



Lenten Devotional 2011

"Our Journey through the Book of Psalms"

Divinity Lutheran Church

Parma Heights, Ohio

Wednesday – March 9, 2011 – Ash Wednesday

Psalm 23:1-4 – *The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want. He makes me lie down in green pastures; he leads me beside still water; he restores my soul. He leads me in right paths for his name’s sake. Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I fear no evil; for you are with me; your rod and your staff – they comfort me.*

“From Here to There”

I respected Al Radefeld for the way he dealt with “walking through the valley of the shadow of death” for so many years, but especially in the last few months. Al told me in 2008, about the remodeling of his office building and that he “didn’t want to die without getting one last deduction from dear old Uncle Sam.” Of course Al didn’t die, until 3 years later.

I remember during a very lively visit with him in the hospice house in Strongsville in 2008, he was showing off his 12 miniature beefeaters amongst some flowers, reminiscing about driving a V.W. on the autobahn in Germany (he liked his cars), and smiling about his twice a year visit to Brew Kettle with Dick Wittig and Pastor Don, smiling over joining the “86” club with Dick, Pastor Don, John Smeets and others, and then getting serious, teary eyed, and saying “I have a good feeling. I’d rather be there than here.” Just then a speckled fawn appeared outside his sliding glass door and Al smiled saying, “Looky, looky, a great world. A great world.” That 86 club this year becomes the 89 club.

I have learned much from our Divinity “89” club over the past 8 years. Most of all, they’ve taught us by example how to give thanks for a life well lived and how to face death with anticipation and faith. “I have a good feeling. I’d rather be there than here.”

As we make our Lenten journey to the death of Good Friday, let us anticipate Easter morning with the faith of our “89” club. But to get to the “there” of resurrection, we must first pass through the “here” of suffering and death.

May God bless you on your journey from “here” to “there.”

Pastor Doug

Thursday, March 10, 2011

Psalm 46:10 – *Be still and know that I am God.*

This has been my favorite verse for a very long time now. It has been with me and comes to mind on many different occasions. It has been a very real source of strength and surrounds me with the comfort of God’s love.

This verse came to mind a long time ago, when I was planning a trip with my Divinity Family to Israel, Egypt, and Greece. It was when terrorists were beginning to make appearances by exploding airplanes. This was a trip that I dreamed of taking one day, and now my family did not want me to go. I called and talked with Pastor Don who was the guide for this trip. He said “pray about it.” I did, and that is when this verse came to mind. I went on the trip and had one of the most wonderful experiences of my life.

Some years later, a dear friend of mine gave me the book “Psalms Now.” It is the Psalms in modern language. May some of these verses be as comforting to you as they are to me.

Our great God is still our Refuge and Strength;
He is ever aware of our problems and fears.
Thus we have no business doubting Him,
Even though the earth is convulsed in tragedy
Or its human masses are threatened
By nuclear annihilation . . .

Just look about you; reading the pages of history.
Refresh your flagging spirits with the reminder
Of His great feats, throughout the ages
And you will again hear Him speaking:

God is here among us; He continues to be our Refuge and Strength.

Prayer: Father, help me to know and feel your presence in all circumstances of my life. May your love continue to sustain me in all my experiences so that my heart and my mind will be still and know that you are God. Amen.

Loretta Cross

Friday, March 11, 2011

Proverbs 16:20-23 - *Whoever gives heed to instruction prospers, and blessed is he who trusts in the Lord. The wise in heart are called discerning, and pleasant words promote instruction. Understanding is a fountain of life to those who have it, but folly brings punishment to fools. A wise man's heart guides his mouth, and his lips promote instruction.*

When I buy something new that requires assembly or instruction on how to use it, I like to read the manual front to back before I begin. Not so much with my husband. He would rather just have at it. Quite sure that he can figure out how it goes together, or how it runs. This has led to some very lively if not loud discussions.

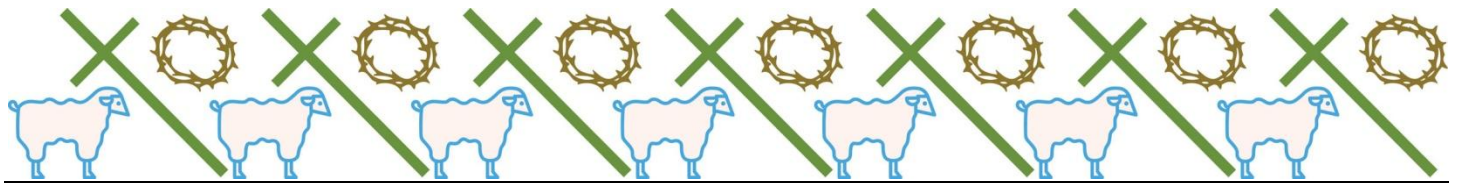
Now a days user manuals are written in more than one language. Sometimes English is a little hard to understand: Press PRESET EQ to select CUSTOM mode. While CUSTOM is displayed, press DIGITAL TUNING </> to cycle among displayed bass- and treble-range levels. While BAS or TRE is displayed, adjust VOLM/CTL to set the associated gain between -10-+10. What?

God's instruction manual, the Bible, is much easier to understand. He even sent us an expert, His Son, to help clarify things. But, you must be willing to open the book and read it. If you still have questions, there is always a pastor, a bible study, a friend, who can help you make sense of it.

Knowing what the instructions say will always make the job go smoother.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, Your instructions have given me rules and guidelines to follow as I travel this journey of life. Your words give me comfort, lift me up, and bring me joy. Amen.

Marty Hof



Saturday, March 12, 2011

Ephesians 5:8-17 - *For once you were darkness, but now in the Lord you are light. Live as children of light — for the fruit of the light is found in all that is good and right and true. Try to find out what is pleasing to the Lord. Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them. For it is shameful even*

to mention what such people do secretly; but everything exposed by the light becomes visible, for everything that becomes visible is light. Therefore it says, "Sleeper, awake! Rise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you." Be careful then how you live, not as unwise people but as wise, making the most of the time, because the days are evil. So do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is.

"Walking as Children of the Light"

Reflection: My husband and I have never been big on hiking. But when our guidebook raved about sunrise over the Himalayas, we put that on the must-do list for our trip to Nepal and headed to Sarangot, a small foothill outside the town Pokhara. We reached Sarangot at dusk.

The next morning at 5 am, we awoke to total darkness. As we bustled through town with cameras in hand, I noticed the calm, gentle way the Nepalese people greeted the morning. It was enchanting, but not to be deterred, we joined the stream of tourists charging up to the lookout point.

The top was crowded when we arrived, but after 10 minutes of cold fidgeting, the assembled group gave up. "The cloud cover is too heavy," one said, scowling. Then one by one they scurried down the hill to the next item on their sightseeing agendas. I noticed a small Nepalese boy still crouched on his haunches... He must know something we don't I thought. I decided to wait with him.

The boy and I did not have to wait long. Moments later a tiny stream of golden light burned through one dense cloud, then another...the morning sun peeked around the side of the mountain, miles above where I'd expected it to be.

Nothing I'd seen before prepared me for the moment the clouds withdrew with bowed heads, and the majestic Himalayas were unveiled before, around, and above me. I sat in awe, not breathing, not daring to look away, certain that God had placed me here at the backdoor of Earth to show me what Heaven really looks like.

I certainly got the message. Never again will I rush a sunrise.

(Excerpt taken from "50 Things That Really Matter", pg 95)

Prayer of the day: Lord of light, our busy lives leave much to be desired when we get caught up in everyday, trivial things and fail to slow our pace . . . to even chance a gaze in your direction. Yours is the way, the truth, *and the light* in this darkened world. May we remember to never rush the sunrise in our lives again as we look in awe at you working before, around, and in us. Amen.

