time for many showers and thunderstorms, Lord. Thanks for refreshing the earth and bringing us the needed rain. Protect us through both the bad storms of spring as well as the strong storms in our own lives. Help us to remember that rainbows follow the storms and in order to see your rainbow of promise, we first need to go through the storms of life. Amen.

Graduations

Lord, as we celebrate graduations of family and friends, help us to remember that these joyous occasions are not the end of something but rather the beginning of new learnings and opportunities. As young people “toss the tassel” from one side to the other, we say thanks to you for the learning experiences and also thanks for the challenges you put ahead of all of us. Amen.

Memories of the Past

The older we get the more memories we have, Lord. And that’s a gift! Help us to recall the “good old days,” but also remind us that today is a “good new day” because you are with us. Help us to rejoice in the wonderful memories gone by as we celebrate the memories of right now. Amen.

Weddings

We remember, Lord, that you are at every wedding through your Word and through your people, as we share the love and joy of family, friends and new beginnings. I pray that new couples will realize that you are not only present for the ceremony but that you are also with them throughout their whole life together. Thanks for weddings, commitments, family celebrations and your presence, even after the cake and dancing are over. Amen.

Family

We can so often take for granted our families, Lord. Forgive us when we do and when we focus more on the problems that we face and less on the promise that you have given. That promise is that you love and forgive us so that we can love and forgive others, especially those in our families. Help us to listen and not shout, praise and not criticize, and encourage and not belittle. We are your family, Lord, and we say, “Thanks.” Amen.

Servanthood

Lord, you call us to celebrate and serve each day of our lives! Servanthood is not something we “have to” do but rather it is something that we “get to” do, because of what you have already done for us. So, move us to serve today, in small and big ways, by seeking those who need our help and support. Amen.

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