

Devotions – March 8-14, 2015
By Members of Trinity Lutheran Church
Ishpeming, Michigan

Sunday, March 8

“Look, Focus and Live!” – by Luanne Skrenes

Text: Numbers 21:5-9

They spoke against God and against Moses, and said, “Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? There is no bread! There is no water! And we detest this miserable food!” Then the Lord sent venomous snakes among them; they bit the people and many Israelites died. The people came to Moses and said, “We sinned when we spoke against the Lord and against you. Pray that the Lord will take the snakes away from us.” So Moses prayed for the people. The Lord said to Moses, “Make a snake and put it up on a pole; anyone who is bitten can look at it and live.” So Moses made a bronze snake and put it up on a pole. Then when anyone was bitten by a snake and looked at the bronze snake, they lived.

Text: John 3:14-15

...And just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in him may have eternal life.

After wandering in the wilderness because of their refusal to trust God, the Children of Israel became impatient. They began to complain again about their conditions even though it was their own actions that had placed them there! They began to blame it all on Moses. It is always easier to point the finger at someone else than to consider our own role in our difficulties.

So God sent his wrath upon these impatient people in the form of fiery serpents whose venom caused great fevers and death. Again, like many of us, the people THEN cried out to Moses for mercy. Like us, their song changed from a whine to a plea when faced with a life and death situation.

The Lord’s instruction to Moses was to take a pole and place upon it a bronze snake. If the people would just turn and look at it they would be healed from the deadly venom. Snakes and serpents appear often in the Bible. Satan appeared as a serpent when he deceived Adam and Eve. Since then the serpent has become an illustration of the effects of sin, but one day the sin of Adam and Eve and all sin would be judged upon a pole.

All we need to do to be cured of sin’s deadly venom is to look and live. To focus on the one who saves us from our sin. In the John 3 reading, Jesus references the bronze snake on the staff...and just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in him may have eternal life.

Sin has been judged in the One who hung on the cross. We will live. Thank the Lord for His wonderful plan of salvation. Look, focus and live!

Let us pray: Thank you, Lord, for making it so easy for me to come to you. Help me look to you daily, to focus on you, and live. Amen



Monday, March 9

“Who is Your Master?” – by Peter Johnson

Text: Luke 9:23

Then he said to them all, “If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me.”

In a world filled with so many possible gods, be they sports, money, drugs – and this list of gods is inexhaustible – it is difficult for all of us to be true to the one who washes us clean and gives us eternal life. So where do we fail in carrying the cross that Jesus would carry? We fail as stewards when we begrudgingly give God the leftovers of our time, talent and money. Or we fail as stewards when we look the other way or we ourselves cause God’s creation to be violated. How many excuses have we found for not going to church or for not seeing that our kids are in Sunday School and Confirmation?

Excuse #1 – Oh, I have to work (the money god);

Excuse #2 – I can worship God when I’m in the woods (the nature god);

Excuse #3 – Church services are too long and I have weekend chores to attend to (the time god).

But, God gave us the Third Commandment which says, “Remember the Sabbath Day and keep it holy.”

Now, before I bring this to a close, how about we take a stab at the sports god? The following examples are excuses we have all heard or used:

Excuse #1 – Joe, will you usher for me on Sunday? The Packers are playing at home and I have tickets to go with three friends.

Excuse #2 – Pastor, I won’t be in class on Sunday. Our basketball coach is having an extra practice, and if I’m not there, he won’t put me in the game on Tuesday.

Excuse #3 – I’ll be absent from Confirmation for the next two Sundays. I’m on a travel basketball team and they need me.

When we stop and look back over our lives, reflecting on how we have treated our true God, we should feel pretty crummy. But thanks to our loving Lord and Savior, he brushes our crumbs in his sin bin and tells us “Child of mine, you are forgiven.”

Let us pray: God of all creation, forgive us when we allow other gods to enter our lives. Help us to push them aside and worship only you. Amen.



Tuesday, March 10

“While We Were Still Sinners” – by Jan Grove

Text: Romans 5:6-8

For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. Indeed, rarely will anyone die for a righteous person – though perhaps for a good person someone might actually dare to die. But God proves his love for us in that while we still were sinners Christ died for us.

God is an awesome God...God is a thoughtful God...He is a Shepherd and a Redeemer.

Psalm 23 tells us that he leads his sheep beside still waters. He is wise in leading the flock where the waters are calm so that they can cross in safety. Otherwise, the weight of the wet sheep's wool would cause the animal to drown if the waters were rushing. Furthermore, he leads us to a place of inner stillness. As we breathe in we feel the safety of resting beside still waters. As we breathe out, we feel refreshed and restored. He is the true Shepherd.

In chapter five of Romans, we hear how God saves us from our own sinfulness since we are unable to save ourselves. In his thoughtfulness, God had the life of his own Son sacrificed for us. He died so that we might live.

In our weakness we are made strong through the death of a loving Son. Someone might be willing to die for an especially good person. Christ, however, died for us all while we were still sinners and by this God showed how much he loves us. He is awesome. He is thoughtful. We have been reconciled to God through his Son. We have been released from the prison of our own sinfulness. He is our Redeemer.