Laura Ramsey

Monday, March 14, 2011

Luke 12:15 - *Be on your guard against all kinds of greed. A man's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions.*

In the past few years as the economy has taken a downturn many people have experienced what it is like to have less rather than yearly adding to their abundance of money and possessions. In Luke is an admonition for all of us that life is more than how much we possess. There is nothing wrong with desiring a good job, a nice home, money for travel, and all the technological gadgets which are available to us. What the Lord is really saying is more and more possessions are not the key to happiness and should not be the major goal of a Christian. I think back in my own life and times I thought if I only could achieve a certain goal then I would be really happy. When it happened I found it really did not bring the joy which I had imagined.

It is really quite simple if we heed the Lord's advice and love Him and also our neighbor. Instead of greed and envy of others, living a life of service and praise to the Lord is how the Lord desires us to live our lives. In Corinthians 10:31 the Lord remind us "Therefore,... whatever you do, do all to the glory of God." This is really liberating knowing that if we use the gifts the Lord has given us and use them to God's glory we will experience the "peace that passes all understanding." I am sure you have also experienced it that many times people who have

very little are happy in their lives. We pray that the Lord would grant each of us to live a life focused on service rather than accumulating an abundance of possessions.

Prayer: Dear Lord, take our lives and fill us with peace and happiness in serving others. Keep our emphasis on possessions in check so that we do not lose our way. May this Lenten season be a time of reflection on how we use the gifts You have given us. Amen

Mary O'Rourke

Tuesday, March 15, 2011

John 8:12 - *I am the Light of the world. So, if you follow me, you won't be stumbling through the darkness, for living light will flood your path.*

For years, John and I sang in a quartet with two other members of our church. Our favorite anthem was entitled "The Light of the World". The words grew from the above text. It was an inspiration to us all. I always talk about singing because it has been a part of my life since I was a teenager. It is a joy to give to God with our voices and to share that love with others.

It doesn't only have to be a singing voice. It can be your speaking voice as well; one of invitation, of welcoming, a voice of call to service, one of thankfulness and praise.

And it can go further than voice. It can go to only listening. That is the way Stephen Ministers serve - - they listen. Listen to God's voice calling you to sing, to speak in praise and love or just to listen. Whichever way you are called, you serve. Just answer your call.

Prayer: Gracious God, help us hear your call and help us answer! Amen

Judy Jacobson

Wednesday, March 16, 2011

Psalms 40:5 - *O Lord my God, you have done many miracles for us. Your plans for us are too numerous to list. If I tried to recite all your wonderful deeds, I would never come to the end of them.*

As life moves forward so many things that I want to do, or accomplish. Always waiting and watching for that "perfect time". Have I waited, too long, or is it too late? Has time run out for my serving the Lord? Does it take too much time and effort, will I be able to serve and be happy in the responsibility?

Miracles in our every day living can be misread as luck, or just in the right place at the right time. But if we stop and really observe and "smell the roses," we can see that the miracles are there to give us strength and courage, in our faith journey. Each of us can be at a different place in this faith journey, but by sharing together we can make the journey rewarding and as we take up our cross and follow Jesus, the journey is then made easier.

Sign up to serve the Lord here at the church; not for the Pastor, or the music director, or Sunday school teacher, **but because Jesus is here in this place. Jesus is the reason** to attend worship, take communion, participate in the Christian fellowship, rejoice as we baptize, give to those that are in need, pray for each other, visit the sick and shut-ins, help with a funeral meal, welcome and encourage the youth, sing in the choir, ring bells in the bell choir, take communion to our shut ins, be a Stephens minister, and the list goes on and on...serve with joy! Jesus is counting on you and on me, He has no other plan. There is still time! It is not too late!

Prayer: Jesus Sweet Jesus, encourage each of us to reach out with the message of Your love and grace. Amen.

Marilyn Sesock

Thursday, March 17, 2011

Luke 12:32 - *Do not be afraid little flock, for it is your father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.*

In St. Luke's account, Jesus speaks first to the disciples and then to the many thousands of the multitudes. His message seems to be, don't sweat the small stuff. What is the small stuff about which Jesus directs us not to worry? We'd likely put some of the things Jesus mentions in the category of pretty big stuff. If we glance through chapter 12 quickly, we see warnings about things to avoid and warnings about those things we should not worry

Do not be afraid of those who kill the body and after that can do no more. Fear him who, after the killing of the body, has power to throw you into hell. Are not five sparrows sold for two pennies? Yet, not one of them is forgotten by God. Don't be afraid, you are worth more than many sparrows. When you are brought before synagogues, rulers and authorities do not worry about how you will defend yourselves or what you are to say.

Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; a man's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions. Do not worry about your life, what you will eat, or about your body, what you will wear. Life is more than food and the body more than clothes. And, do not set your heart on what you will eat or drink, do not worry about it, for the pagan world runs after all such things.

God must surely look at life differently than I do. Jesus' argument is, I know you intimately. I know how many hairs are on your head. I care for the sparrows, but you are far more important than many sparrows. If I care for the grass of the field, which only lasts for a summer, will I not care for you, O you of little faith? Jesus tells us that his Father knows that we need food, clothing, and water, so we needn't be anxious about them. Yes, we need those items but we are not to be anxious or worry about them. To worry, to be anxious means to have extreme unease of brooding fear.

For me, the two big phrases in this chapter are; I tell you my friends, fear him who, after the killing of the body, has power to throw you into hell. The second is, instead seek his (God's) kingdom and all these things shall be yours as well. This life is merely a prelude to the life that is to come and that's the life that is more important. It deserves our focus. Everything else is only small stuff. If we focus on God's love, then we, as the little flock, need not fear, for it is our Father's good pleasure to give us the kingdom. God does not set up obstacles to His kingdom, but just the opposite. It's God's pleasure, God's joy, God's plan to give us the kingdom. That's what God wants to do. That's still ahead of us. That's the prize. That's why we don't have to sweat the small stuff.

Prayer: My focus on your love is deflected by my earthly concerns, O Lord Jesus. Give me the strength and the will to focus on your love for me and for the life that you offer me through your Son, Jesus, the Christ. Amen.

Bud Hesterman

Friday, March 18, 2011

Philippians 4: 6-7 - *Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.*

In these uncertain times, many of us are going through stressful situations. Mine started on October 2, 2010 when I fell and broke my ankle. Getting to the hospital, having two surgeries and being back home by October 5 was the easy part. Learning to use a walker and going through the daily needs became stressful. However, things fell apart more when on October 18 I received a phone call from the hospital telling me that my job had been terminated. Health insurance would be gone at the end of the month and short-term disability had already stopped.

After the initial shock, panic set in as I could barely get around the house, let alone look for a job. Unemployment would not take place until I was able to work again, which turned out to be Thanksgiving. Scared and worried about the future, I found the Lord and I had many conversations. When I finally realized that if I left everything in His hands, even in the bleakest moments, miracles were there to support me and give me what I needed.

I am still not sure of the future as I still do not have a job. However, I take my concerns to the Lord and He has provided for my household. So I leave as much worrying in His hands as my humanness can and do what I can to live as He would want me to as I await my next job He wants me to do.

Prayer: Dear Lord, Let me hear You when You call, let me see Your hand in my life, let me give my concerns to You knowing in Your hands all will be well. Thank you for all You have given me. Thank you for the support of family and friends. Thank you for all of my possessions. Thank you for Your love and knowing You will never leave me. In Your name, Amen.

Joyce Tallman

Saturday, March 19, 2011

Matthew 26:29 - *I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it anew with you in My Father's kingdom*

While eating their last meal together, Jesus gave the bread and wine of the first Lord's Supper to His disciples

For Jesus, the road ahead led to Gethsemane, with its agony and bloody sweat; trials with injustice and abuse; and crucifixion on Calvary, which included being forsaken by God, and death.

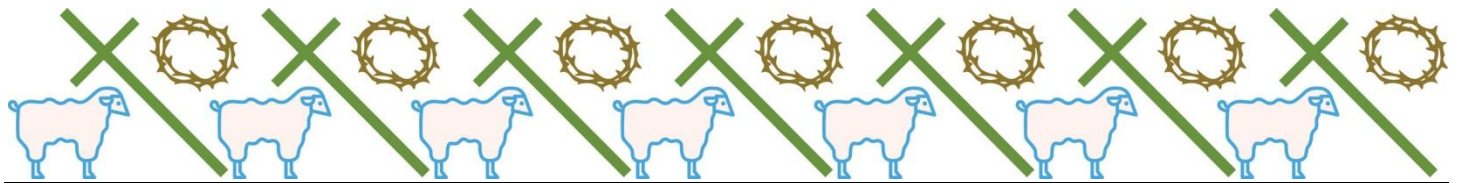
These events would shake the disciples' faith. Jesus knew. He revealed Judas as the betrayer. He knew Peter would deny Him and that the others would abandon Him. Jesus knew God would bring Him back from the dead, open the way of salvation, and reconcile Him with His friends.

But knowing is one thing; living is another. Jesus knew pain accompanied this payment. So, Jesus told the disciples His blood would provide forgiveness of sins. He spoke of their reunion in heaven, a new day in His Father's kingdom.

This vision gave Jesus joy and comfort. Beyond Calvary and because of it, Jesus will unite His own in glory. We will drink the cup of the new covenant together and rejoice in His victory. God's promises are true.

Prayer: Jesus give me hope in the promise of Your kingdom. Amen

*From: A Living Hope
Submitted by Loretta Cross*



Monday, March 21, 2011

Mark 8:33 - *But turning and seeing his disciples, he rebuked Peter, and said. "Get behind me, Satan! For you are not on the side of God, but of men."*

At some point, most of us have said something we've later come to regret. The pain of ill-spoken words can linger for years. Why do we say such hurtful things? Like Peter, we can speak from ignorance. Such words can come in moments of anger. Sometimes we are striking back at someone who has hurt us.

Jesus' response to Peter's misspoken rebuke is both immediate and pointed. He doesn't downplay Peter's mistake. He wants Peter and the other disciples to understand. It must have been an uncomfortable moment, but it put Peter back on the right track.

When I say something out of line, I want to be told. I can only make amends when I know I've hurt someone. I cannot take the words back, but I can ask for forgiveness. Such confrontations can be uncomfortable, but they are necessary for us to continue relationship with one another. Jesus did die on a cross so that Peter and those of us who are like Peter might be forgiven. In the power of that forgiveness, we can rebuke and be rebuked and continue as brothers and sisters in Christ.

Prayer: Lord Jesus, give me the strength to forgive others, when they hurt me and the courage to admit when I've misspoken. Amen.

Marge Braithwaite

Tuesday, March 22, 2011

Matthew: 6:8 - *Your Father knows what you need before you ask him.*

When Alberta was invited to join a prayer group, she was anxious about saying yes. She didn't think she was very good at praying. While others sounded eloquent, weaving words into profound prayers of the heart, Alberta felt tongue-tied and panicky at the thought of praying aloud. She even worried whether her silent prayers were good enough. Although Alberta wanted to be "good at praying", she wasn't sure how to do it.

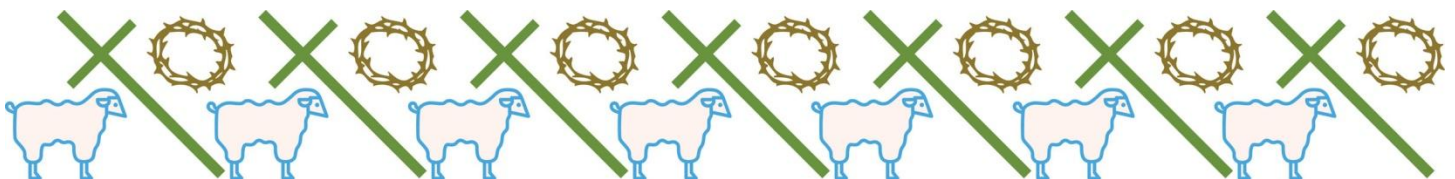
As Jesus teaches us to pray, he invited us to be simple, honest, and direct, talking with God from our hearts. We need not worry about whether we are using the right words, or whether we are being eloquent or profound. We pray not to impress God, but simply to talk with God, as a child talks to a loving parent who listens patiently and understands what the child is trying to say, even when the words don't come easily.

In the Lord's Prayer, Jesus offers us a model prayer; naming all of our life's needs and offering those needs to God, who already knows what they are. We are invited to pray in confidence, for God listens to us with love, acceptance, and understanding.

Christ in Our Home, May 11, 2004

Prayer: Loving God, help us to trust you for all that we need, we give thanks for our prayer ministers, and their prayers ascending each day for those that are in need. Amen

Marilyn Sesock



Wednesday, March 23, 2011

Mark 4: 11-13 - *Jesus told them. "The secret to the kingdom of God has been given to you. But to those on the outside everything is said in parables so that, they may be ever seeing but never perceiving, and ever hearing but never understanding; otherwise they might turn and be forgiven!" Then Jesus said to them, "Don't you understand this parable? How then will you understand any parable?"*

Have you ever played the game of telephone? The first person whispers something to the next person in line. He then whispers what he heard to the next person, and so it goes down the line to the last person who says what they heard out loud. What the last person says seldom bears any resemblance to what you said to begin with.

It is human nature; we hear what we want to hear or what we think we should hear, instead of listening to what is really being said.

Jesus encountered this same problem over & over again with His own disciples. He would tell them a parable and they never got it, so he would have to explain it.

When Jesus says; "The secret of the kingdom of God has been given to you." He should have followed that up with: I'M SITTING RIGHT IN FRONT OF YOU! I wonder if even that would have worked. What's the old saying about not seeing to forest for the trees?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, open my eyes and my ears to your saving words. Amen

Marty Hof

Thursday, March 24, 2011

John 15:16 - *You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide.*

Picked for the Team.

I went to a one room school for my elementary education. Just one teacher taught all the eight grades. Imagine that! The school house was out in the country at the intersection of two county roads. I had nearly two miles to walk to school. There were usually about 25 students enrolled. Recess time was special. The teacher would usually appoint two older students as captains of the teams. These captains would get to choose their team, one by one. I can still remember the joy and delight in being picked for the team. I was wanted. I was expected to help the team. I was determined to be a key player to win the game.

This experience came to mind when I was ordained into the Christian ministry of Word and Sacrament on June 13, 1948. Dr. Liefeld, my favorite Seminary Professor, preached my ordination sermon and based it on the text that I quoted above. YOU DID NOT CHOOSE ME, BUT I CHOSE YOU. Those words have meant a lot to me through the years of my ministry. Jesus Christ, the Lord of the church, picked me for His Team. He wanted me to bear fruit for His Kingdom. Me, the little farm boy, educated in a one room school was being called to minister in His name. What a gift! What a challenge! What a feeling of being wanted and needed! Many times in my ministry when I felt inadequate or discouraged I would recall these words and found some renewed sense of being wanted and needed for His ministry. These words meant I had the Lord's backing, His blessing and His Presence!

As you read this devotion, read the text again and have it apply to you. Know that you have been picked for His team. You have been called to bear fruit for His Kingdom. Your relationship with Jesus is just not based on your choice, but His choice. He has chosen you to be a disciple of His. Privileged to join Him in the high calling of Christian ministry! Rejoice in it. Feel empowered to serve with Him.

Prayer: Dear Lord Jesus! Help me to believe and accept the call to be your disciple. To believe that I am a member of your team and that I can indeed bear fruit for Your Kingdom. Amen

Pastor Don Hesterman

Friday, March 25, 2011

Matthew: 3:2 - *turn from your sins and turn to God, because the kingdom of Heaven is near.*

It is such a Heavenly day as I write this. The sky is clear, the sun is shining, the air is cool and brisk, the trees are waving hello to me as the wind blows through them, and I can feel God's wonderful love inside of me and all around me. It is almost like Heaven decided to drop in for a visit here on Earth.