Let us pray: Thank you, God, for saving us when we cannot save ourselves. We are sheep of your own flock and sinners of your own redeeming. You keep us safe when we are a danger to ourselves. Your thoughtfulness makes us whole. Thank you for being so awesome. We pray that you continue to bless us through your Son. Amen.



Wednesday, March 11

“Praying for Us” – by Rosemary Larson

Text: Hebrews 5:7

In the days of his flesh, Jesus offered up prayers and supplications, with loud cries and tears, to the one who was able to save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverent submission.

How do you pray? Do you pray?

Well if you are a Lutheran, I imagine it's done pretty quietly. I would imagine many of us, me included, are uncomfortable if we are asked to say a prayer out loud, in front of others. We worry, "Will my prayer make any sense? What will the other people think? Will I say I right?"

We are downright uncomfortable.

Or do you pray with loud crying and pleading? I can imagine at times and in some situations we can pray like that. If not aloud, then maybe we are screaming in our heads, "Dear God, can you hear me?"

Or maybe at times we can't even pray at all. But God knows our heart and hears prayers others may be lifting up for us at these times.

When we read the verse, it says, throughout his life Jesus prayed, pleaded with loud crying and tears. How do you envision what is being said? We all interpret what we read differently, we take away different visions and meanings. Many would think that He was pleading to save himself from what was to come, his crucifixion and death. I interpret it as he was praying, pleading, crying for us. He did this throughout his life. He wanted to save us, not himself.

Whichever way we pray, if we do it in faith, in the belief that God is Lord, Jesus hears us. He walked this earth just as you or I do. He knows the struggles we face, the problems we have, the sorrows we bear, as he too experienced them. Believe me, he hears us...

Let us pray: Dear Jesus, thank you for pleading, begging, crying, and praying for us. Thank you for hearing the prayers we send to you in whatever form. Thank you for your saving grace and each day you send our way. In your name we pray, Amen.



Thursday, March 12

“Scorned or Loved?” – by Aaron Skrenes

Text: Psalm 22:6

But I am a worm, and not a man; scorned by mankind, and despised by the people.

It is easy to feel hated by those around you. Whether wearing a Packers T-shirt in a sea of blue and silver, or wearing a Romney pin in a crowd of Democrats, we are often put in situations where we feel alone. Sometimes we even feel abandoned. We very often feel “scorned by mankind and despised by the people.”

Being the lone difference of opinion in a large group can be a very lonely feeling. We even feel disliked by our friends because of the things we say or do at times. Sometimes we are outcast for our refusal to “go with the crowd.” The high road as well as the low road can lead to being crucified.

Jesus Christ was the ultimate example of the high road leading to being outcast. Jesus repeated the opening line of Psalm 22 on the cross: “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” Even Jesus Christ felt alone and abandoned by God. Christ was “scorned by mankind and despised by the people.” Sometimes being scorned by mankind means being loved by God.

Psalm 22 finishes in a much more optimistic and happy light. Verse 26 says, “The afflicted shall eat and be satisfied. Those who seek him shall be satisfied. Ay your hearts live forever.” The Lord our God has not abandoned us and never will. No matter how lonely we feel we are never truly alone because God loves us and watches over us, and like Christ’s rising from the tomb, we will overcome our trials in this life because God has found us.

Let us pray: Lord, help us remember that we will never be scorned and abandoned by you. May we never scorn and abandon others, but instead practice your unfailing love. Amen.



Friday, March 13

“Carrying our Sorrow” by Sue Danielson

Text: Isaiah 53:4

Surely he has borne our infirmities and carried our diseases; yet we accounted him stricken, struck down by God, and afflicted.

...As I feel the love I have for my children and their children (so much that it hurts sometimes), I understand...

For my children I would endure any pain and suffering. I would bear their grief and carry their sorrow as our Lord has done.

Even a greater sacrifice would be to witness their wounding and bruising done in the name of forgiveness for all.

LIFE comes from LOVE and where there is love, there is pain.

With PAIN follows REFLECTION of sin- followed by FORGIVENESS of sin – followed by LIFE and the return to LOVE!

Let us pray: Each morning I ask – THY WILL BE DONE, not mine. Each night I say THANK YOU LORD for this day. Amen



Saturday, March 14

“Healed by his Wounds” by Brian Price

Text: Isaiah 53:5

But he was wounded for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his stripes we are healed.

Isaiah 53:5 is a reminder of God’s sacrifice to all the world. Written in the Old Testament, it speaks initially to the indiscretion of humankind; we are tempted, we have sinned. The verse foreshadows God’s greatest sacrifice, when he gave his only Son to die for us, to save humankind. He laid all of our transgressions on Jesus and through him, through his suffering, we all are saved.

To me, Isaiah 53:5 reminds me that though I may wander astray and become lost, I know that my shepherd is there to lead me home. Through his pain, I am healed. We are to look to God to find help, discipline and peace. We can make mistakes, we can live an imperfect life, and we can do so because through his wounds, we are healed. Yet we can only find true healing through repentance and asking forgiveness from our LORD and Savior. When we do this, we know that we are forgiven and that we have been brought home by our shepherd.

Let us pray: Dear LORD, heavenly Father, we thank you for your sacrifices, your patience and your forgiveness. We know we are blessed to have you to lead us and save us from ungodly lives. Our shepherd’s wounds brought us peace and he brings us home to dwell in the house of the LORD forever. Amen.