I truly do believe in Heaven. Why do I believe in it? I believe in it because I have seen so much of it even though I am still here on Earth. I have seen it in the glorious sunrises God gives us each day. I have seen it in the starry, moonlit nights God gives us each night. I have seen it shining in a baby's eyes and heard it singing through a child's laugh. I have watched it flowing from another's smiling face. I have felt it in every hug I have ever been given. I have listened to it in every kind word ever spoken to me. I have read it in beautiful, uplifting words and sung it in glorious, heart touching songs. I have seen it looking up at me from a dog's eyes and watched it shared from happy hearts and loving souls. I have seen that bit of Heaven that lies in all of us and done my best to share my own bit of Heaven with the world everyday.

Even though you are still here on Earth for awhile, don't ignore the Heaven around you or the Heaven within you. Life is full of Heavenly moments and Heavenly blessings. Rejoice in every single one of them. Take them into your heart and invite them into your soul. Nourish and grow that bit of Heaven that lies within you and then share it with everyone you meet. Bless this world with your love, joy, peace, kindness, and help to create a little more Heaven here on Earth.

Author unknown

Prayer: Blessed Savior help us to love one another and to open our hearts to those that are searching for Your love and grace. Let our light shine in the darkness of the cross bringing us to eternal life. Amen.

Marilyn Sesock

Saturday, March 26, 2011



Matthew 25:34-36; 40 NIV - *"Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.' 'I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me.'"*

During Lent we spent time thinking about Jesus and His life here, His teaching, His suffering and death for our sins. Sometimes we think about what we should give up or sacrifice for all He has done for us. This scripture reminds us we are to serve others especially those in need. Our church gives many opportunities to serve others like donating to the food pantry, visiting the home bound with tapes or Communion, greeting members and visitors, helping serve Communion, or helping on an usher team. These are ways we can show Jesus' love to others.

Prayer: Dear heavenly Father, we thank you for sending Jesus to teach us, lead us and give His life for us. Help us to reach out to those in need in our church and our daily lives and share the love of our Lord with them. Help us to reflect your love in our world.

Dianne Mims

Monday, March 28, 2011

Revelation 22 :11-12 - "Behold, I am coming soon, bringing my recompense, to repay every one for what he has done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end."

The book of Revelation has always been doomsday to me. After attending Wednesday morning Bible study I have learned this is not meant as the end of the world. I must say before attending Bible study I did not fear the "doomsday" belief, as I knew as a Christian and a child of God I would live on forever with my Savior.

This study has taught me God is not going to destroy the earth that He has created. He will come to live with us, the Lord Jesus will walk among us and we will see His Glory!! He will renew the earth we humans have taken advantage of, restore it to its natural beauty and make it clean. All humans will have peace, live in harmony and love one another as God intended.

Revelation should not be feared for it fore tells of hope, God's love for all creation, most especially His love and plans for us.

Come Lord Jesus!

Prayer: Father of all creation, I Thank You for the opportunity to study Your Word and to learn of Your plans for the future. I pray you find me a good servant; I await Your rewards with hope, love, and patience. Father, I Love You and await Your Son's return to this earth. Amen.

Linda Blunk

Tuesday, March 29, 2011

Matthew 5:43-44 - Jesus says, "You have heard it said, 'love you neighbor and hate your enemy. But I tell you: Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven."

This scripture is sometimes difficult to accept, especially when we are suffering at the hands of an enemy. How do we love someone who is inflicting pain and suffering on us? How can we pray for them? Forgive them?

Yes, it is easy to love those who love us, but how do we transcend the human and do what Jesus asks us to do and be like our Father?

It is only through prayer that we are able to overcome the temptation to hate others, to love our enemies. It may be difficult, but with God's guidance, we do have the power to seek and find peace in our relationships and ultimately within ourselves and therefore with God!

Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank you for the many blessings of this life. Thank you especially for my family and friends. I ask for your guidance today. Please help me forgive those who have hurt me. Help me to be a beacon of Christian Love to all those I encounter during my life here on earth. In Your Son, Jesus' Name. Amen.

Marti Stephan

Wednesday, March 30, 2011

For God so loved
the world that he gave
his only Son.



John 3:16, NRSV

John 3:16 – For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life.

It's a 26 word parade of hope: beginning with God, ending with life, and urging us to do the same. If you know nothing of the Bible, start here. If you know everything about the Bible, return here. We all need the reminder.

The heart of the human problem is the heart of the human. And God's treatment is prescribed in John 3:16. It's more than a verse, it's the answer.

He loves.
He gave.
We believe.
We live.

Words from my favorite author, Max Lucado.

Prayer: Almighty and ever-living God, increase in us the gifts of faith, hope, and love, and that we may obtain what you promise, make us love what you command, through your Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen.

Diane Conroy

Thursday, March 31, 2011

Psalm 23 - *The LORD is my shepherd, I shall not want. ²He makes me lie down in green pastures; he leads me beside still waters; he restores my soul. He leads me in right paths for his name's sake. Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I fear no evil; for you are with me; your rod and your staff — they comfort me. You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; you anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the LORD my whole life long.*

I am thankful for all my fellow Christian brothers and sisters, Via de Cristo movement, choirs, and all people that believe and worship God. I think of saints that have made the journey to be with our Lord and heavenly Father. John Nelson went to be with our Lord in February, 2011. John was like a father to the Rettig Family. John and his wife Alice were good hikers and good hike leaders. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me. John led trips and hikes all over the United States and Canada, to see God's creation and beauty. John and Alice also worshiped with my family on special days, and also attended special family events. May God take care of John till we someday meet in heaven.

Prayer: Dear Lord, as I travel and walk, I know that you are with me, even when I go down the wrong path, you guide me back. I know that someday I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever and ever, and be with all the saints and loved ones. Peace and love forever and ever. Amen.

Bill Rettig

Friday, April 1, 2011

“God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change – the courage to change the things I can – and the wisdom to know the difference.”

I have used this saying throughout my adult life. To use the “serenity to accept things that I cannot change” is difficult to do. I could not be serene as I watched cancer eat up my brother from the inside. Nor could I be serene as my beloved pet dog succumbed to old age and death.

The “courage part” was to be there for my brother and support him on his quest of chemo and radiation. It took all the courage I had to lay down a soft blanket for my dog so she could be comfortable. To watch the pain in both cases was difficult but I did try to help.

The wisdom part was when I gave up completely! I could do no more and I knew that I finally turned them both over to my God. Then things went back to “serenity” again! With His grace, there was peace for all of us.

Prayer: My dear Lord, please help me to do my part when I am supposed to. And to pull back and let you finish your part! Amen.

Sandy Cramer

Saturday, April 2, 2011

Luke 23:46 - *Then Jesus, crying with a loud voice, said, "Father, into your hands I commend my spirit." Having said this, he breathed his last.*

These words tell us, how God loved us, and all the people in the world. He sent His beloved Son down to earth to teach us how to live, and He died in our stead, and took all of our sins, and the sins of the whole world upon Himself. He paid the price for our sins, not with gold or silver, but with His holy innocent precious blood. Jesus was our substitute. We have forgiveness of sins, and through His bitter suffering, and death, you and I, and all believers are heirs of heaven.

Prayer: Dear heavenly Father, we pray keep us all in the true faith, and keep us faithful to you till the end. We ask this all in Jesus' holy name, thy will be done. Amen.

Bob Maas

Monday, April 4, 2011

Exodus 20:16 - *You shall not give false testimony against your neighbor.*

Truth

What is truth? Webster defines truth as the quality or fact of being true, honest, sincere, accurate, etc. More specifically, it is in agreement with an established standard or rule. For example, if you ask three different people what the temperature is, you will get three different answers. But if you want the truth, check the thermometer yourself.

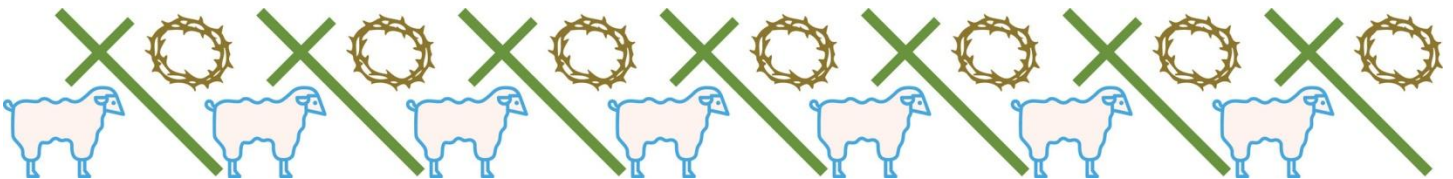
There are all kinds of truth out there. As someone so aptly put it: "There are three truths: my truth, your truth and THE truth." The definition of truth as used here is God's word, the Bible—the pillar and foundation of belief in absolute truth, where hundreds of references speak words of truth always in love.

Godly truth is determined by God's word (God-centered), the Ten Commandments in particular. Worldly truth (self-centered) is determined by the culture. All truth is relevant; Bible truth never changes—it is the same "yesterday and today and forever." Worldly truth is the opposite; it is in constant change. Nothing is absolute—anything goes. Whenever these differences are ignored, negative consequences are sure to follow.

The 9th Commandment says, "You shall not give false testimony, against your neighbor." (And person with whom you come in contact) Do not be disloyal toward others by withholding or distorting the truth with intent to deceive. Remember, God loves every person equally. In the words of J. Grant Howard, "Truth is not limited to the Scriptures, but it is limited by the Scriptures."

Prayer: Lord Jesus, may we be guided by your truth so that the salt and light in our lives will be acceptable in your sight.

Dan Taddeo



Tuesday, April 5, 2011

Psalm 47:5-9 - *God has gone up with a shout, the LORD with the sound of a trumpet. Sing praises to God, sing praises; sing praises to our King, sing praises. For God is the king of all the earth; sing praises with a psalm. God is king over the nations; God sits on his holy throne. The princes of the peoples gather as the people of the God of Abraham. For the shields of the earth belong to God; he is highly exalted.*

Through all of our music groups, Children's Choir, Bell Choir, Adult Vocal Choir, *Chosen*, Arts for Action, solos, Via de Cristo, and all music groups for all functions at the church. This year the Adults Vocal Choir early season had songs like: *He Never Let Me Down; Built on a Rock; In His Everlasting Arms* and a few other powerful songs. Many years ago a pastor taught me that singing brings a message to God's people, you never know who you are going to touch with your singing. Singing lifts your spirits and gives hope and grace with God's mercy touching many lives. So let your light shine all over the world carrying hope and faith.

Prayer: Dear Lord, keep us singing to your people as we use our gifts that you have given us. Let our light shine into the world until the day we are called home to be with you in your kingdom. Amen.

Bill Rettig

Wednesday, April 6, 2011

Matthew 6:9

The Lord's Prayer

I cannot say OUR if my religion has no room for others and their needs.

I cannot say FATHER if I do not demonstrate this kind of loving relationship in my daily living.

I cannot say WHO ART IN HEAVEN if all my interests and pursuits are in earthly things.

I cannot say HALLOWED BE THY NAME if I, who am called by His name, am not holy.

I cannot say THY KINGDOM COME if I am not willing to give up my own sovereignty and accept the righteous reign of God.

I cannot say THY WILL BE DONE if I am unwilling or resentful of having His will in my life.

I cannot say ON EARTH AS IT IS IN HEAVEN unless I am truly willing to give my life here and now to His service.

I cannot say GIVE US THIS DAY OUR DAILY BREAD without expending effort for it or by ignoring the genuine need of others.

I cannot say FORGIVE US OF OUR TRESPASSES AS WE FORGIVE OTHERS if I continue to harbor a grudge against others or anyone.

I cannot say LEAD US NOT INTO TEMPTATION if I choose to remain in a situation where I am likely to be tempted.

I cannot say DELIVER US FROM EVIL if I am not prepared in the spiritual realm with the weapon of prayer.

I cannot say FOR THINE IS THE KINGDOM if I do not give the King the disciplined obedience of a loyal subject.

I cannot say FOR THINE IS THE POWER if I fear for what my friends or neighbors might say.

I cannot say FOR THINE IS THE GLORY if I seek my own glory first.

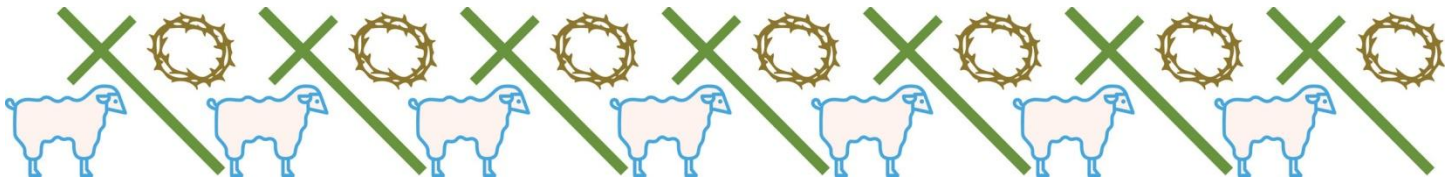
I cannot say FOREVER if I am too anxious about each day's affairs.

I cannot say AMEN unless I can honestly say (cost what it may), "This is my prayer."

— *Ruth Bartner and Lela Wegman*

Prayer: God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference. Amen

Reinhold Niebuhr
Submitted by Dan Taddeo



Thursday, April 7, 2011

Matthew 11:28-30 - *Come to me all you that are weary and carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yolk upon you and learn from me" for I am gentle and humble at heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.*

How to do Quiet Time.

God extends to us, in our times of quietness, the opportunity simply to be in the time of the Divine Presence.. .to sit at the feet of the Lord and listen, to allow the spirit to work within us the changes that need to be wrought. It's an invitation to grace. Activity. Grace accepts. Grace loves. Grace waits.

When we still our shallow, babbling hearts in the presence of Almighty God, we discover a deep and enduring peace, a silent strength that enables us not to do, but to become. And then, in the quietness of our souls, we hear the whispered invitation, the blessed word: "Come . . . and I will give you rest.

Prayer: Dear Lord, help us to find that quiet place in times of stress and worry, and may we heed your words. "Come and I will give you rest. Amen.

Excerpt from "Beside a Quiet Stream".
Submitted by Noreen Patterson

Friday, April 8, 2011

Psalms 119:114 - *You are my hiding place and my shield; I hope in Your Word.*

In my own life, I have always relied and depended on my Lord. When I've called on Him for help he always comes to my rescue, because I love and trust Him. At times I have been so distracted and not known what to do next. He has lifted me up and borne me away into His loving embrace. I pray I will never forsake Him and that I may remain faithful to His Word. I know He is always there for me.

To quote from the popular hymn in the ELW; # 596,

“When darkness veils His lovely face
I rest on His unchanging grace.
In every high and stormy gale,
My anchor holds within the veil.
On Christ the solid rock I stand;
All other ground is sinking sand.”

Prayer: Gracious, Heavenly Father, we thank You for being with us at all times, in Jesus Name, Amen.

Larry W. Jones

Saturday, April 9, 2011

John 6:32-35, 40 - *Then Jesus said to them, "Very truly, I tell you, it was not Moses who gave you the bread from heaven, but it is my Father who gives you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is that which comes down from heaven and gives life to the world." They said to him, "Sir, give us this bread always. Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty. . . This is indeed the will of my Father, that all who see the Son and believe in him may have eternal life; and I will raise them up on the last day."*

We come and ask for forgiveness and repent for sins. We believe and partake of Holy Communion, bread and wine, which is the body and blood. In the beginning God created the heavens and earth. God called the firmament – heaven. I also think of the Church Year from birth to heaven if you are a believer. I do a lot of hiking and walking through our National Parks and Metro-parks, toward the end of winter, cold, dark, gloomy, and dirty. All of a sudden there's new life and buds, trees, flowers, birds, and all other living things from God. Then you know that God is real and up in heaven.

Prayer: Wonderful God feed us with bread from heaven that will give us eternal life forever and ever. Heavenly Father, help us to go through this 2011 Lenten Journey and rejoice Easter morning. Amen.

Bill Rettig

Monday, April 11, 2011

Matthew 19:27-28 - *Then Peter said in reply, "Look, we have left everything and followed you. What then will we have?" Jesus said to them, "Truly I tell you, at the renewal of all things, when the Son of Man is seated on the throne of his glory, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel."*

Peter, always so practical. Here's what he's really saying: “Lord, when we get to the end will it have been worth it to follow You?” And Jesus reassures him with a gigantic yes!

How it must have broken Jesus' heart to know His treasured followers would be martyred one day. Perhaps Peter had an inkling about this too. We see he wanted desperately to know whether life really went on eternally. The Lord went a step further and related that Peter would not only be with Christ, the Son of Man, eternally, but he would have work to do once he arrived in heaven.

None of us will just occupy space in heaven. Our God is always productive. And this job to which Jesus refers, that of judging the twelve tribes of Israel, will be given to the disciples.

Have you ever, speculated as to what you might do in heaven? Well, don't worry; it's not going to be anything like what you've done on earth. Your “boss,” after all, will be perfect. And the tasks you perform will be custom-tailored to you. “Job satisfaction” will finally fit into our vernacular.

Prayer: Lord, I can't even imagine what You have in store for me in heaven. Please keep me faithful to complete the duties You've called me to on earth. Amen.

**Excerpt from *Wisdom for Women*
Submitted by Judy Junker**

Tuesday, April 12, 2011

Matthew 7:7-8 -- Ask, and it will be given you; search, and you will find; knock and the door will be opened for you. For everyone who asks receives, and everyone who searches finds, and for everyone who knocks, the door will be opened.

When I was young my family belonged to what is now Good Shepherd Methodist Church on State Road in Parma. At the front of the church is a stained glass window of Jesus standing at the door and knocking. When I was praying about doing a devotional this year, I came across this one in a booklet, *Our Daily Bread*, from December 1-2, 1988-89. It was in that time period when both of my parents died. I know God wants me to share this with you.

“In the book, *Anthology of Jesus*, the author said, ‘Behold, I stand at the door and knock’. Why does Jesus not come in? . . . Has He not power to enter when He will, to breath where he chooses, . . . Why, then does He stand without, knocking at the door of a frail human heart? Could He not break down that door in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, and annihilate that opposing barrier? Yes, but in so doing he would annihilate also the man. What makes me a (human) is just my power to open the door. If I had no power to open or to forbear opening, I would not be responsible. The Divine Spirit might then, indeed, do with me what He will, but I would not be worth His possession. I would be simply as the unconscious stars which He fills with light, as the blind winds which He directs on their way. But if the stars and winds had been enough he would never have said, ‘Let us make man.’ He made me because He meant me to be more than a star. He made me to respond to Himself, to open on His knocking at the door.”

Of all creation, only man can say “yes” or “no” to God.

Prayer: Dear Jesus, the door to my heart is open, please do come in and stay with me into eternity. Amen.

Submitted by Alice Linn

Wednesday, April 13, 2011

Psalm 121 - I lift up my eyes to the hills — from where will my help come? My help comes from the LORD, who made heaven and earth. He will not let your foot be moved; he who keeps you will not slumber. He who keeps Israel will neither slumber nor sleep. The LORD is your keeper; the LORD is your shade at your right hand. The sun shall not strike you by day, nor the moon by night. The LORD will keep you from all evil; he will keep your life. The LORD will keep your going out and your coming in from this time on and forevermore.



The color for Lent is purple.

Forty days of purple,

Forty days of wrestling with decisions:

How will I spend my life?

What will I give up?

What will I take on?

Forty days for the forty years the Israelites wandered in the wilderness:

When will I come home?

Where is my source?

Forty days of fasting,
 Moses becoming a prophet:
 What am I called to do?
 Where will I find the strength to do it?
 Forty days of testing and prayer, Jesus for his ministry:
 What is my purpose?
 Who or what is my authority?
 Forty days for forty hours in a tomb:
 What does it mean to sacrifice?
 What does it mean to repent?
 Forty days of preparation for Easter:
 In the midst of my searching, I will be sought.
 In the despair of my questioning, I will be heard.
 Resurrection waits.

Susan Ross

Prayer: You are always there – loving – immovable in your love – unstoppable in your love – faithful in your love. I’m the one who creates distance from you – from your love. Help me to remember your undying love and care for me, and for all your children, in the name of your great love – Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

Paula McCormick

Thursday, April 14, 2011

Revelation 21:6 – *Everything is finished! I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. I will freely give water from the life-giving fountain to everyone who is thirsty. All who win the victory will be given these blessings. I will be their God, and they will be my people.*

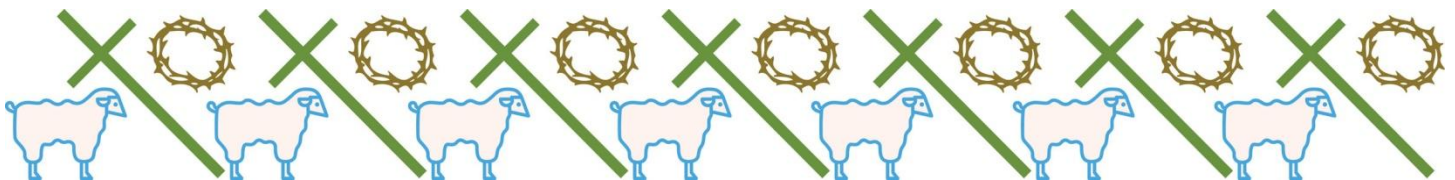


I used to be afraid of reading the Book of Revelation until I learned that its message is not that God plans to destroy our world, but that God’s desire is to heal. It is a book not of judgment but of justice, of radical hope for the world’s future. I found the chapter on “Journey Into the New Jerusalem” in the workbook to be very exciting because it described a vision that is opposite of Armageddon.

The New Jerusalem is an image of beauty and healing, of joy and renewal. The radiant city looks like a bride bedecked with golden streets and a gate of pearls, where suffering and tears – even death are gone forever. It is the fulfillment of God’s promise that I hope to see someday.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank you for giving me the opportunity to attend the Wednesday Bible Study on Revelation. With the guidance of the Holy Spirit, Pastor Doug was able to explain to me the important message in the last book of the Bible --- the power of the Lamb! Thank you being with me through every beginning and every ending. Amen

Fay Maldari



Friday, April 15, 2011

Psalm 79:9 - Help us, O God of our Salvation, for the Glory of Your Name; deliver us, and atone for our sins, for Your name's sake!

In this verse forgiveness of sins is being asked for. It is important to remember as Christians that only God can forgive our sins and that Eternal Life and Salvation comes through faith and belief in Jesus.

This is why we have God come first in our lives. But though we try not to become distracted by bad influences, sin is a clear reality in our lives. Then God has to also return us to a state of wellbeing. He does this by just loving us.

Our God is a forgiving God, as is also shown in this verse. God's Name is mentioned twice in this verse. Jesus asks God for His forgiveness for man, in His Own Name. Jesus asks God that He forgive man for the honor and glory that is due His Name.

If God did not forgive when being asked for forgiveness, He would hardly be the forgiving God that He claims to be.

Prayer: 'All the prophets testify about You that everyone who believes in You receives forgiveness for his sins through Your Name.' Lord, let Your Spirit guide our hearts to repentance of our sin so that we may gratefully receive Your Forgiveness. Amen.

*... from Christ Lutheran Church
Submitted by Larry W. Jones*

Saturday, April 16, 2011

Matthew 17:20 – Nothing will be impossible for you.

It is possible for believers who trust the power of God for their safekeeping to lead a life of taking His promises and finding them to be true.

It is possible to cast our cares upon Him and find peace.

It is possible to have our thoughts and desires purified.

It is possible to see God's Will in every circumstance and to accept it.

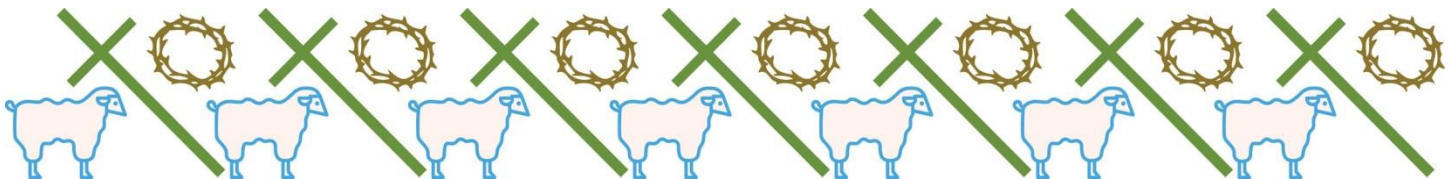
It is possible to become strong by taking refuge in the power of God.

It is possible to call upon God in our time of need and have faith he will respond.

Everything is possible for him who believes. It is not enough to pray for something without having the faith that God will hear us and answer our prayers.

Prayer: Dear God, during this time of Lent, strengthen our faith and commitment to you and your Word. Let us realize that through you and our faith that nothing is impossible. I simply take Him at His Word and praise Him that my prayer has been heard. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Elaine Quint



Monday, April 18, 2011

Matthew 27:30-31 – *And they spat on Him, and took the reed and began to beat Him on the head. And after they had mocked Him, they took His robe and put His garments on Him, and led Him away to crucify Him.*

True Love Means Sacrifice

Years ago the popular movie *Love Story* coined the unforgettable phrase, “Love means never having to say you’re sorry.” What a fallacy, and more is the pity for those who bought into this lie!

For love demands that we always say we’re sorry. How else can relationships be restored?

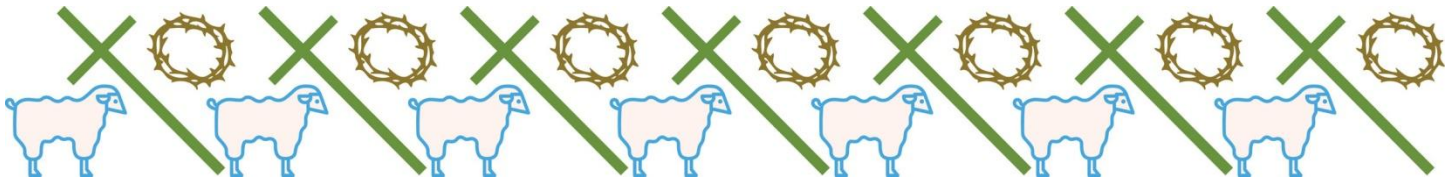
Those two words, “I’m sorry” have the power to keep families and churches together. I once knew a pastor whose refusal to recognize his humanity caused almost half of the church family to seek membership elsewhere. In his eyes he had done nothing wrong, but what harm would have been done to admit the possibility of poor judgment?

To admit fallibility is to make a sacrifice. To have done nothing wrong and to offer the ultimate sacrifice is an act only possible by God’s Son. Jesus’ offering of His body at Calvary gave eternal life to all who believe in Him.

Is there someone from whom you are estranged who is waiting to hear those two little words? Say you’re sorry.

Prayer: Lord, You sacrificed all You had to provide my eternal salvation. Help me today to express true sorrow for my sins. Amen.

*Excerpt from Daily Wisdom for Women
Submitted by Judy Junker*



Tuesday, April 19, 2011

Matthew 5:1-12 - *When Jesus saw the crowds, he went up the mountain; and after he sat down, his disciples came to him. ²Then he began to speak, and taught them, saying:*

³*Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*

⁴*Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.*

⁵*Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.*

⁶*Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.*

⁷*Blessed are the merciful, for they will receive mercy.*

⁸*Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.*

⁹*Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.*

¹⁰*Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*

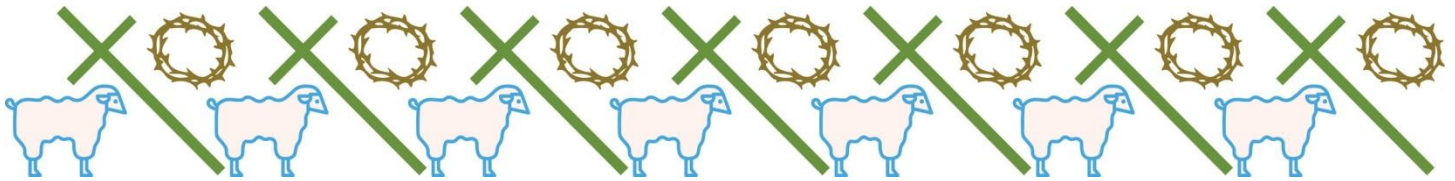
¹¹*Blessed are you when people revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account ¹²Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.*

Last fall, when I heard the Sermon on the Mount delivered by Father Rich Evans (our tour group leader), each beatitude sounded so profound. I felt goose bumps when I realized that those same words were uttered by

Jesus (over 2000 years ago) at the same spot where I was sitting. The scenery was simply breath-taking which added to an unforgettable mountaintop experience.

Prayer: Thank you, dear Lord, for allowing me to go to the Holy Land to follow the footsteps of Jesus. Let this awesome spiritual pilgrimage strengthen and sustain me in my faith journey. Amen

Fay Maldari



Wednesday, April 20, 2011

John 13:2-5 - *The devil had already put it into the heart of Judas son of Simon Iscariot to betray him. And during supper Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he had come from God and was going to God, got up from the table, took off his outer robe, and tied a towel around himself. Then he poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet and to wipe them with the towel that was tied around him.*

In this one paragraph we are given reams of information about the last supper Jesus shared with His disciples. How difficult it must have been for Christ to say good-bye to them, knowing they still didn't fully comprehend His impending death! So Jesus set about to love them. By His example, He wanted to show them that they were called likewise to be servants.

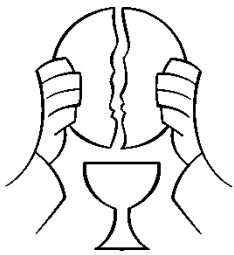
Christ removed his outer garment and then placed the garb of a servant, a towel, about his waist. Then He began washing the dust from the disciples' feet. Usually a servant would administer this kindness to those who came in for the banquet supper. But the God who had created them desired that His followers know the depth of His humility. His gesture made them uncomfortable. When Peter balked as the Lord stooped to wash his feet, Jesus said, "Do you not know what I have done to you? You call Me teacher and Lord; and you are right, for so I am. If I then, the Lord and the teacher, washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet" (John 13:12-14).

Prayer: Lord, help me to cultivate the heart of a true servant. Amen

*Excerpt from Wisdom for Women
Submitted by Judy Junker*

Thursday, April 21, 2011

Romans 5:9 - *Since, therefore, we have now been justified by His blood, much more shall we be saved by Him from the wrath of God.*



**MAUNDY
THURSDAY**

Jesus died for us, to ensure that our sins would be forgiven. His blood was shed so that we would be reconciled with God and not face His anger due to our sinful lives.

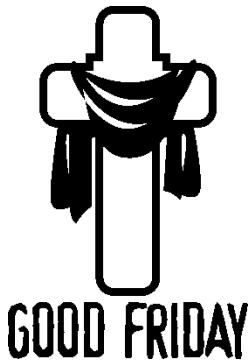
If we sincerely believe that Christ did die for our sins when He shed His blood on the cross, then God will accept this faith in Jesus and not judge us on our lives, but will accept our debt as paid through this faith.

Jesus did not die for Himself, but for us. All that Jesus asked from us was to believe, have faith, in Him and His victory over death.

Prayer: Savior and Lord, we cannot thank You enough for what You have done for us. May we honor You today with our lives because by Your sacrifice we are already saved eternally. Amen.

Larry W. Jones

Friday, April 22, 2011



John 14:6 - Jesus said to him, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.

Details are important to us. So we can sympathize with the disciples in John 14 when Jesus is talking about going ahead of them to the Father to prepare a place for them. Despite His assurances that He’ll return for them and take them to Himself, the disciples get a bit antsy. Thomas says, “Lord, we do not know where You are going. How can we know the way?” Philip adds, “Lord, show us the Father, and it is enough for us.” They’re not asking for much, really, just a few details – a road map, a high-definition photograph, a color brochure – anything! And what is Jesus’ reply? “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.” In other words, “Keep your eyes on the road!”

In the hours and days that follow this scene, Jesus fulfills the meaning of “truth” and turns this world’s understanding of “life” on its head! The disciples are there to see it all. No doubt, they would have preferred the road map or the detailed how-to list rather than the suffering and death of their beloved Teacher. We sure would.

It’s tempting for us to think that Christian lives ought to be predictably free from struggle, sickness and sin. It seems like it would be quite reasonable for God to give us a ten-step self-help plan for curing our separation from Him. But Christian life is rarely a cake-walk, and we’ve failed at our ten-step plan before we’ve even begun. If we’re honest, we realize we can’t even handle the details we’ve been given. Jesus’ words to his disciples are for us too. “I am the way, and the truth, and the life.” The details of our future – in this world and the next – may seem a bit hazy to us, but we are not without glimpses and landmarks, as it were. In God’s Word and in His Sacraments of Holy Baptism and Holy Communion we are joined to Christ’s Death and Resurrection. They point us to the Way – to Jesus Christ. We have been eternally restored to our Father by the forgiveness of our sins won in Jesus’ Death and Resurrection. We keep our eyes on the road – on Him.

Prayer: God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Often our futures seem unclear, and we are bewildered by the changes and chances of life. Despite our preoccupation with details, we often see our good intentions marred by sin. Please forgive us, and through Your Word and Sacraments keep our eyes of faith firmly focused on Jesus. By His keeping every detail of the law, You have saved us. By His suffering and death, bridge our separation from You and by His resurrection give us sure hope in Life Everlasting with You, Amen.

*... from Christ Lutheran Church
Submitted by Larry W. Jones*

Saturday, April 23, 2011



Galatians 2:20 - I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.

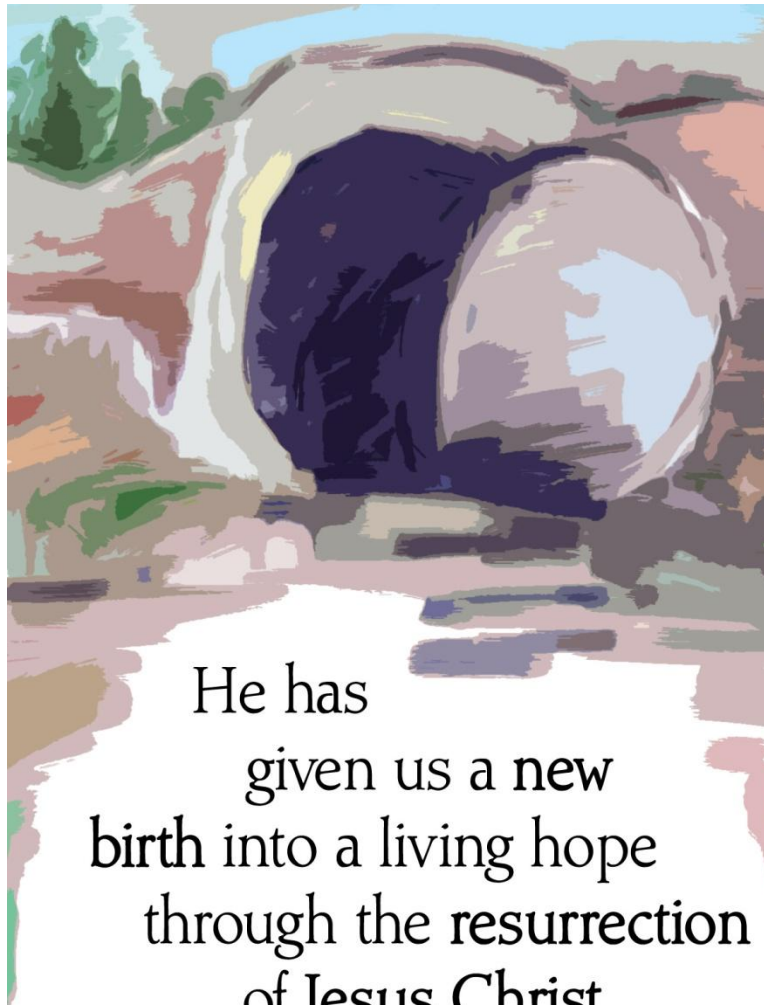
We died 2000 years ago also? We died on the cross with Jesus? This is a strange saying indeed. It seems impossible but it is not. The author Paul here wants to draw the reader and the hearer to the truth of our Baptisms. This is true as Paul also says to the Romans, ‘You were baptized into Jesus’ death, but you were also baptized into Jesus’ resurrection.’

Because we have been “crucified with Christ”, hence, ‘baptized into Jesus’ death and resurrection’, being given eternal life, His Spirit produces a longing in our hearts to live for Him; to live for our dear Savior. This life is lived in faith because it is a life living in trust to the Lord. Sometimes this hope can only be trusted because there is not real evidence before us of our being connected to Christ when we are still acting out our sin.

But because God forever loves us and Jesus’ sacrifice was for eternity; not just from His life up to when you were baptized, God’s forgiveness also stands for eternity.

Prayer: Lord, thank You for Your sacrifice for eternity. May it inspire us to work for You but may we also continually be reminded that it is only on account of Your mercy that we are saved everlastingly. Amen.

*. . . from Christ Lutheran Church
Submitted by Larry W. Jones*



He has
given us a new
birth into a living hope
through the resurrection
of Jesus Christ
from the dead.

1 Peter 1:3, NRSV

Wednesday Evening Lenten Worship

Wednesday, March 16, 2011

6:00 p.m. — Dinner served by Arts in Action — Fellowship Hall
7:00 p.m. — Lenten Worship
“Restlessness” — Psalm 77

Wednesday, March 23, 2011

6:00 p.m. — Dinner served by Board of Youth — Fellowship Hall
7:00 p.m. — Lenten Worship
“Oppression” — Psalm 40

Wednesday, March 30, 2011

6:00 p.m. — Dinner served by Women of the Church — Fellowship Hall
7:00 p.m. — Lenten Worship
“Recognition” — Psalm 139

Wednesday, April 6, 2011

6:00 p.m. — Dinner served by Board of Property — Fellowship Hall
7:00 p.m. — Lenten Worship
“Sorrow” — Psalm 102

Wednesday, April 13, 2011

6:00 p.m. — Dinner served by Board of Witness — Fellowship Hall
7:00 p.m. — Lenten Worship
“Forgiveness” — Psalm 51

Holy Week Worship Schedule

Palm Sunday, April 17, 2011

9:00 a.m. — Traditional Worship with Holy Communion
11:00 a.m. — Contemporary Worship with Holy Communion

(Both services of worship will begin in the Fellowship Hall)

Maundy Thursday, April 21, 2011

12:00 p.m. — Worship with Holy Communion
1:00 p.m. — Luncheon for Homebound/Care-givers
7:00 p.m. — Worship with Holy Communion — First Communion

Good Friday, April 22, 2011

12:00 p.m. to 2:30 p.m. — Community Good Friday Service
7:00 p.m. — Tenebrae Service

Holy Saturday, April 23, 2011

5:30 p.m. — The Great Vigil of Easter — *(Service begins in the Courtyard — weather permitting)*

The Resurrection of Our Lord, April 24, 2011

6:30 a.m. — Sunrise Worship — *(Service begins in the Courtyard — weather permitting)*
9:00 a.m. — Traditional Worship with Holy Communion
11:00 a.m. — Contemporary Worship with Holy Communion